

Business as Usual Applications Support

Client: Anonymous

Business Size: Corporation

Industry: Personal Mobility

Country: UK

Technology: SQL Server, Oracle, JBoss, Confluence, and others

Objective: Provision of Application Support Services

The Brief

The primary objective of Application Support is to ensure that all of the client's applications, systems and servers are in a healthy state each morning, ready for the new day's activity. This includes checking that overnight processes have been successful, interfacing systems have reconciled, all is ready for the business day ahead, and resolution of any incident tickets raised during the day to meet SLAs.

Background

The client, a UK-based charity, is heavily involved in empowering disabled individuals, their families, and caregivers by granting them the opportunity to lease new cars, scooters, or powered wheelchairs, utilizing their disability benefits.

The Application Support team look after many systems where issues are investigated, documented, and passed onto other teams for resolution if further assistance is needed. These cover a wide range of the client's internal and externally interfacing operations using a range of different technologies.

Methodology

Applications Support needs to be proactive in all support activities, checking automated processes, both overnight and during the day, are running successfully. Early identification of issues significantly reduces business impact and the effort required to resolve them.

In addition to regular system checks, issues can be reported by users or the service desk raising Jira tickets. These need to be dealt with in a timely manner in line with SLAs.

The Applications Support team covers all working hours with different shifts assigned. The early shift will begin with checking that the live applications, systems, and servers have performed numerous overnight processes correctly and are functioning well. Later duties include checking the many test and UAT environments, applications, and servers.

Application Support also perform many tasks other than problem resolution, including setting new Users on various applications, resetting passwords, server patching activities, on-call support, and weekend work (Production system/application/server checks – Sat/Sun mornings).

Consultant Contribution

A large part of the role is to resolve Jira tickets in a timely manner and meet SLAs. Tickets are often raised by 3rd parties where a system issue may need to be resolved as a matter of urgency. The tickets require fully documenting the resolution and are used for audit and building up history to aid future resolutions and investigations. Recurring problems are documented on Confluence for reference purposes.

Other duties require appropriate access to SQL Server (SSMS) and Oracle SQL to investigate, document, and resolve data issues, with DBA colleagues at hand to assist with resolving these kinds of issues.

It is also necessary to log onto the many servers, checking server space, application availability, and relevant services such as JBoss are correctly running.

Challenges

The job was initially quite challenging due to the large number of systems and applications, where getting to know how they interface with each other and learning of common problems is key.

New skills were also acquired including Splunk, Confluence, mRemoteNG, and the specifics of Jira ticketing.

Lessons learned

The role shows the importance of efficient collaboration with other teams, end users, and IT management, as controls needed to be put in place for efficient problem resolution.

Being able to prioritize tickets effectively is important when supporting many applications and a wide user-base.