

Support Desk FITS the bill at RSA Academy

FACILITATING PROACTIVE IT SERVICES TO HELP TRANSFORM LEARNING

The RSA Academy came into being in 2008 when the RSA took over what was Willingsworth High School. We joined them on 3rd August 2010 when their new premises were handed over from the builders. The new school building has been designed around the opening minds curriculum and in conjunction with the students. They are also getting a range of new IT solutions from RM to support learning including; Community Connect 4 (CC4), Kaleidos, EasyTrace, DACTA equipment, Exterity, OneLAN Digital Signage, ISIS furniture, green screens, PCs and MACs. They have a Strategic Leader for ICT seconded from RM to help embed this new technology. I spoke to Tim Morton, Network Manager, who plans to use this system to provide proactive IT services to help transform learning.



Why use call management software?



When the school changed to RSA Academy they went from 100 mobile devices and 150 desktops to 850 mobile devices and 250 desktop devices giving the academy a virtual one to one ratio of machines. The IT Services team grew, from two people to six, but something more was needed. *'With this massive change in the number of clients we had to work with and service, there became a need to have something that allowed us to start logging calls and keep track of them...(before) the problem was easy to see, people were reporting problems, we were using a spreadsheet; and not quite using the spreadsheet! So issues were getting forgotten and everyone was getting frustrated with IT Services. I have an excellent team of people who would never knowingly forget about an issue or let someone down but when you haven't got a way of recording and processing issues you're onto a non-starter.'*

Why Richmond SupportDesk?

The Academy had Richmond SupportDesk on free evaluation before buying the solution. *'We looked at some different options and then RM recommended Richmond, and we noticed how closely it fitted with FITS (Framework for ICT Technical Support www.thefitsfoundation.org)*

SupportDesk
FOR SCHOOLS

....I think what Richmond does well is, it's a good out-of-the-box product; if you just want to use it as a helpdesk it will work and is ready....equally it's scaled up to us; we've got very set goals and a very good understanding of FITS.'

Objective

Previously, the team was very reactive. They hope to be more proactive, conducting preventative maintenance (e.g. using the functionality within CC4 to identify users who are running out of space and address this before it becomes an issue.) and helping with teaching.



'The Vision all along has been to see the team supporting the learning process more, and be more than the geeks that get locked in the cupboard who only come out when there is a problem!'

In addition, the new systems they have in place have several levels of failover. They could have a major issue that's invisible to the rest of the school; so another objective is to communicate what's going on behind the scenes.

Getting Started



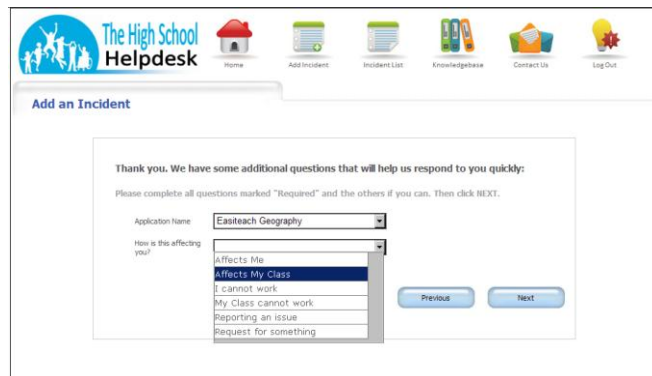
The RSA academy chose to have two days onsite consultancy and implementation from Richmond Systems. *'On the day when the Richmond guys came to install, we handed over our FITS documentation and they just took it from there which was ideal. It was great, there were no issues at all...we did the install for the evaluation but as soon as Richmond came in, we got a better understanding of what was there.'*

After the installation the engineer provided training to two members of staff. *'they would've been just as happy presenting to ten or twelve people as they were one to one; the knowledge was really good, they had a good understanding of the system and processes which was helpful.'*

'The honest truth is, to begin with it's a lot more work to operate a service desk, it's easier to change someone's password and forget about it than to log the call. It was important that all IT staff had the FITS and Richmond Systems training together so they understood the purpose and importance really well.' To help with this, the IT Services team has used some of the templates within Richmond SupportDesk for common tasks, such as password change and wireless resets, so it's quicker and easier to log these calls.

