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– Tom Oelsner, Overall Project Manager of Heidelberg Remote Service, Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG

Heidelberger Druckmaschinen: less travel and yet always at the customer’s side with WebEx Support Center



INDUSTRY
Print media

WEBEX APPLICATIONS
Support Center

SUMMARY

Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG uses a web-based system by WebEx to support their worldwide customers in the event of prepress service incidents. This system does not only allow the company to service their customers more efficiently but has also significantly reduced the number of on-site service visits.

ABOUT HEIDELBERGER DRUCKMASCHINEN AG

Line of Business
Sheetfed offset presses

Headquarters
Heidelberg, Germany

Number of Employees
19,000

WebEx Customer since 2004

Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG (Heidelberg), headquartered in Germany, is the world’s leading solution provider for the print media industry. With development and production sites in five countries and some 250 sales offices worldwide, the company offers services to more than 200,000 customers around the globe and has a 40 percent market share for sheetfed offset presses. Currently, Heidelberg generates 85 percent of its sales through a direct sales force and over 80 percent of their sales take place outside of Germany.

The Challenge

With so many customers located all over the world, Heidelberg’s support organisation realised it needed a platform that would allow its regional units to work quickly and self-sufficiently. Before WebEx service incidents had to be resolved either by phone or, if available, via modem. This meant that if a local service technician in China was unable to help a customer, he had to ring the product specialist in the Service Centre in Kiel, provided the time difference allowed him to do so. Erik Etzold, Service Manager of Heidelberg’s Service Centre in Kiel, Germany explains, “Otherwise the local service technician would have to send an enquiry by e-mail to Kiel, and the problem could not be solved until the next day.” Heidelberg realised that customers needed much faster response times and resolutions.

Trying to solve this problem, Heidelberg tried remote support by modem but found the solution lacking. “While, ten years ago, modem support was the first possibility to ‘dial up’ into the prepress system, speed and stability put the technicians’ nerves to a hard test”, Tom Oelsner, Overall Project Manager of Heidelberg Remote Service at Heidelberg

explains. Due to different protocols being used around the world, it was often not possible to establish communication. “The modem solution met only with a low degree of acceptance because it required prior installation”, Oelsner points out. Etzold underlines that the operating and maintenance cost involved in such a communication infrastructure should not be underestimated: “Everything had to be maintained in the Service Centre in Kiel – the modem pool, the telephone lists, the contacts, etc.” Even so, when there was a service incident, the system did not always work because in some cases the dial-up number was no longer correct or something else had changed. Moreover, only one service technician could participate in a session. If another service technician was called in, the whole problem had to be described once more from scratch.

The Solution

Heidelberg needed a solution that was easy for the customers to access across different platforms, was readily available to all its customers and could support their international growth strategy.

The choice of WebEx Support Center was mainly due to the solution’s platform independence. “Many of our customers use Apple Macintosh computers for graphics and design in the prepress stage, Oelsner explains. Heidelberg’s technicians, however, deliver service and support using Windows-based notebooks that have enterprise-wide standardised equipment and software suites. “They need to be able to access the customers’ heterogeneous systems with their notebooks at any time – without any limitations or loss of performance”, Oelsner underlines. No problem with WebEx.

WebEx Support Center, a web-based remote support solution, allows Heidelberg's support organisation to get onto a customer's press in two clicks, wherever in the world they happen to be. All the service engineers need now with Support Center is a PC with a browser and internet access. It takes them just a few mouse clicks to communicate in live with customers in an online support session. The audio conversation is held over a telephone conference call simultaneously. This means the support department can 'see' and 'hear' what the customer needs. Diagnosis is easy, quick and effective in real time.

"With WebEx Support Center, we now have a platform that allows our regional units to work quickly and self-sufficiently and at the same time enables worldwide collaboration under one umbrella", Oelsner adds. "If a local technician needs the help of a product expert located elsewhere in the world, he can call in the expert by conference call and resolve the problem together with him", Oelsner continues.

"Prior to WebEx, we were only able to remotely service customers who had a modem or wanted to have a modem. With WebEx, we can support virtually any customer given that they all have internet access for their business anyway." WebEx is easy for both Heidelberg and its customers to improve communication and customer support.

Heidelberg has implemented WebEx Support Center in 40 countries worldwide, and the number is set to grow. Acceptance is enormous and usage continues to increase. While in the third quarter of 2004, just under 1,500 remote sessions were held, the figure

rose to 3,000 in the third quarter of 2005. "Use has more than doubled within one year," Oelsner underlines. In 2005 alone, there were more than 10,000 successful incidents of remote service overall.

The Benefits

The collaboration of Heidelberg's worldwide service staff has significantly improved with WebEx and is allowing it to keep up with growth in Asia-Pacific. Now, a much higher proportion of problems are solved without on-site visits. "We can use WebEx Support Center even in regions where we were not able to work with means such as modem connection in the past, like in China and Japan, where Heidelberg's business is growing enormously", Etzold emphasises.

"The increasing number of sessions shows that our people work much more effectively with WebEx. Our employees start sessions to explain to each other how the tool is working; they link up with sessions – and provide each other with tips and tricks, etc. A lot of the information that used to be written in manuals or discussed by phone or e-mail is no longer necessary."

– Tom Oelsner, Overall Project Manager of Heidelberg Remote Service, Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG

"With Support Center, our remote services have become much more efficient and much faster", Tom Oelsner adds. An expert from Kiel can now simply link up with an ongoing session that a local technician is holding with a client. This means that the three of them can look at the problem together and resolve it. At the same time, potential language problems can be solved because the local technician can also serve as interpreter. This more efficient way of resolving problems also offers e-learning effects that should not be underestimated. According to Etzold,

"The attendees see what the expert does and learn how to do it themselves."

"Heidelberg is now resolving 80 percent of service incidents without having to go to the customer – that's 20 percent more than prior to WebEx. The increasing number of sessions shows that our people work much more effectively with WebEx", remarks Oelsner.

In addition, Heidelberg's staff is very creative in their use of the web-based system, Etzold says, "Our employees start sessions to explain to each other how the tool is working; they link up with sessions – and provide each other with tips and tricks, etc.", he adds with a smile. "A lot of the information that used to be written in manuals or discussed by phone or e-mail, is no longer necessary."

The Future

"WebEx is more and more establishing itself as the standard at Heidelberg", Oelsner concludes. It really helps that WebEx requires so little training: "One or two sessions are enough to learn how to use WebEx as it's quick and easy to understand."

HIGHLIGHTS

- Heidelberg has implemented WebEx Support Center in 40 countries. In 2005 there were more than 10,000 successful incidents of remote support via WebEx.
- Heidelberg's remote services have become much more efficient and much faster with WebEx – the company now resolves 80 percent of service incidents remotely.
- WebEx Support Center requires little training. One or two sessions are enough since WebEx is quick and easy to understand.

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