

Avocent's LANDesk® IT Business Management Suite Helps Whitbread PLC Deliver Service with a Smile

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— **Doug Baker**

Head of Outlets Systems
at Whitbread PLC

Whitbread PLC is the largest hotel and restaurant company in the UK, with market-leading brands such as Premier Inn, Beefeater, Table Table, Brewers Fayre, Taybarns and Costa Coffee. Customer service is an essential part of Whitbread's day to day running of its brands. The group as a whole serves nine million customers every month in its 1,650 outlets, so service needs to be swift and reliable.

IT tools such as Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) and reservations systems are the backbone of this service and uptime is crucial, says Doug Baker, Head of Outlets Systems at Whitbread PLC. “Our systems are integrated with how our business operates,” he explains. “If our reservation system doesn't work, we can't check in a guest. It's as simple but important as that.”

The IT processes underpinning the business are centrally managed by the service desk, which provides data maintenance and checks, manages third-party suppliers by automatically notifying them of incidents, answers IT helpdesk calls, and resolves technology-related incidents. Whitbread had recently centralized the business and IT processes for the entire group, and as part of the review, the business looked at the way its service desk was operating with a view to reducing call abandonment, call queues and closure rates, and preventing incidents and cutting costs. The desk had become very reactive and complex.

As an existing user of Touchpaper's Classic HelpDesk (prior to Touchpaper's acquisition by Avocent) Whitbread IS evaluated and chose Avocent's LANDesk® IT Business Management (ITBM) Suite. Whitbread IS was able to build multiple support processes within the solution to meet the needs of the business.

Making a Visible Difference

Whitbread wanted to improve its visibility into how the system was performing at any one moment in time, so that analysts moved on from fire fighting individual incidents to dealing with underlying problems. Says Doug Baker: “I lacked real visibility. My experience was that if any part of the business, especially those using central-based applications, was having issues in one outlet, then there would be issues in the others as well. But I couldn't see this in real time.”

Using the new solution, analysts could clearly identify previous incidents, see the history of a particular outlet, identify patterns, and, by capturing the incident resolutions, they could also create knowledge for future use.

Avocent's LANDesk® Service Desk solved this problem by providing a graphical interface and reporting in real time. Says Doug Baker: “One of the main reasons we chose this solution was because of the intuitive interface. Now we not only have a suite of reports telling us what we need to know, they are presented visually so I can see straight away where the trouble spots are. We can delve into what's going on and predict what might go wrong in the future.”

Root cause analysis has been effective in driving down calls and reducing incident queues. New efficiency in call handling has also shortened queues by defining clear ITIL® practices through the desk and underlying the core ITIL principles; in this case, Ownership. Says Doug Baker: “Analysts used to have to swap screens and shortcuts to deal with different calls. Now from a single touch point, they are managing the calls in their own queues and I can see, in real time, how we're performing overall. We can set targets that the team can be measured against.”

Streamlining Operations

This new process has made an immediate noticeable difference. “Before, the IS helpdesk had an abandoned call rate of 40 percent. But since implementation of the new Avocent LANDesk® software, this figure has dropped to below five percent, and that is with a zero-second tolerance for abandonment,” says Doug Baker, meaning abandonment rates were measured even if the caller hung up after waiting for less than a second.

“We’ve even installed a large plasma screen in the office to display key targets and metrics for the team. The GUI and graphs all enable us to see how we’re performing against key service levels, as well as better match the calls we have coming in to the analysts we have available to resolve them.”

New efficiencies mean that Whitbread IS has increased productivity and more incidents are now being resolved by each analyst. In addition, automatic calls to the vendor whenever there’s a problem with the hardware saves the IT manager’s time. Whitbread IS has also discovered a new way of working. Says Baker: “Now the analysts have their own queues, team leaders can shift around and go where the problems are. The team is more flexible and nimble. It’s a whole new style of service.”

About Avocent Corporation

Avocent delivers IT operations management solutions that reduce operating costs, simplify management, and increase the availability of critical IT environments 24/7 via integrated, centralized software. Avocent’s LANDesk division delivers cost-effective systems, security, and process management solutions that help IT teams automate and simplify the management of desktops, servers, and mobile devices. With long-standing partner relationships and solutions successfully deployed at leading enterprises worldwide, LANDesk continues to deliver rapid innovation and time to value to help organizations achieve their business objectives. Additional information is available at www.landesk.com.