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Bell Canada Optimizes Testing Workflows



The Company

Montreal based Bell Canada is now 120 years old and turned in revenues of \$14.3 billion last year. As the national leader for communications in the Internet world, Bell Canada provides connectivity to residential and business customers through wired and wireless voice and data communications, high speed and wireless Internet access, IP-broadband services, e-Business solutions, local and long distance phone and directory services.

Bell Canada offers its wide-ranging, integrated platform of voice, data, wire-line and wireless, and directory communications through its divisions Bell Ontario and Bell Quebec. Bell Ontario and Bell Canada provide a wide range of communication services to their customers in their respective operating territories.

High volumes of new equipment and services need to be tested, which is labor intensive, demanding the best utilization of technicians experience, knowledge and diverse skills.

The Challenge

In Bell Canada's relentless search to be more efficient and improve their bottom line, the Operations Group needed to address some key 'points of pain':

- Shifting workloads, across the various technology groups as legacy communication technology declined and IP-based technologies grew rapidly
- Competitive pressures, as technology evolved with reducing prices and different client SLAs demanded effective management
- Task cycles shortened, to around three hours from start to finish
- Tightened budgets, increased the need to do "More with Less"
- Too many process verticals were affecting business efficiency

Benefits

- Met the Bell Canada Business Case and ROI within the same year
- Improved control over the 'cost of doing business'
- Greater productivity & performance of technicians
- Enhanced resource planning & management
- Strategic leverage, of the 'end-to-end' solution into other parts of the business
- Customer satisfaction levels increased

Bell Canada recognized that they needed to improve the flexibility and efficiency of workflow management by taking down the walls that existed across different technologies, processes and groups of technicians, enabling all resources to be scheduled as one large 'pool'.

The Solution

Bell Canada considered the option of continuing to work using the traditional methods fed by more sophisticated queues of work, but this would require much management intervention. They finally decided to introduce an automated, workforce scheduling tool into their testing environment so that they could remove the boundary walls and optimally balance the workload across technician pools to maximize resource utilization.

The criteria for selecting a 'best fit' workforce management tool were ease of integration with their CRM solution (Remedy), the ability to implement in-house (for direct control over the changing environment), the ability to optimize continuously (in scheduling testing jobs to technicians) and affordability (a low cost solution).

Bell Canada selected ClickSoftware's ClickSchedule allowing them to check resource availability (via calendars) against projected work, output shortfalls by territory and skill, balance their resource capacity and optimize the scheduling of test jobs across the pool of technicians according to their availability and skills.



The Implementation

Bell Canada planned the integration and implementation of ClickSchedule with the NOMAS and COPS-TM/Remedy call logging and workforce management infrastructure. The scheduling objectives and rules were defined and tuned in ClickSchedule to meet Bell's business and technical requirements.

Test technicians were interviewed, to capture their technical skill sets and competency levels, which were then loaded into ClickSchedule. The reporting infrastructure was defined so that ClickSchedule Reports would generate key information on work plans, technician skills, utilization, test status, lost time, lateness, meetings, training, quality metrics and benchmarks.

A pilot implementation was held at the Megaroute Test Center in June 2000, followed by initial production deployment for 69 testers (Datapac, 4x4, Switched Network, Teletype, Dataroute) on December 15, 2000. Phase 2 deployment was on February 26, 2001 across 30 Mega Testers (Megaroute, Megalink, Megastream) and phase 3 deployment was on April 2, 2001 at the Ontario AOC (Frame, Hyperstream, ATM).



Dave Wilder summarized the experience and lessons learned from the workforce management project commenting:

"You really have to know how you want the business and processes to work, then get help from ClickSoftware to understand the rules, objectives and weightings. Above all do invest sufficient time to train all personnel in using and tuning the new support infrastructure."

"We used to work in a reactive, trouble-based, world. Now we are proactively planning, scheduling and managing exceptions. Bell has gained tremendously, especially in tracking the actual productivity from task-based, technician and management reporting."

- Dave Wilder, Project Director

- For more information on Bell Canada visit www.bell.ca
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