



Improving Productivity and Time Management at a Racing Empire of 400 Employees

In 1990, former race car driver Chip Ganassi started a one-car IndyCar™ team. After a decade of success on the track, Ganassi partnered with NASCAR team owner Felix Sabates to form Chip Ganassi Racing with Felix Sabates (CGRFS). Today, Chip Ganassi is owner and president of a racing empire with over 400 employees. CGR, Inc. has cars in the Indy Racing League, NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, Grand American Sports Car racing, NASCAR Nationwide Series, and the Indy Pro Series.

The Challenge

Improve the support for a racing business dependent on information technology for the winning edge

Fielding racing teams for NASCAR, Grand Am and the Indy Racing League requires a great amount of information technology. CGR, Inc.'s three facilities in Concord, N.C., Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh, and five mobile locations, represent an IT investment in several hundred devices. Their IT inventory includes over 250 laptops and desktops, 40 servers, mobile devices, routers, switches, wireless, VoIP phones and video conferencing equipment.

In 2001, Mike Carbone joined CGR, Inc. as Manager of Information Technology. Over the next few years, he executed CGR, Inc.'s ambitious plans to overhaul the company's computing and networking infrastructure – involving connecting all sites and systems on a core VPN backbone. It was at that time that both Carbone and the organization realized the need to better manage IT support issues and requests in a centralized manner.

CGR, Inc. had been relying on Microsoft® Excel spreadsheets to track incidents and requests. This approach proved inadequate in the new IT environment CGR, Inc. was building. The IT organization found spreadsheets to be very time consuming to use and hard to manage, and users couldn't easily learn the status of their ticket.

Management reporting was practically nonexistent, which meant that IT planners could not easily monitor service desk performance or analyze trends.

IN BRIEF

Industry

Professional Sports

Challenge

Manage multi-site business and mobile IT facilities

Solutions

- Numara FootPrints
- Numara Footprints Dynamic SQL Link
- Numara Footprints Intergration with Microsoft SMS
- Numara Footprints Dynamic Address Book Link / LDAP

Business Application

Centralized IT Service Desk

Key Features

- Rapid implementation
- 100% web-based with ease-of-use
- Easily customizable with no programming
- Two-way email with BlackBerry® Treo™
- Integration with external databases
- Sophisticated reporting
- Survey tool to measure performance

Benefits

- Increased user satisfaction
- Increased IT staff accountability
- Faster response time for requests
- Increased productivity and better time management for users
- Lower costs for IT support
- Better planning and resource allocation
- Reliability that leads to increased uptime availability

Without a mechanism for communicating and sharing ticket information, the five member service desk staff couldn't keep pace with the increasing ticket volume. User satisfaction with IT was plummeting and Carbone needed to act fast. He wanted to establish a robust system for CGR, Inc.'s IT support environment – a complete end-to-end solution that would track, manage and report on incidents and requests.

The Solution

Replace spreadsheets with a 100% web-based solution that would integrate easily with existing systems

In 2004, the organization began the search for a service desk solution by reviewing demo versions of products from established software vendors. Under Carbone's direction, they looked at products from Altiris®, FrontRange®, Remedy®, and several other vendors.

They discovered that the software they tried was either too difficult to learn, required in-house development capabilities that CGR, Inc. lacked, or simply didn't provide the functionality that was needed. "I remember there were many instances where I couldn't even get the demo up and running just to simply see if the software would suit our needs," said Carbone.

Then Carbone tested Numara® FootPrints® and was favorably impressed with the difference.

"Numara FootPrints was the only demo software that installed without a hitch."

Mike Carbone
 Manager of Information Technology
 Chip Ganassi Racing

Key Features

Fast implementation, noticeable ease of use and robust reporting

What made Numara FootPrints especially attractive to Carbone was its ease-of-use and 100% web-based functionality. He quickly realized that he could customize Numara FootPrints without programming. Carbone also saw that integration features like Numara FootPrints Dynamic Address Book Link/LDAP and Numara FootPrints Integration with SMS (System Management Server) Link would make it possible to tap into CGR, Inc.'s existing systems.

Fast implementation to the enterprise in just a week

In 2005, CGR, Inc. began implementing Numara FootPrints. Carbone was able to configure Numara FootPrints for CGR, Inc.'s environment and business processes within two days. "Initially, we used the existing service desk template," said Carbone. "We then configured escalations to notify users during an outage." Within one week, Carbone had rolled out Numara FootPrints enterprise-wide to its users.

Two-way email functionality improves communication

In its first year, the IT desk used Numara FootPrints to process over 1,700 requests. In 2006, the request volume reached over 1,800 tickets. Based on current year-to-date trends, Carbone expects the request load to double in 2007. That's why it was critical to Carbone to take measures to reduce the call-in requests to service desk agents. He configured Numara FootPrints to accept email requests which has proven to be very popular with the CGR, Inc. user community.

