Lakeside®

Large Midwest US Bank successfully integrates SysTrack into their Help Desk support tooling to improve control of the end user experience

Use of SysTrack Resolve and SysTrack Operations have proven effective in providing a more proactive Help Desk experience.

"We can now frequently intervene before an end user even realizes they have a problem."

\- Senior Systems Engineer, Desktop Management

INDUSTRY
Community Banking

LOCATION
Tri-state, Midwest, USA

KEY CHALLENGES
* Reactive vs. proactive Help Desk
* Limited forensic toolset
* No historical data for problems reported "after the fact"
* Problem resolution involved too much guess work
* "Real" end user data needed to make enterprise decisions
* Limited capacity planning and management reporting ability

SOLUTION
Integration of SysTrack as a data driven end user decision support tool.

The Client

This community-minded bank in the upper Midwest US serves over 1,000,000 customers every day. It takes more than 4,700 productive employees and an efficient IT department to provide the high level of customer service on which the bank prides itself. Delivering a broad array of banking services and products requires IT based tools with little or no service interruption. A highly available end user experience for each bank employee is critical.

Background

The Challenge

Banking is a highly competitive industry that requires an on-going focus on automation, productivity gains, and wise investing.

While the Bank delivered a high standard of IT services to the more than 7,500 desktops, 200 laptops, 50 virtual desktops, and 100 Citrix XenApp servers they supported, IT felt significant gains in the end user workplace experience could be achieved through a more proactive approach to desktop monitoring and support.

Areas of Concern

The Bank's IT staff recognized there was a shortfall in their tools to monitor and maintain over 7,850 mission critical end points. While Microsoft SCOM (Systems Center Operation Manager) was used quite effectively to monitor the Windows servers, the IT staff had no effective way to assess the workload stresses to which the desktop end points were being subjected. No effective way existed to confirm if systems were properly sized to meet the needs of the individuals, or if Citrix XenApp servers had been properly provisioned to meet the demands to which they were being subjected.

Additionally, in the event of a technology refresh or delivery update involving movement of applications to a Citrix XenApp deployment, no real data existed for sizing or provisioning.

Another challenge was frequent frustration when end users would call the Help Desk with a problem that had occurred days before and wanted to know how to avoid a similar occurrence in the future. With no historical data, there was no way to playback the "day in the life" of the system which had failed a few days prior.

"We can now make decisions with real data. For example, we no longer simply replace a PC to resolve a problem, unless the data justifies it...we fix the problem.

Our Lakeside Software experience has been very good. We've received excellent technical guidance and support throughout our PoC and implementation. They've done an excellent job for us."

 - Bank Senior Systems Engineer

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Improved end user productivity through increased desktop availability
- Proactive alerts for issues impacting multiple systems in the estate
- Improved decisions through access to real workload and sizing data
- Better overall control of the Bank's IT infrastructure
- Visibility into the "end user space"

FINANCIAL BENEFITS

- ROI of 1.5 years...on track
- Reduction in Help Desk tickets
- IRR of 67% expected

The Help Desk relied on the end users to identify problems in the environment, forcing the Bank's IT staff to be in a constant reactive mode of operation.

In the event an end user moved from one location to another and perceived their performance to be worse than before there was no way to compare/contrast the before and after scenarios.

In short, a lot of educated guesses and superior technology skills were being targeted at endemic issues. The IT staff knew the issues could be handled more efficiently if real end user data was available.
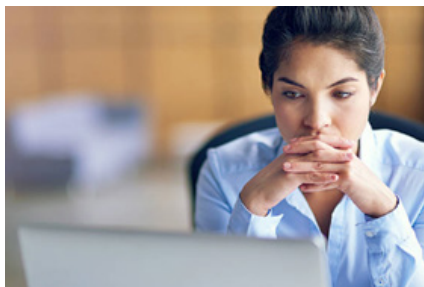

Product Selection Journey

The Bank considered several tools to improve their visibility of end user data. SysTrack moved to the top of the list after careful review. In particular SysTrack Operations, SysTrack Resolve, and SysTrack Analyze appeared to provide precisely the kind of real time and historical data the IT staff was seeking.

Another key difference from other tools under consideration was the proactive alerting for monitored processes, services, and system conditions they found only in SysTrack.

It was quickly decided that a PoC (Proof of Concept) was needed to validate the claims of data visualization and effective proactive alerting.

The PoC proved to be very successful, leaving only the business case justification as the final step before implementation.
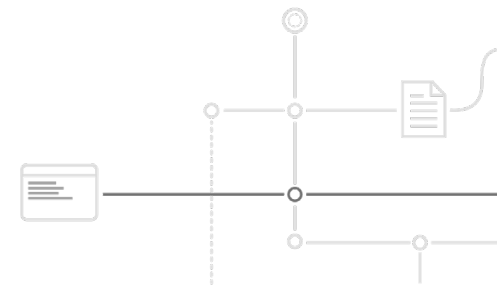
The Business Case

Key Requirements

The Bank's business case required an ROI of payback in less than 5 years.

