



Higher Quality of Service with Open Source Solution at Toshiba Europe Toshiba Implements Call Center Project for EMEA with OTRS Help Desk

Toshiba Europe feels confident: Open Source software can well compete with mainstream software – and Open Source software even comes without licensing fees. That’s why the IT managers of the Technical Service & Support department of Toshiba Europe in Regensburg, Germany didn’t hesitate to switch to an Open Source alternative once the maintenance contract of the old call center software was about to expire. They opted for OTRS Help Desk, an Open Source system without licensing costs. Toshiba Europe adapted the OTRS-based solution to its IT environment together with OTRS AG, the vendor and premier full service provider for OTRS Help Desk, located in Bad Homburg, Germany. Starting in the spring of 2009, the Open Source solution has been introduced at eleven Toshiba call centers throughout the EMEA region. The project, labeled internally as “Call Center OTRS“ (CCO), has already proven to be a huge success. Uwe Feil, General Manager of Technical Service & Support EMEA at Toshiba Europe, does the math: “The cost savings we achieved with OTRS Help Desk regarding licensing, maintenance and support are in the six-figure sum.“ And the new software has not only reduced costs, but it has also raised the quality of service for customers of Toshiba Europe.

Toshiba is one of the most important global brands in the IT and electronics industry. Founded over 125 years ago, Toshiba Corporation is headquartered in Tokyo and is today a major high technology corporation from Japan. The product portfolio spans power systems and

high-speed trains to mobile phones. The corporation today operates a global network of more than 740 companies, with 199.000 employees worldwide and annual sales surpassing US\$67 billion. The European subsidiary of Toshiba Corporation is Toshiba Europe GmbH (TEG) located in Neuss. All local marketing organizations in the EMEA region are coordinated from



Neuss. The portfolio comprises IT products and consumer electronics, from high end notebooks and other mobile devices to hard disks, DVD and Blu-ray players, and LCD and LED TVs. The Technical Service & Support department of Toshiba Europe, which is in charge of IT in the EMEA region, is based in Regensburg, Germany. Early in 2009, Toshiba Europe had to decide whether it wanted to continue with the old call center software and invest in adding new functionality, or whether it should turn over a new leaf and switch to an Open Source solution that would yield positive effects in regard to license and maintenance costs. Uwe Feil, General Manager of Technical Service & Support EMEA at Toshiba Europe in Regensburg, was quick to make a decision: “Our internal IT Help Desks in Germany, Spain and Portugal were already working with OTRS Help Desk for quite some time and had a positive experience indeed”, says Feil. “One has to acknowledge that today, there are Open Source systems that can easily compete with commercial licensed software. What is more, our Call Center OTRS project, which we started in the spring of 2009, had very different requirements from the old solution right from the start.”

While the old proprietary call center software at Toshiba was more or less an isolated application, OTRS Help Desk was to be integrated with various other IT systems within Toshiba. It is the policy of Toshiba Europe to avoid the set up of own operational units if applicable and instead opt for outsourcing and careful management through cooperation with external service contractors. Accordingly, the numerous call centers of Toshiba Europe in EMEA are not being operated single-handedly, but by larger call center providers.

OTRS AG, the vendor and premier full service provider for OTRS Help Desk, first customized its software based on the functional specification document defined by Toshiba Europe. OTRS AG developed the required new application programming interfaces to interact with other core systems at Toshiba. Then, after the call center staff, i.e. the actual users, were involved in the Call Center OTRS project, further detailed customizations were implemented.

The Open Source software OTRS Help Desk is based on the community project OTRS.org, which started in 2001. Today, OTRS Help Desk is a service management solution available in 27 languages and run by more than 80,000 enterprises, SMBs and public sector organizations world-wide. Furthermore, 60% of the DAX-30 companies rely on the Open Source tool. OTRS Help Desk can be extended to the integrative IT service management solution OTRS ITSM, which is compatible with ITIL V3 as certified by PinkVerify.

OTRS AG has subsidiaries in USA and Mexico, and its service portfolio comprises 24/7 enterprise application support, consulting, implementation, integration and customization, training as well as Managed OTRS Services; the latter is also highly relevant for Toshiba’s Call Center

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OTRS project. Together with the various application interfaces (for example, to the repair system and the registration database), OTRS AG also customized the user interfaces utilized by call center staff. Service agents can now see all relevant information of a calling customer at a glance in the user interface of OTRS Help Desk, while other systems at Toshiba are connected through real-time interfaces to immediately validate data. The old call center system was less ambitious due to its much lower scale of integration. “Our contract for the old system expired by the end of April 2010”, reports Uwe Feil, General Manager Technical Service & Support at Toshiba Europe.



