

Case Notes

Shere Ltd



Overview

- Mareeba researched and identified software applications that met Shere's demanding functional requirements.
- Mareeba undertook a rapid requirements gathering programme that substantially reduced the time to deploy the system.
- Mareeba project managed the implementation, delivering on time and on budget, within a tight time-frame.

In the autumn of 2004 Shere, the UK's leading supplier of ticketing systems for the rail and travel industry, were pondering a dilemma – **how to undertake a fundamental overhaul of its key support systems without sidetracking staff at a time that the business was growing dramatically.** *'We've always sought to differentiate ourselves through the quality and responsiveness of our customer support, and we knew that taking it to the next level would involve introducing new technology, but with the business growing as fast as it was, we needed a way to deploy it with minimum disruption'* commented Shere Managing Director Neil Briscoe.

The Shere support centre was using an in-house developed system, but its capabilities lacked the flexibility to fully automate the increasingly sophisticated Service Level Agreement (SLA) tracking demanded by Shere and their clients. *'Our customers rightly expect us to be able to monitor SLA's that have been tailored to their precise requirements. Our existing system accomplished that to a fashion, but there was an increasing amount of manual intervention in order to make that information available'* noted Iain Kingsley – Head of Sales and Marketing *'it would have become prohibitively expensive to make that sort of data available as our client base grew using the existing support application'*.

Two other areas were causing concern; as the installed base increased, and call volumes rose, there was a

need for more sophisticated prioritisation tools to ensure that calls were being optimally addressed.

Secondly, there was heavy recruitment of new support engineers and help desk staff, and it was vital the new staff got up to speed fast. The absence of knowledgebase or frequently asked question (FAQ) capabilities in the existing system was making the learning curve for new joiners unnecessarily steep.

Shere contracted Mareeba CRM Consulting to help plan and manage the project. *'Our timelines were very tight. We knew we needed a more supportive IT infrastructure, but the upcoming demands on our resources prompted by the move to chip and pin technology meant we had a short window in order to get the system implemented. **We didn't have time to extensively research the market place, nor could we afford any false starts;** the system had to meet our requirements on day one. We wanted an experienced team to help us structure the project and execute it quickly'* said Neil Briscoe

'We wanted an experienced team to help us structure the project and execute it quickly'– **Neil Briscoe, Managing Director, Shere Ltd**

As a starting point Mareeba quickly assessed existing capabilities, and interviewed staff to gain an understanding of the principle business requirements. Mareeba presented to the management team a plan setting out the principle objectives for the project and associated business justification, estimated costs, and a short-list of potential vendors. **This initial assessment convinced the Shere team that the project was financially viable, and could be completed within the timescales.**

While likely technology options had been identified, the complexity of Shere's requirements, particularly in respect of SLA management, meant that the next step was to tightly define the required functionality. *'We undertook a series of workshops, facilitated by*

Mareeba, and worked through our needs in detail. We embraced the measure twice cut once approach. We knew how important it was to get our requirements clearly documented in a way that everyone understood and bought into. **We were also acutely aware that without getting the requirements tightly defined there was a risk that we could purchase software that just couldn't deliver against what we were trying to achieve'** -Iain Kingsley.

The requirements documentation went through a number of iterations as requirements were clarified and prioritised. When the detailed requirements were finally locked down, the technology selection process was initiated.

With the functional needs clearly itemised, Shere and Mareeba were able to define a short, tight list of potential suppliers. Key criteria were - flexibility, particularly in respect of accommodating the structure of supported assets, and the ability to handle a large number of highly customised and invariably complex SLA's. After a streamlined vendor selection process, Supportworks from Hornbill Technology was selected. *'We were confident they could meet our demanding functional and reporting needs, and we felt the flexibility of the application would allow us to add functionality over time'* – Iain Kingsley.

With Hornbill now on board, the next stage was to map the business requirements into the Supportworks application. The joint Mareeba, Shere, and Hornbill team spent a day discussing the requirements, before leaving Hornbill to translate them into the software.

'The detail in the document clearly helped, but Hornbill did a first class job in designing it into the software in a way that users were comfortable with – we knew that getting user buy-in was going to be key to the projects success' – Iain Kingsley.

Despite the tight timelines Hornbill were able to complete installation, data upload, customisation, and training in just three weeks.

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– **Neil Briscoe, Managing Director, Shere Ltd**

As Neil Briscoe concluded - *'Overall from start to finish the project was completed in six weeks. The combination of an experienced external consultant, our own team, and Hornbill, worked well, and we completed the project on budget, and well within the window we set ourselves. We now have instant access to a depth of management information that we can use to drive the business more effectively, and provide better feedback to our customers. It would have taken man weeks of time to gather that information previously. The prioritisation tools are allowing us to balance the support workload, and the productivity gains should allow us to scale back the recruitment of new staff. We are committed to providing the best level of service in our market, and this project has moved us forward significantly in our ability to deliver it.'*