Cost Savings Considerations

The business case took into consideration the following as cost savings targets:

- Replacement of a niche software usage application
- An electrical utility rebate for power management tools, for which SysTrack qualified
- Help Desk ticket reduction due to proactive alerting and improved forensic diagnostics
- Improved end user productivity due to a healthier, more available desktop experience
- Lower desktop costs due to problem resolution versus PC replacement and/or routine re-imaging

Current State

In the client's own words, *"The SysTrack infrastructure was sized to support our current estate of ~ 7,000 desktops, 300 laptops, 250 virtual desktops, and 130 Citrix servers.*

The server and SQL database implementation was accomplished in less than two weeks. The multiple options for agent deployment makes it easy to keep up with agent end point instrumentation.

Lakeside's support throughout the PoC, implementation, and now, has been very good and a key to a smooth installation experience."

Early Success

"SysTrack has quickly become one of our primary "go to" tools for preventing problems in our IT environment.

One example of how it has helped us avoid Help Desk calls and improve our end user productivity was a recent
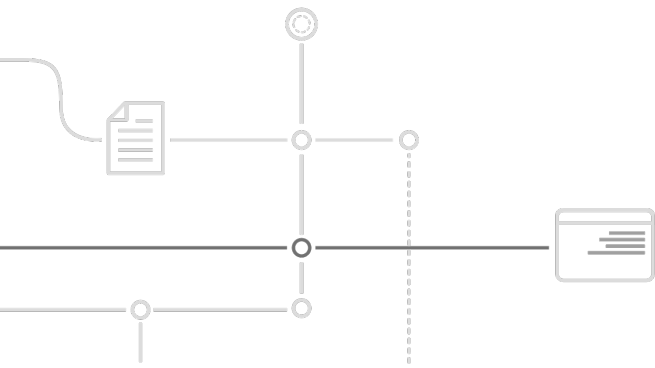
case where we observed in the SysTrack Operations dashboard a high number of BSOD (Blue Screen of Death) alerts. We saw over 1,500 BSOD alerts in a one week period of time. Although no Help Desk tickets had been opened due to this issue, we knew they would if the situation continued. It is common for end users to simply reboot their system the first or second time they experience a BSOD. After multiple such experiences we would have received a sharp increase in call activity.

Once alerted by the "Operations" tool, we were able to identify 15 systems which had experienced multiple BSOD events. We then used Resolve and the Analysis Tool to quickly trace the events back to a recent Windows OS update. Using memory dumps from SysTrack and the Microsoft debugging tool, we were able to isolate the system file of concern. We were then able to confirm, that file had in fact been updated as part of the recent OS updates. We quickly researched the issue and found an updated file using Microsoft support and applied a hot fix to all our affected systems (real and virtual).

All this transpired in less than 24 hours. The best part of all, we never received a single BSOD Help Desk call; we had truly been proactive and solved the problem - surprisingly - before the end users' productivity was significantly impacted. We could never have done that prior to the deployment of SysTrack.

We have also been able to research and resolve issues we suspected existed in the environment, but for which we had no historical evidence to prove or remediate."

Future Plans

Better Decisions with Better Data

"We plan to move to a more virtualized desktop experience. That means more end users on virtual desktops and more application virtualization.

The SysTrack Site Visualizer is providing us with the assessment data we need to size the future infrastructure requirements correctly. We are also using it to help us decide who are good candidates for desktop virtualization based on how they use their current systems. Software licensing compliance and concurrent usage are also areas of optimization where use of SysTrack Enterprise and Site Visualizer will provide visibility.

We also see SysTrack playing a significant role in our move to a more mobile workforce.

In short, we are making decisions with actual end user data, not our perception of how we think end users are using their systems and applications. It makes a big difference in our discussions with upper management to be able to prove "cause and effect," show real usage patterns, and feel confident in the budget requests we make to support IT.

We now plan server upgrades, replacements, or additional capacity based on actual utilization patterns versus waiting until there's a performance complaint.

We are far more in control of our IT assets and it shows."

Measuring Success

Realized Benefits

"All our anecdotal evidence suggests SysTrack was the right decision for us.

The alerts and emails we receive from alarms and event log monitoring has been a real advantage to our Help Desk, and we are confident it has had a positive impact on end user productivity."

Recommend SysTrack

"We would recommend SysTrack for anyone looking to improve their view of what's going on in their environment.

We have found it very effective in monitoring the performance of both physical and virtual desktops as well as our Citrix servers.

In our opinion, it is a very easy product to use, deploy, and support, with a highly accelerated ROI.

Lakeside's support by phone, email, and over the internet has been outstanding."

Lakeside®

www.lakesidesoftware.com