



FootPrints

Case Study

Speeding Up Response Time to 7,200 Students and 800 Faculty and Staff with Web-based IT Self Service

Located on a 160-acre campus in the center of Topeka, the capital of Kansas, Washburn University provides broadly-based liberal arts and professional education to 7,200 students by combining the most effective modes of educating: accomplished faculty, small class sizes, state of the art technology, modern learning techniques and unique opportunities available through an interactive campus and community relationship.

Washburn offers more than 200 programs leading to certification, associate, bachelor, master's and juris doctor degrees through the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Applied Studies, Business, Law and Nursing.

Overview

Industry

- Education

Challenge

- Implement a web-based, self service tool to be used by 7,200 students and 800 faculty and staff dispersed across a large university campus.

Solution

- Numara® FootPrints®

Application

- Centralized IT Service Desk
- Multiple Business Process Management

Key Features

- A flexible solution for incident tracking, asset inventory and project management
- Web-based for faster response time for tickets
- Real time inventory that reduces errors
- Easy customization for campus needs
- 24/7 availability for improved visibility and workflow
- Robust reporting function to keep management informed
- Training that teaches new concepts

Benefits

- Ability to easily handle 300 tickets monthly during normal times, and over 600 monthly during peak times
- Improved control over work orders by the service desk with nothing getting lost or falling through the cracks
- Increased satisfaction with the service desk from the campus users
- Reduction in phone calls with 90% of all work order requests coming in via email
- Improved ability to respond to issues and keep management informed

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The Challenge: Speed up response time to an increasing number of IT requests using an easily installable solution

Washburn University is a growing campus, with recent additions that include a Student Recreation & Wellness Center, an art building, and Washburn Village, a 192-bed apartment-style housing complex. With all the growth, come more students and more IT support demands.

The Technology Support department, which is entrusted with keeping all the networks and computers up and running on the 160 acre campus, was becoming overwhelmed with IT requests.

“Not only was Numara FootPrints less expensive, but it also fit our other criteria of being web-based so we could utilize the solution across multiple campus buildings. And it was easy to customize to the specific way that we handle work orders.”

– John Haverty,
Manager of Technology Support

“It was a nightmare,” recalled John Haverty, Manager of Technology Support. “There were three of us who would take support requests into our own email boxes. Then, I would dispatch someone to fix the problem.”

The previous method gave the Technology Support group no way to track an issue or find out if it was resolved. “It was crazy,” said Haverty. “There was just no way I could find out what happened with the ticket or whether the user was satisfied. I could ask the agent the status, but it was often difficult to track them down and get a timely answer.”

“Basically, it was just overwhelming,” said Haverty. “The number of requests was growing, and so were the number of assets on campus. We needed some kind of tracking system for our work order tickets. We also needed a way to keep track of assets that was more efficient than the way we were doing it.”

Up until then, agents kept asset inventory in an Access Database. “It was cumbersome,” said Haverty. “It was difficult to keep track of our inventory, especially if someone mistyped something...then we’d definitely lose track of an asset.”

The University began looking for an automated system that would handle the burgeoning number of work orders efficiently, give them real-time control over their growing inventory of assets, and create a much more satisfied user base of students, faculty and staff.

The Solution: A 100% web-based, customizable system up and running in one day

“We evaluated several solutions, including Remedy® from BMC®,” said Haverty, “but only Numara FootPrints had all the features we wanted.” As a non-profit organization, budget was the first concern for Washburn University. “We found Numara FootPrints to be much more affordable than Remedy from BMC and the other options,” said Haverty.

Next, came other considerations. “Not only was Numara FootPrints less expensive, but it also fit our other criteria of being web-based so we could utilize the solution across multiple campus buildings,” said Haverty. “And it was easy to customize to the specific way that we handle work orders,” he said.

Finally, Haverty decided that Numara FootPrints would be the easiest solution to use. “Ease of use was important,” he said. “We can run it on our existing Linux® server and connect it to our MySQL®* database, so that made things easy. It’s fast to do upgrades and customization. And whenever I need help doing a customization and I call Numara Software, I always get a fast response.”

