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📖 Case Study

Amherst College Finds Higher Level IT Service Management with Samanage

Background

Amherst College is located in Amherst, Massachusetts with approximately 1,800 students and 200 faculty members. Amherst is home to over a dozen teaching and research laboratories, and an NSF computational cluster with over 124 processors.

Challenges

Before Luis Hernández's, Director of IT Support Services, first day on campus he was tasked with finding a new IT service management solution. He quickly began working with the IT support services team, who had started evaluating services before his arrival. "We needed a new solution by August, before the start of classes, said Hernández. "It was very important for us to not disturb clients, in this case students, faculty, and staff once classes are in session." Hernández and his team chose early August as the launch date for a new solution.

Amherst College was using Request Tracker (RT). But, they knew they needed to migrate away from 8 years of old terminology, process, and habits. Many of his team members and IT staff had the feeling of being trapped with the old system. Some of the staff members couldn't see a way out because we were so invested in RT, which included an internal development team for the system. The biggest challenge they faced as they evaluated new IT service management solutions was staff members who were hesitant of the change. "Even through the interview process for my position, I knew it was going to be an interesting challenge" said Hernández.

Solution

As a school, Amherst College had a unique set of requirements that extended past just what IT was looking for. The Amherst IT support services team needed to keep in mind the requirements of multiple departments, but most importantly their clients: students, faculty, and staff.

The IT support services team was looking for a solution that was modern and scalable. They also knew they needed to break out of outdated processes and habits. As an overall IT team they were looking for an IT service management solution, with a focus on incident management that would:

- Allow them to categorize incoming requests and map the requests to an existing service catalog.
- Help them define and determine a clear incident state (open, resolved, pending, etc.).
- Continuously allow them to improve processes by providing raw data to determine how well services are being delivered.

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> **Luis Hernández**
> Director of IT Support Services
> Amherst College

For asset management, Hernández and the IT team needed a solution that could easily help them move from their custom built asset management system, which was not scalable and no longer maintained to a solution that could:

- Track assets better by knowing the location and the asset's status (whether it's checked out, returned, or retired).
- Track all IT assets, not just computers.

The needs that IT believed that students, faculty, and staff would require included an aesthetically pleasing product, the ability to easily track requests, and consistent responsiveness while using the product.

It was extremely important for Hernández and the IT team to include everyone who used the previous system. "We wanted to make sure all stakeholders had buy-in to the process and the final product selected," said Hernández. Advancement Operations, the Library, and IT never analyzed incident management solutions together, so the opportunity to select a new product together allowed the Amherst teams to find a product that fit the needs across divisions.

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The evaluation team at Amherst College looked at 25 products in total, including Zendesk, BMC Footprints, Freshdesk, CA Nimsoft Service Desk, TeamDynamix, and Samanage. The final candidates were TeamDynamix and Samanage. Hernández and the evaluation team selected Samanage because of the ease of implementation, the community support available, and the attractive price point.

Benefits

Right away the process of selecting a new solution brought the departments closer together. "We now work very closely on matters that relate to ITSM and share ideas on how we handle similar processes in each area," said Hernández.

Just prior to Amherst launching their new solution, Samanage added the capability to create custom states and tie them to SLAs. This allowed Hernández and his team to highly configure their instance of Samanage to meet their needs. They were also able to define their business hours, as well as scheduled time off. "I have also added the snow days, when we know we have one, since

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that affects the SLA notices," said Hernández. "We can also create separate business hours for separate business units with Samanage."

With Samanage, Hernández and his team have been able to completely map the service catalog to their categories and subcategories. They can now clearly show data on how the request tracking system is used and the areas in which they need to improve.

"We can easily track tickets and receive alerts when SLTs are breached," said Hernández. "And, we respond so much quicker to requests because the system is easy to use, provides reminders and feedback, and each ticket is accounted for."

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