

BEST PRACTICES

with **Mike Grisamore**



CDW says “I CAN” to Internal Customer Service Support

For most companies, various internal and external support functions are housed in different departments, which can lead to inefficiencies, dropped customer requests and long wait times as they try to coordinate across departments. Inefficiencies at their worst can lead to lost customers, and during a tough economic climate, this can be devastating.

ICAN originally leveraged a shared email management tool and then evolved to a true help desk application. Both solutions were a vast improvement over the hundred plus “Help Desk Inboxes” that individual departments used to use to support sales. From a sales perspective, this new group and tool streamlined the majority of non-traditional questions or tasks that fell outside of the normal systems or processes. It also provided CDW clarity on areas that needed process improvements and allowed for support coworkers to more effectively manage the volume of requests.

The results of ICAN have been spectacular, but the journey took serious commitment, hard work and vision. An initiative such as this needs a significant number of support functions to get on board early to provide the momentum needed for the sales force to buy in. CDW was fortunate that several support

“I CAN” to Change

CDW Corporation, a leading provider of technology solutions for business, government and education, recognized an opportunity to optimize its internal customer support function in order to better serve its growing number of loyal customers. CDW implemented and improved what today is officially called the Internal Customer Assistance Network or, as the coworkers call it, “I CAN.” Previously, as a smaller company, CDW account managers had to email or call various departments, looking for information on items such as drop ships, new part numbers, repairs and more. Each support department set up its own processes and help desks to handle requests, tracking was inconsistent and there was no centralized productivity view.

Implementing the Ideal

Realizing the **inefficiency and anticipating future growth of the company**, CDW’s new ICAN initiative centralized a dedicated team of 20 coworkers to support the 2,100 sales coworkers by looking across individual departments and aggregating support functions into one area. The **team answers questions or solves problems from coworkers** and the now 3,000 sales coworkers **within four to six hours** of the inquiry — a vast improvement over the seven day average turnaround four years ago when the department was first pulled together and service levels were baselined.

functions such as warehousing, transportation services management, purchasing and customer service all rolled into Doug Eckrote, senior vice president of operations, and he had the vision to support the initial consolidation.

The department continues to evolve to provide better support to sales. Recent changes include an escalation process for sales management and increased coworker cross training to better absorb spikes in volume and new department additions. Duplicate requests have been eliminated, internal service levels have been more clearly defined and better reporting has been provided.

In today’s economic conditions, customer service is paramount to providing value to clients. By reducing the amount of time needed to find answers and solve problems, CDW’s sales force is better able to understand and serve its growing customer base and further illustrate the company’s mantra that everything revolves around the customer. ■

CDW was founded in 1984 and as of June 30, 2009 employed approximately 6,250 coworkers. In 2008, the company generated sales of \$8.1 billion. Visit www.CDW.com.