

iiS IT Help Desk Update

with a focus on Asset management



Customer-centric development

From time to time, iiS consults with forward-looking customers regarding current and future developments; this document is a discussion document designed to contribute to customer-centric development. Much of the software developed by iiS has been based on suggestions for generic improvements by users. The underlying idea is that, whereas the nature of iiS's customers businesses vary substantially, the way the software affects their premises, people, networks, etc. is very similar. If a suggested mechanism is good for a university, it is probably good for an insurance company or a hospital. The timing of the implementation of generic software improvements is sometimes complex - such requests are inevitably of short-term benefit for the requesting customer, but of long-term benefit to iiS (or medium-term at best). As iiS chooses to never accept remuneration for generic improvements, the timings can sometimes be brought into line by effecting mutual benefit based on a non-financial future advantage. This might be an agreement to participate in a case history, speak at a seminar or conference, host reference visits, etc.

Help Desk Styles

At first glance, Facilities and IT help desk requirements may seem to be quite different, but there are actually more similarities and differences. Perhaps an interesting example is move requests - which would be a type of work in a facilities help desk, probably with a detailed location for the pick-up, but a descriptive location for the drop off. In the facilities realm, hospitals tend to believe they need a "hospital version", because they move so many people, beds and other equipment. In the IT realm, moves for people and equipment tend are for a completely different reason, but in both cases, asset location and the

relationship of the asset to a person (be it a patient or an employee) is crucial.

iiS strives to make all mechanisms available by switch, anticipating that mechanisms which have been designed for one style may be useful for another style at a different time. Referring back to the above example, a patient/equipment move in a hospital might be immediately useful to IT as an employee/

The screenshot displays the 'Fast Track Help Desk - IT Edition' software interface. It features a menu bar (File, Tasks, Actions, Background Data, Reports, Other Data, Email Operations, Window, Help) and a toolbar. The main window is divided into several sections:

- Job Details:** Job Code: 10222, Created: Saturday 9-Jul-05 16:14, Status: Issued, Resp. Hrs: 0.50, Contain: 1.00, Complete: 1.50, Priority: 0. Customer: AMBERCOM, Job Cat: NORMAL, Site: CARDIFF, Issue Type: Network Error. Requested by: ANDERSON, GARRE, Work Type: NETWORK, Building: CARDIFF, Op. Sys: XP Pro. Contractor: ITSUPPORT, Floor: 01, Can be Reproduced?: YES. Attachment: TOSH10001, Room/Desk: 100, Steps to Reproduce: After using 3G datacard to upload and download, then come back to office LAN. Logged By: SMITH, PETER, Asset Code: TOSH10001, Location: .
- Job Description:** Problem connecting to the main LAN after being on the road with a 3G datacard.
- Asset Management:** A table titled 'Assets for: ANDERSON, GARRETT' showing details for TOSH10001 (Toshiba 1900 Notebook) and LG19MON003 (LG 19 in LCD Monitor).
- Job History:** A table showing a list of jobs with columns for Job Code, Created, Building Name, Requested By, Phone, Work Type, and Job Status.
- Asset Job History:** A table for TOSH10001 showing job history with columns for Customer Id, Job Code, Job Type, Created, Completed, and Contractor.

Dynamically provided information on the caller's assets and their history

equipment move, but the IT move undoubtedly needs to be augmented with additional detail for (amongst other things) connectivity, which may need to be checked before, during and after the move.

Mechanism Roll-out

New mechanisms reach iiS products at different speeds, simply based on the normal choices made in the development cycle. A mechanism may be developed for Oracle and later be deployed to MS SQL Server and Sybase; a new feature may be developed in a Windows version of software to later be deployed in a web version. If this document, or similar documents, discuss or display examples using one platform, it will almost always be the intention to deploy to develop on other platforms. Perhaps an

exception to this rule is when using Pocket PC browsers for direct web connectivity - only some mechanisms will be made available, because of the restrictions of screen size.