Washburn University decided on Numara FootPrints after a very smooth test run. “It was simple to get up and running,” said Haverty. “It just took a morning to get the solution up and running so I could test it. I set up five users initially, and the test run went perfect so we decided to buy it.”

Key Features: A flexible solution for incident tracking, asset inventory and project management

“To support and serve the university” is the mission of Haverty’s team, and now almost all fifty of the Technology Support department’s agents are using Numara FootPrints to achieve that goal. “Actually, there are 70 total people using Numara FootPrints,” said Haverty, “and that’s because we use the solution for other campus processes besides tech support.”

“For example, within the one Numara FootPrints solution we have 24 different campus “projects” or processes going on,” said Haverty. “Most of it is us, meaning service desk and IT projects. But Numara FootPrints is flexible and can be adapted for almost any campus use, so our Residential Living and Residential Advising areas use Numara FootPrints to manage their processes.”

Web-based For Faster Response Time for tickets

Washburn University has a large campus, so the Technology Support departments take advantage of the web-based features in Numara FootPrints so their agents can log on to the solution from multiple locations. This, in turn, speeds response time to work order requests and increases user satisfaction.

*MySQL AB is a product of Sun™ Microsystems

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“We support 7,200 students and 800 faculty and staff,” said Haverty, “so we have deployed tech agents in five different buildings. When a request comes in, it’s automatically routed to the agent in the building where the help is needed so the response time is shortened.”

Typically, the Technology Support group receives work orders to help students and faculty install and operate software, repair hardware in need of service, help students log onto the wireless network, and help users get up and running on new equipment. “We buy tech equipment through Dell for our faculty and staff,” said Haverty. “We then install any hardware that comes in, as well as any necessary components. All the work gets logged into Numara FootPrints, so we can keep track of our installs and respond to the users quickly and efficiently.”

Real Time Inventory that Reduces Errors

Before implementing Numara FootPrints, the Technology Support group manually entered descriptions of assets into an Access database which proved unwieldy and unreliable. Information on what equipment the school had was hard to ascertain.

“Now with Numara FootPrints, we can keep better track of our equipment,” said Haverty, “And I can monitor it with a daily report that tells me exactly what we have. For example, I know what items are being disposed of, and what we need to replace.”

“The most helpful thing about it is that our inventory is tied to our support efforts,” said Haverty. “By tying our inventory together with our work orders I know exactly which machines need to be worked on and where they are, for example, software installations. It’s very helpful to have all the information in one place, and it greatly reduces errors and the time we spend on maintenance.”

Easy Customization for Campus Needs

Haverty appreciates the fact that Numara FootPrints is easy to customize to the needs of his users. He constantly monitors feedback from students, teachers and faculty and then changes the solution based on their desires.

“Recently, our clients told us they were confused when they learned that a ticket had been closed, yet they felt the problem wasn’t solved,” said Haverty. “What was happening was that when we referred work out, we closed the ticket because as far as our agents were concerned, they were done.”

Haverty went into the system and created a new status field called “Waiting To Close” which put those referred work orders into a queue which automatically closed after three days. “Now our clients understand what we are doing, and it greatly improved the way they felt about the process.”

24/7 Availability for Improved Visibility and Workflow

The computer network runs 24/7 at Washburn University, and sometimes it comes crashing down at inopportune moments. But thanks to Numara FootPrints, Haverty knows just when that happens and makes sure that help is on the way.

“If the system crashes at 3 am, I need to know about it, especially before my management team does,” said Haverty. “Numara FootPrints automatically generates a ticket when catastrophes happen, and I get an instant message on my phone,” he said. “I can then call a systems operator to get to work fixing the problem, and I can send out a global announcement to all our users through Numara FootPrints describing the issue and how we are resolving it.” The global announcement lets the University population know that Haverty’s group has the situation in hand.

