



## UNIVERSITY COMPETENCE CENTER, MAGDEBURG

### FASTER, MORE EFFECTIVE HELP-DESK OPERATIONS WITH SAP® SOFTWARE

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**André Faustmann**, Technical Director,  
University Competence Center, Magdeburg

#### QUICK FACTS

##### Company

- Name: University Competence Center, Magdeburg
- Location: Magdeburg, Germany
- Industry focus: Higher education and research – service provider for SAP® University Alliances program members
- Products and services: SAP software delivery and support
- Employees: 12
- Web site: [www.sap-ucc.com/emea](http://www.sap-ucc.com/emea)

##### Challenges and Opportunities

- Meet demand of large customer base with limited staff
- Reduce redundant effort and improve operational efficiency

##### Objectives

- Implement help-desk processes leveraging the SAP Solution Manager application management solution
- Improve accuracy of incident allocation process
- Increase productivity of help-desk staff
- Enhance visibility into status of open help-desk tickets
- Round out application lifecycle management capabilities

##### SAP Solutions and Services

SAP Solution Manager application management solution

##### Implementation Highlights

- Used expert-guided implementation to speed deployment and reduce cost
- Mapped “dummy” accounts used for learning purposes to real users in a centralized user directory
- Educated users to use SAP Solution Manager instead of e-mail for support

##### Why SAP

- Help-desk functionality that is fully integrated with solution portfolio
- Support for end-to-end application lifecycle management

##### Benefits

- Vastly improved help-desk efficiency and effectiveness
- Lower support costs
- Improved staff productivity and responsiveness, with less redundancy of effort
- Greater visibility into ticket status for help-desk staff and customers alike
- Single version of the truth for all help-desk tickets, leading to faster, more cost-effective service

##### Existing Environment

E-mail-based, manual help-desk processes

##### Third-Party Integration

- Database: IBM DB2
- Hardware: HP RX8620/HP BL480C
- Operating system: HP-UX/SuSE Linux



The SAP® University Alliances program provides universities with access to SAP Business Suite applications, enabling students to learn about enterprise technology. To support this software with an effective help desk, the University Competence Center (UCC) in Magdeburg, Germany, uses the SAP Solution Manager application management solution. “With just a 12-person staff,” says André Faustmann, technical director of UCC Magdeburg, “we have the workflow and visibility we need to meet the demand for more than 400 SAP University Alliances program participants.”

### So Much to Do, So Little Time

As a not-for-profit service delivered to support educational aims, the concept of a UCC has been intended from the beginning to emphasize lean, low-cost operations. A UCC is similar to a more business-focused SAP Customer Competence Center (SAP CCC) location – which is common in the private sector. A CCC, however, typically focuses on the needs of a single company. UCC Magdeburg, by contrast, serves a user base that is as large as its business-world counterpart (in this case about 60,000 SAP software users), but these users are spread out across hundreds of participating universities throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA).

UCC Magdeburg manages this volume by standardizing wherever possible. For example, all universities in the SAP University Alliances program use the same standard configuration of SAP training software that is designed to represent a virtual company. This configuration includes core functionality from the

SAP ERP application as well as documented processes and a healthy offering of demos.

Yet despite standardization, each university is unique – and invariably, help is required. This is where UCC Magdeburg comes into play. To solve reported problems and provide help, the competence center originally used a process that was based on e-mail. For supported end users, this process was straightforward: just send an e-mail to the competence center and wait for a reply.

For the UCC Magdeburg staff, however, the experience was far from simple. First of all, the incoming e-mails seldom contained adequate information about the user’s environment. For each reported issue, the team had to do research in order to gather basic information. This caused lengthy response times.

What’s more, all incoming e-mails reached every member of the team simultaneously. This led to confusion when it came to allocating incidents to the appropriate domain – network,

applications, servers, and the like. With each staff member receiving the same incident message at the same time, colleagues would take off in different directions to solve an issue – often working at cross-purposes. At other times, multiple staffers worked on the same resolution at the same time – leading to redundancy of effort.

Tracking progress was challenging as well. Lacking an explicit workflow, the team at UCC Magdeburg found it difficult to pinpoint who was working on what aspect of an issue at any point in time. Sometimes colleagues collaborated only verbally, leaving no e-mail record of their decisions or actions. This often made it futile to search the e-mail system to try to gain insight into resolution status. It also meant the team at UCC Magdeburg lacked the visibility and insight required to generate timely reports on help-desk performance.

“Basically, we needed a formalized approach to service-desk operations,” says Faustmann. “This is why we chose to implement SAP Solution Manager.”