Asset Management

One of the wider development areas for the coming period is asset management. Most of iiS's software is concerned with asset management, typically being the management of facilities assets and A/V IT assets for room booking. The intention is to build upon the existing mechanisms, firstly to round out the functionality for IT, and secondly to consider additional functionality specifically for IT. Assets are almost always associated with buildings, but if they can be linked to people and/or locations (rooms, desks, workstations, etc.) certain powerful automation benefits can be gleaned. See the following description and the screen shot for an example.

Personal Assets

An operator takes a call, and logs the name of the caller; a list of the caller's assets pops up and the operator asks the caller with which item is there an issue; the operator doubleclicks the asset to insert it into the call logging form.

Departmental Assets

When assets do not "belong" to an individual, they will still have a contact for responsibility - typically either a technical or departmental contact person. This approach is similar to the personal assets example, but the caller may have more assets assigned.

Asset Job History

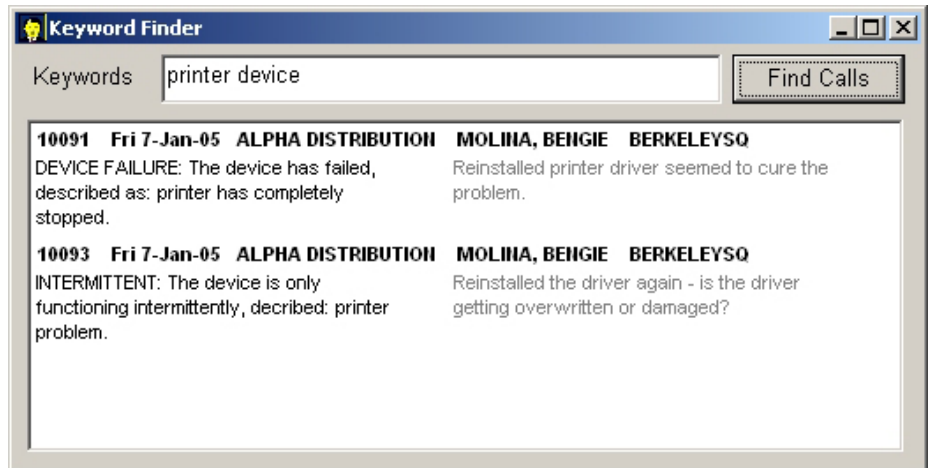
During the call, the operator can ask to see a history of jobs against the asset, to assist in diagnosing the issue, hopefully contributing to a more timely closure.

Asset Data Resolution

One consideration is the resolution of IT asset data. Much information regarding the assets can be held in the asset or asset type tables, but there also can be justification for tracking separate hardware component and software component tables.

Inventory Agent Data

The data which provides for the mechanisms discussed in the Asset Management section can be gleaned in various ways, but updating the hardware, software, network, etc., data is going to be crucial. One way of automating the process is to use data from an inventory agent, which "collects" data across networks. This type of data may contribute to great technical detail, but conversely may be weak on people data - who is using what. This may lead to an "asset driven" approach rather than a "call driven" approach.



The keyword finder finds matching call descriptions, and shows the call detail and the operators notes on the solution

Keyword Finder

The keyword finder searches past calls and user notes for specific phrases to allow an instantaneous summary of previous information and shows users how prior issues have been fixed. What happens after the matching is a subject for discussion.

Parts, Labour, Materials and Stock Control

Tracking these resources can lead to a multi-dimensional breakdown of job costs. Whether parts are ordered for just-in-time installation, or are stored when commonly used, they can be logged in the parts management area, and so contribute to a cost analysis by job. If it is better to not track a parts inventory, any item can be logged on-the-fly in the materials section (uses specifies, rather than picks an item, provides a quantity and cost). If a parts inventory is to be kept, all transactions are recorded in the Stock Control mechanism. The time on or off site spent on jobs by consultants or engineers can be logged against each job.

Email scanner

A mechanism with the ability to be able to read email from a "support Inbox", and import data from the emails which are relevant to the Help Desk. The mechanism will transfer the relevant data from the email and place it in the call-logging section as a new job. This process can be fully automatic, and include removal of the message from the Inbox. This provides a desirable level of automation, but much depends on the information in the email, or an operator will have to chase the emailing party for clarification (potentially more work than logging a voice call).

Please contact iiS if you need any more information. www.iiSFM.com