The email notification process, in which Numara FootPrints automatically notifies any predetermined list of support staff associated with the ticket, helps Haverty run the Technology Support department...even from home. “I do it all from my email,” said Haverty. “Say a ticket comes in over the weekend, and I get notified on my pager. It’s handy for me to review it from home and decide on the severity of the issue. If needed, I can add people to the ticket or escalate it to give it the proper attention -- all from my home computer.”

Robust Reporting Function to Keep Management Informed

Haverty uses the reporting capabilities of Numara FootPrints to keep management informed of work order status, something he could not do when tickets came into his email and thus were irretrievable.

“I show management every two weeks how many closed tickets we have and how many open tickets we have,” said Haverty. “It really shows them that we are on top of things and have a good handle on our workflow. Management is very happy with the system.”

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"I also get a great deal of information that helps me manage our resources," said Haverty. "I know from Numara FootPrints that early in the semester is the busiest, around 600 tickets a month. That tapers down to 300 to 400 tickets during the year."

"I also track tickets by number closed per month, number closed per agent, and number of tickets by building to see where our greatest number of support requests are coming from and where we might need to do more maintenance or proactive instruction."

Training that Teaches New Concepts

Haverty says that the Numara Software training he attended a few years back helped him learn how to get the most out of the solution. "I attended a Numara FootPrints event and learned some new concepts which I brought back to the University," he said. The training helped him understand all the capabilities of the solution and how to best implement it at Washburn University.

Benefits: More tickets handled, happier agents and more satisfied clients

Haverty reports that his department can handle more tickets thanks to the automation that Numara FootPrints brings to his group. "We are definitely saving time now and can handle more tickets since we're not having to track an agent down and ask him if he fixed a certain problem," he said.

Haverty mentions that the workflow processes of Numara FootPrints allows his group to do more. "We can handle more calls, because tickets are auto assigned to agents in the right buildings. This keeps things moving along quickly and ensures that the right person is assigned to the task."

"Numara FootPrints has been well received by the agents," said Haverty. "It's definitely exceeded their expectations. They are always giving me suggestions on new fields to add to make the process go even smoother."

"And we get great feedback all the time from users who are happy with our service," he said. "They like knowing who is assigned to the problem and what we're doing to keep the ticket moving along."

Lastly, Haverty is immensely satisfied with Numara Tech Support, which not only answers his questions quickly, but helped him through a tough time. "We do our upgrades on Sunday at 10am, and one time we made a mistake and lost all our data and locked ourselves out of the system. I called tech support and they gave us a temporary key to get the system up, and on Monday they told us how to get all our data back and get running full time. The response time was great." Haverty is happy with the decision he made back in 2003 to implement Numara FootPrints. "We are definitely happy with the system as well as the support," he said.

As for the future, Haverty is still mining all the possibilities that Numara FootPrints offers. "Numara FootPrints is a work in progress," he said, despite having five successful years using the solution. "We are always trying out new test projects to see how customers react to using the solution in new ways."

While Haverty is unclear as to how many uses he'll find for Numara FootPrints, one thing is certain: The students and faculty at Washburn can focus on their degrees and lesson plans, confident in the fact that Haverty and his team are focused on keeping their computers and networks working for them around the clock.

About Numara Software, Inc.

Serving over 50,000 customer sites worldwide, Numara Software is a global leader in providing practical software solutions for service management to IT professionals. From a single technician running a help desk to 1000 technicians managing a complex service desk, IT organizations of all sizes trust our award-winning solutions, featuring Numara Track-It! and Numara FootPrints, to track requests, automate workflows and support internal and external customers.

Unlike other complex, difficult-to-implement, and costly products, we offer robust, affordable and easy-to-use solutions that can be quickly deployed without disruption to your business. Our flexible solutions can be implemented right out of the box or configured to match your unique IT environment and business processes. They can also be leveraged to support non-IT operations, such as human resources and facilities, allowing you to optimize your investments in licensing, maintenance, training, and support.

We're passionate about helping people successfully manage their IT environments. Find out how we can help you by visiting: www.numarasoftware.com.