### End-to-End Application Lifecycle Management

While the immediate issue facing the team at UCC Magdeburg was streamlining incident and problem management, the team also chose SAP Solution Manager in part for its ability to help manage the end-to-end application lifecycle. Since they were already using the application for software maintenance and monitoring, the team had a level of comfort with it and knew it could be



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leveraged for help-desk purposes. “We can use SAP Solution Manager at the front end and the back end of the application lifecycle,” Faustmann says. “The application puts everything we need in one place, which helps us increase efficiency and effectiveness.”

To configure SAP Solution Manager for service-desk operations, the team participated in an expert-guided implementation session. This involved a mix of morning training sessions delivered by an instructor over the Web and afternoon lab sessions in which lessons learned were applied by the attendees to the configuration of SAP Solution Manager at UCC Magdeburg. When issues arose, participants were able to contact the expert for direct assistance. In just five days, the organization was up and running with basic service-desk functionality.

The challenge subsequent to this phase of the project was to create a centralized user directory. Here UCC Magdeburg had to contend with an unusual set of circumstances that are unique to the

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SAP University Alliances program. For this program, status as authorized users – those who are empowered to contact the service desk in order to resolve issues – is limited to university instructors. But for educational purposes,

these instructors will frequently create a wide range of “dummy” user accounts for hands-on student usage.

To account for this, the team needed to map these dummy accounts to the primary user for tracking purposes. Then they had to customize the end-user software itself so that it would allow only authorized users – the instructors – to generate service-desk tickets. With the help of the SAP Active Global Support organization, the team was able to manage these customizations within a short period of time.

### The Rollout

UCC Magdeburg has completed rolling out the new service-desk functionality to all 180 or so German institutions participating in the SAP University Alliances program and is planning a rollout to further institutions throughout EMEA soon. The initial rollout serves as a pilot implementation to bring both staff members and customers up to speed on a new way of issuing and managing help requests.

According to Michael Greulich, the project manager for the introduction of the service desk, the primary challenge facing the team at this point is to train the user base to use SAP Solution Manager to resolve issues rather than

sending e-mails. “So far,” he says, “service-desk processes with SAP Solution Manager are quicker and more satisfying for the end user. Our customers have already begun to realize its advantages, and we now have plans to retire the e-mail-based process entirely in the near future.”

### Enhanced Visibility, Greater Efficiency, and Improved Effectiveness

The advantages for the UCC Magdeburg team are equally evident. “One major benefit is visibility,” says Greulich. “From the instant we receive a ticket to the time the issue is resolved, we can see where we are in the process – and our customers can see as well. This makes us a lot more effective as a support organization.”

Faustmann’s team has also increased its efficiency under the new process. “When a ticket arrives, we have the data we need to get working right away,” he says. “We can also allocate the problem to the right domain immediately. This speeds time to resolution and helps minimize the cost of the service-desk function.”

Automated workflow, meanwhile, has helped to streamline support processes and eliminate redundancy of effort. With the process currently in place, only one staff member at a time is permitted to work on an incident, which avoids confusion. If the first staffer cannot resolve the incident, then the ticket is forwarded to the next in line for further investigation.

Throughout this process, all actions taken are attached to the ticket for the historical record. Staffers can even associate additional documents, such as user documentation, so that this information travels with the ticket throughout its lifecycle. "This gives us an easily searchable single version of the truth for all service-desk incidents," says Faustmann. "And this, in turn, dramatically reduces complexity and allows us to deliver better, faster service at lower cost."

### Building on a Good Thing

As UCC Magdeburg rolls out the new service-desk functionality to the rest of its user base, the group has additional plans to optimize the offering for even greater returns. Monitoring functionality, for example, will help track system status across the user base and allow the team to detect potential issues proactively and resolve them before customers feel the impact.

Over time, the team will also build an incident database based on all tickets generated and managed by SAP Solution Manager. This will then be used for various purposes – such as identifying persistent problem areas and generating reports regarding the performance of the service desk.

In the near future, UCC Magdeburg also plans to upgrade to a new version of SAP Solution Manager. Through the SAP Ramp-Up program – which gives participating organizations early adopter status for new releases – UCC Magdeburg will be one of the first organizations to run on the new software. As part of this upgrade, the organization will achieve fully compliant service-desk operations according to ITIL, a standards-setting organization for IT service management.

"Our goal is to continuously improve," says Faustmann. "With SAP Solution Manager, we've already been able to make significant strides. At this point, the sky is the limit."

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