The James Hutton Institute

SMAX provides engaging self-service user experience and combines IT and non-IT requests for more efficient and transparent service delivery

Overview

The James Hutton Institute is a world-leading scientific organization based in Scotland, UK, working to resolve global challenges in food, energy and water security. The Institute works with people, organizations and governments to enhance sustainable environmental, social and economic development to deliver practical solutions for a shared future. It has more than 500 staff and 150 PhD students, and is named after an 18th century Scottish Enlightenment scientist widely regarded as the founder of modern geology and who was also an experimental farmer and agronomist.

"Our SMAX service portal is well liked by staff, and we often receive requests for other departments to be included. Users are very comfortable doing their own research through the various channels at their disposal, which helps us focus our resources where we can add most value."

BEN WATT
End User Computing Manager
The James Hutton Institute

Challenge

The James Hutton Institute IT team had a fragmented approach to capturing requests from its 600 users. One site used a SharePoint solution, another site used a service automation solution, but neither really met the requirements, as Ben Watt, End User Computing Manager for The James Hutton Institute, explains: "We didn't have a single place for all staff to submit their requests. This made it hard for the end users, but also for the team of 14 working on the requests."

He adds: "Without visibility across the process we could not easily allocate resources and deliver an efficient service. We wanted to provide a better experience for everyone, and create a service portal that would not just be used for IT requests, but for our estates, communications, and finance departments as well."

Solution

In consultation with technology partner EOH, The James Hutton Institute learnt about Micro Focus® Service Management Automation X (SMAX). SMAX provides a digital self-service experience for IT and non-IT services, that seemed to fit the requirements. EOH made a SMAX trial tenant available on their infrastructure to demonstrate how it could add value to The James Hutton Institute. With its expert modules on service desk management,

At a Glance

■ Industry
Research

■ Location
United Kingdom

■ Challenge
Create a service portal to capture IT and non-IT requests, delivering an improved user experience and more efficient service

■ Products and Services
Micro Focus Service Management Automation X

■ Results
+ 50% survey response rate—increased from 10%
+ Positive user feedback and enthusiastic engagement
+ Hot Topics Analytics helps prioritize next activities
+ 1000s of knowledge article views support wide-spread self-service

knowledge management, surveys, and incident and problem management, SMAX looked to deliver exactly what was needed. Over a period of three months, existing integrations were migrated and tested, to ensure a transparent and smooth move for end users and service desk agents.

Watt on how SMAX was received: "The actual migration was done over a single weekend, and on the Monday all users and agents were productive in their familiar interface. The move was completely transparent initially, and over time, we started to add features to enhance the user experience."

The SMAX-driven service desk manages some 500 IT requests and 300 non-IT requests every month. The team has noticed that users leverage the virtual agents to receive automated 24x7 assistance, complimented by email to enhance continuous customer support. They can use the portal to raise requests, but also check existing request status or leave additional comments. The agents work by department and have a full overview of what requests are open within their area. The team make heavy use of knowledge articles. These short summary articles include hyperlinks to the full knowledge article in the SMAX knowledge management module.

"Our analysis shows that creating short articles that just answer a specific question has really worked for our users," says Watt. "Our views across all knowledge articles are now in the thousands, compared to the tens of views we had in the past. In addition, SMAX Hot Topic Analytics, using advanced search and analytics capabilities to recognize request patterns,

has helped us create knowledge articles or problem records to address common issues."

Following every request, SMAX sends a survey to the user. In the past, surveys had a low response rate—barely 10+ percent. Watt comments on how SMAX has helped streamline the survey process: "The SMAX survey platform helped us simplify our surveying approach and we have managed to boost our response rate from 10 to 50 percent, which is an incredible improvement. Here, we also deploy Hot Topics Analytics. This highlights particular keywords used in the surveys and gives us a deeper understanding to determine if we need to add extra services, or knowledge articles."

Results

The team plans to leverage Operations Orchestration in conjunction with SMAX. This will automate many of the processes that currently rely on manual intervention or scripting, for instance the staff on-boarding process.

Watt enjoys the continued collaboration with EOH and Micro Focus: "We like contributing feature ideas via the SMAX Forum. Research and Development review any forum suggestions and members vote on their priority. It's great for us to see the future direction of the solution and influence development decisions."

He concludes: "Our SMAX service portal is well liked by staff, and we regularly receive requests for other departments to be included. Users are very comfortable doing their own research through the various channels at their disposal, which helps us focus our resources where we can add most value."

MICRO FOCUS®