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## Marriott Continues its Legacy of Superior IT Service with Latest Support Portal

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*It is no surprise that Marriott International, a company consistently recognized for IT excellence, has embraced web-based support initiatives for employee support. With support demand coming from over 2,400 worldwide locations, the need to expedite support for both support analysts and Marriott customers was clear. Michael Seeds, Marriott's eSupport Project Manager, had the answer: build an internal support portal (self-help web tool and knowledge base) for both support analysts and end-*



*users alike. The portal would be the single, centralized authoritative source for IT knowledge. Whether it is support knowledge for business processes unique to Marriott, Marriott's own internally developed computing applications or knowledge for using hundreds of commercial business software products, the goal of "knowledge enabling" the support portal would be a critical success factor. Seeds knew that developing knowledge that is unique to Marriott was a job best done with internal resources. For powering the support portal with solutions to popular desktop software titles, Marriott choose the Knowledge-Pak brand of knowledge bases from RightAnswers and expanded the knowledge base with internal documentation on Marriott proprietary systems written by support analysts. This is the story of how Marriott delivers knowledge-enabled employee support across the enterprise with the right mix of tools, technology and knowledge to assist with non-critical support issues.*

### **Marriott's Award Winning Support Organization:**

Marriott sets the standard for excellence in information technology in the hospitality industry. The company consistently earns industry awards, including past and present spots on coveted lists, such as Fortune's "Best Companies to Work For", the InformationWeek 500, and the CIO 100. This history of recognition demonstrates, among other things, that Marriott brings its standards of excellence to every facet of IT and end user interaction. At Marriott, support is not viewed as an unavoidable IT task but as a vehicle to build both employee productivity and improve job satisfaction.

With technology users at properties operating under 14 brands worldwide (Marriott Hotels, Resorts and Suites, Renaissance, Courtyard, SpringHill Suites, Residence Inn, etc.), Marriott experiences a constant upward spiral in demand for support services. To meet this growing demand, the company has strategically organized the support function into "Centers of Excellence" and placed them under the umbrella of the Marriott Systems Support Center. These Centers of Excellence, organized by the application or business process supported, operate 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Whether a hotel manager in London needs help with Marriott's reservation system or an accounting clerk in Washington, D.C., needs help with a PC related call, there is always professional support a call or click away.

### **The Challenge: Help Manage Increasing Support Burden Resulting from Worldwide Growth**

As Marriott continues to grow, demand for technical support increases. Every location uses popular desktop computing applications as well as Marriott's proprietary property and reservations management systems. Naturally, users at every location have questions and problems for which they require answers. "I wanted to help our support analysts manage demand while keeping hold times and abandon rates low," said Michael Seeds. "We needed to utilize an enterprise-wide solution that would benefit everybody, both analysts and end-users. Making our employees more efficient helps us sustain our high quality of support while the enterprise grows and does so without constantly pressuring the analysts."

### **The Solution: A Web-Based, Knowledge-Enabled Systems Support Center**

Marriott formed the eSupport group, whose goal was to leverage technology to meet the need for high quality support instead of continually adding more support professionals. Marriott planned to build a support portal that contained a knowledgebase that would augment all Centers of Excellence by providing end users with an alternative to traditional phone-based support for non-critical issues. By offloading support for less complex issues to the support portal, the eSupport strategy would give support analysts more time to concentrate on difficult and proprietary technology issues. The portal would also serve as a resource for support analysts, containing resolutions to technical problems that may not be in their particular area of expertise.

The Marriott team conceived and built the Marriott Automated Self Help portal, known as MASH. MASH contains over 10,000 internal documents including information on virtually all proprietary Marriott technology deployed around the globe. Adding RightAnswers' Knowledge-Paks provided an additional 77,000 resolutions related to common IT issues. Marriott uses its own technology and business process to maintain the internal document repository while

RightAnswers ships regularly updated content for the eSupport group to upload.

### **The Results: Happier Users and Reduced Systems Support Center Burden**



Results were known immediately when the knowledge-enabled MASH site was rolled out. Usage shot up and the praise began to flood in. Ultimately, Marriott has an ongoing IT knowledge resource that will keep them a step ahead of the technology curve while increasing customer satisfaction.

Part of the success of MASH is due to an internal marketing campaign to promote the portal and the imbedded Knowledge-Paks. Once a company-wide e-mail message was sent, a hold message placed on the call center's phone system and desktop icons placed on every PC, Marriott began to see the usage numbers climb daily. "MASH usage increased and the always increasing calls to the Systems Support Center remained flat," said Seeds.

MASH usage statistics illustrate the impact that the knowledge-enabled portal has had on Marriott's support function. The initial MASH site was launched in July 2001 and the Knowledge-Pak powered MASH site in January 2002.

- During September 2002, end-users accessed over 4,200 resolution pages, up from approximately 1,500 during the same month last year.
- Marriott's support analysts accessed 40% more resolutions, demonstrating the value that analysts are finding as well.
- Overall, MASH now has 23% more users since its January launch.

Marriott reaped one more unexpected benefit from the knowledge-enabled Systems Support Center. The accounting support team recorded a decrease in

average training time from four weeks to two weeks. Easy access to corporate and technical knowledge has enabled new hires to learn on their own time, faster and without relying on coworkers.

The knowledge-enabled MASH site works side-by-side with the support analysts to bring quality support to end-users while helping to control costs and reduce call volume and duration. While Knowledge-Paks will never replace the support analyst, they have assisted them in managing the volume of call center requests and providing accurate information. Marriott is delivering on its promise to IT customers while managing support costs and fully realizing a return on IT investments.