“We were dependent on the new system to function properly. OTRS not only delivered in time and within budget, it also was highly responsive when requirements shifted. The technical cooperation worked out very well.” Since then, the CCO system at Toshiba supports eleven call centers throughout EMEA, including Germany, France, United Kingdom, Sweden, Russia, Poland,

Italy, Spain, Portugal as well as Marocco and Beirut in Lebanon. “As of today, 220 call center agents throughout EMEA work concurrently with the new system per month on 45,000 tickets and 15,000 service requests”, mentions Feil. “Results are already positive: We have definitely improved the quality of service for our customers.”

Not only does Toshiba get positive feedback from customers regarding the better and faster support, but the call centers have also fully adopted the new system. In addition, Marion Hammes, Project Manager of Service Engineering of Technical Service & Support EMEA at Toshiba Europe, says: “Usually, there’s a catch when initially switching software in a call center - quite contrary with OTRS. The call centers’ feedback after introducing the CCO solution is 99% positive. That truly surprised us.”

Originally, the new call center system based on OTRS Help Desk was supposed to only support the Computer Systems department of Toshiba Europe. This department mostly deals with premium notebooks and related peripheral equipment. As of today, all call centers throughout Europe and Lebanon in the computer products field work with the new CCO solution. However, the Northern European Sales Area of Toshiba Europe also wanted the new system for consumer products.

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Hence, call centers in anglophone areas and Spain also cover Toshiba TVs and DVD players with the CCO solution. “Fundamentally, software is never completed, because external parameters keep changing and developing”, says Uwe Feil. “The rule being that new tasks are being added that the software needs to reproduce.”

The CCO solution will be rolled out to additional locations, such as call centers in Switzerland and Turkey, and it will be continuously extended with new functionality. For example, OTRS AG has developed an individual Customer Interface for OTRS Help Desk. This is to better help Toshiba Europe serve companies as customers in the computer systems field. Such key accounts with hundreds of notebooks and respective maintenance agreements gets access to the Intranet of Toshiba Europe. This way, the IT support department of a corporate Toshiba customer can themselves directly report service incidents to the central OTRS Help Desk system, without the need to route it through a call center. And Toshiba Europe is already planning the next step: A customer frontend implemented as a Web form that will be accessible by all customers in general.

Toshiba Europe maintains 16 servers with multiple redundancy as high-availability clusters to ensure high performance of the large and central call center solutions. This ensures a mean time to respond right from the start - something that is not usually the case for a call center with tens of thousands of tickets and service requests per month. Not only has OTRS AG extensively customized OTRS Help Desk and integrated it via a real-time application interface, but OTRS also provides comprehensive Managed OTRS Services for Toshiba Europe. For example, OTRS monitors those interfaces day and night during operation. It is this proactive monitoring that guarantees the high availability of the solution.

In principle, OTRS AG could also maintain the 16 servers at Toshiba, but in this case, there were legal constraints. The Securities and Exchange Law of Japan, also known as JSOX, is equivalent to the American Sarbanes-Oxley Act. J-SOX requires a segregation of duties; thus the IT department of Toshiba Europe operates the CCO production environment itself, while OTRS AG ensures thorough monitoring so that the CCO services can be reached by the service agents in the call centers.

In addition, OTRS AG provides support to Toshiba Europe in the realm of its Managed Service. It operates the development environment for Call Center OTRS as well as the staging environment where user acceptance tests are being conducted along with call center staff. Furthermore, OTRS handles all enhancements and change management processes as part of the solution. Eventually, OTRS AG is the central point of contact for all users should there



be any issues with the CCO system and hence covers the pivotal Help Desk support for the CCO system. Even though the Call Center OTRS at Toshiba Europe is continuously being enhanced, the upshot is already positive: “Our business case for the project was not least based on the assumption that we can save costs by using the Open Source OTRS Help Desk”, explains Uwe Feil,

Toshiba Europe. “And these costs savings having become reality with a six-figure sum. There is indeed a return on investment. Take into account that the scale of integration is much higher than it was with the previous system and that we clearly improved our customer service, then it becomes quite obvious that the CCO project is a complete success.” No one bemoans the loss of the old isolated application with high royalty fees, neither at Toshiba Europe, nor at the call centers.