Time for a change

The first implementation of Richmond SupportDesk was 12 months ago, users could log calls person, via telephone or e-mail. Under this model, pupils tended to come down to the desk in person with problems, the helpdesk was seeing 10-12



The screenshot shows the 'The High School Helpdesk' interface. At the top, there are navigation icons for Home, Add Incident, Incident List, Knowledgebase, Contact Us, and Log Out. The main content area is titled 'Add an Incident' and contains a form with the following fields:

- Application name: A dropdown menu with 'Easiteach Geography' selected.
- How is this affecting you?: A dropdown menu with 'Affects My Class' selected. Other options include 'I cannot work', 'My Class cannot work', 'Reporting an issue', and 'Request for something'.

There are 'Previous' and 'Next' buttons at the bottom right of the form. Above the form, there is a message: 'Thank you. We have some additional questions that will help us respond to you quickly: Please complete all questions marked "Required" and the others if you can. Then click NEXT.'

students per session with simple issues, 60-70% of which could be fixed by a restart or checking the wireless connection. *'We identified a need to get more information out there and empower staff more by upgrading their skills. We've made a conscious decision moving to the new build to not have a face to face helpdesk.'*

Now users will be able to raise calls via e-mail (Richmond SupportDesk pulls out the key information from emails uses this to raise calls automatically), telephone or the Self Service Portal. *'The Self Service Portal will help with this as staff will be able to get a knowledge base article that says (for example) if you student can't log on to their laptop try these steps...'*



They are expecting an initial peak of calls and then as they tail off, IT Services will get an accurate picture of the real problems that need to be tackled. They have identified a number of route cause codes for resolution, including user error. These will be used to create reports for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) so areas for improvement can be identified and addressed through training.

Helping Staff

To facilitate this culture change they have reworked FITS, with the full backing of the ELT. All staff will have a week of training on the equipment in the new build; this will include the Self Service Portal and the process for logging calls. They also have an IT Services Pledge in place that is effectively a Service Level Agreement between Tim's team and the staff.

In order to help the staff the IT Services team will have:

- the Self Service Portal
- telephone and e-mail support
- the ability to respond in person to a call
- a weekly 'walk around' to ensure that the IT Services team do not become 'faceless', to gather feedback from staff and to pick up on problems that have not been proactively reported
- Skills Passport for Staff (a staff training scheme covering interactive whiteboards, Kaleidos, general IT skills, etc)

Getting Help

And what about when they forget something from the training? 'The support desk from Richmond is really good as well so we know we can just e-mail, and we still have contact with the installation guys now, they know how they set it up and we can just e-mail them and they explain things to us.'



Impact of Richmond SupportDesk

Introducing SupportDesk and the FITS process has meant the team has adopted a more commercial support model. *'The vision now is to have 1st line support, 2nd line support and 3rd line & management. There is a flow through the room.'* *'The reporting gives us massive benefits. We were able to identify password changes as our main problem and come up with a plan to work through that in the future. Before I would have been hesitant to open up the ability for staff to change passwords but my feeling on it now we have CC4 is every member of staff should be able to change it straightaway. We can then focus on other things we want to do such as preventative maintenance, getting out into classrooms and helping out on the teaching side.'*

Maintaining standards

As part of the FITS process the IT Services team conducted a staff survey. This will be repeated and results reported back to the ELT to ensure the IT Pledge is being met and meeting the needs of staff and students. Following on from FITS they are considering looking at ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library www.itil-officialsite.com) and other ways of continually reviewing and improving their service.

Future Plans

To start with, they are going to be using Richmond Systems with staff. After the first couple of terms Tim would like to extend this to 6th Form users too who may not have a teacher present to help or log a call for them. RSA also plans to use the asset tracking functionality within Richmond Systems, but as they have a whole school of new equipment to tag, this will come later.

Advice to Others

Tim believes you need 3 things if you're going to introduce a support desk:

1. Plan it very carefully
2. Go on the FITS Foundation training
3. It's very important to have your management team bought in and giving you full support with the process.

They also found rebranding to be the 'IT Services Team' helped staff understand the step change and that there would be new ways of working.