Email is especially popular with CGR, Inc.'s technicians, who can read messages on their BlackBerry® devices. With Numara FootPrints' bi-directional email feature, they can immediately reply back with a status update on the incident. Because Carbone has set up an email distribution list of the entire IT team, everyone gets notified. "With this set up, I don't have to spend as much time saying 'Hey guys, what's going on, where are we at?'" said Carbone.

Integration with external databases speeds problem resolution

One of the major advantages of Numara FootPrints for CGR, Inc. is its ability to link to external databases and applications. The service desk has found the Numara FootPrints integration with Microsoft SMS add-on module to be especially useful in speeding problem diagnosis.

Among its many support functions, Microsoft SMS inventories hardware and software in a Microsoft network. Because of the integration possible with the Numara FootPrints module, agents can bring up detailed computer configuration information in work tickets, including CPU type and speed, memory size, IP address, hard disk partitions, OS type and version, as well as a list of all registered software. "With the SMS integration, we can see within the Numara FootPrints ticket what asset the user last logged on with," said Carbone.

The Numara FootPrints Address Book Link/LDAP, which CGR, Inc. also purchased, makes the whole process straightforward. Agents just enter the user's LDAP short name into the ticket to pull in all the rest of the LDAP information and populate the SMS inventory fields too. Carbone was able to implement SMS and LDAP access in about 20 minutes.

Web-access that provides critical on-site, mobile support

In addition to three facilities, CGR, Inc. also has five mobile trailers to support their race teams at the track. "The truck is basically a mobile office," said Carbone. "It has a two-way Internet satellite that's commercial grade – 512 Kbps up and 1.54 Mbps down."

In the trucks, CGR, Inc.'s staff can communicate easily through Numara FootPrints to keep the entire organization apprised of current conditions. "Technicians can function just like they were in the office," said Carbone. "They have a SQL Server to run a proprietary application to log all of our track conditions and telemetry information. They can access Numara FootPrints from the track, shooting emails back to the central help desk."

"In our industry the patience level is not there. Our users find that it's easier and quicker to use Numara FootPrints email request facility."

Mike Carbone
Manager of Information Technology
Chip Ganassi Racing

Reporting and surveying to keep IT performance on track

Having previously used spreadsheets to track issues, the IT management team was well aware of the difficulty of monitoring service desk performance without automated tools. Numara FootPrints has given CGR, Inc. the sophisticated reporting and monitoring capabilities they need.

Carbone regularly examines the open-vs.-closed ticket and agent response time metrics to gauge performance of the IT staff. The team also relies on the Numara FootPrints survey tool to gain feedback on the IT staff and to help in trend analysis, including reviewing feedback about hardware capacity to see if more investment is needed. "Chip himself put in a survey, so that says something," said Carbone.

The Results

Lower support costs, increased productivity and increased user satisfaction

According to CGR, Inc., Numara FootPrints has led to lower costs of support for the enterprise, increased user satisfaction and increased staff accountability. They have also experienced increased productivity and better planning and resource allocation. An administrator at the main office in Pittsburgh put it this way: "With Numara FootPrints, I receive faster support service if I use the service desk system rather than calling directly."

Reliability needed for real-time support

Carbone has experienced very little downtime with Numara FootPrints. When he does experience the rare performance issue, he has found the Numara Software support team to be very responsive. "They answer the phone quickly when you call and you get to a person who is very knowledgeable on the product," said Carbone. "But the system has been running so well, we have not had to call much!"

"With the SMS integration, we can see within the Numara FootPrints ticket what asset the user last logged on with."

Mike Carbone
Manager of Information Technology

Exciting multiple business purpose utilization planned

CGR, Inc. is interested in using the automated workflow capabilities of Numara FootPrints in other company departments. "Our HR director came to me interested in getting a workflow going for her department," said Carbone. There are also plans to use Numara FootPrints in their racing operations group, which would include tracking R&D projects and car part problems.

CGR, Inc. is also exploring the possibility of using Numara FootPrints for facilities management. With Numara FootPrints multi-project capability, CGR, Inc. can use their existing license to manage all of these workflows.

For now, Carbone and CGR, Inc. are experiencing life in the fast lane, thanks to Numara FootPrints and its ability to speed critical information to all stakeholders in the company.

Who are we?

Numara Software is a leading provider of integrated IT management solutions for Desktop Management, PC Lifecycle Management, Security & Compliance, Help Desk and Service Desk. Designed to optimize IT management, Numara FootPrints and Numara Track-It! collectively support more than 50,000 customer sites and nearly 20 million IT assets worldwide.



freedom
to simply **choose**
the right solution for you