Monitor 24-7 Inc.
Enterprise Service Management Solutions
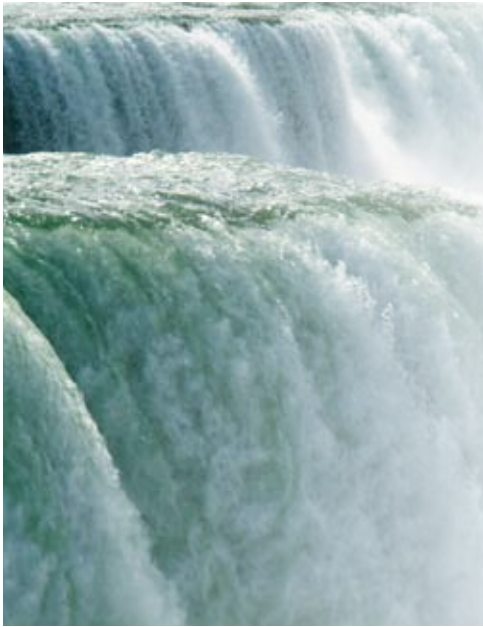
Project at a Glance

About the Customer

Type:	Regional government
Areas served:	The Niagara Region, consisting of Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Wainfleet, St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie
Headquarters:	Thorold, Ontario
Equipment supported:	3,000 PCs and over 200 BlackBerry units
Employees supported:	4,000 computer users

The Challenge

Having outgrown its previous system, Niagara Region's Corporate Services Division, charged with providing help desk I.T. services to other government departments, was seeking a cost-effective, yet robust solution to support its ITIL® requirements

The Solution

Monitor 24-7's IncidentMonitor™, complete with its out-of-the-box ITIL®-compliant templates

Niagara Region

Building Community. Building Lives.

Key Benefits

- ITIL® compliance allows department to take first contact resolution
- Flexible solution empowers customers with activity overview
- Responsive and personal contact support from Monitor 24-7 Inc. has helped ease the transition

Business Profile

IT Solutions is a division of the Corporate Services Department at the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Utilizing a staff complement of about 45 full-time technical and professional employees, the division is dedicated to delivering quality information and technology products and services to a diverse client base of approximately 4,000 Regional employees and shared services partners. The IT Solutions division strives to be your partner in innovation to assist you in delivering Regional programs and services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Niagara Region Help Desk Flows Thanks to IncidentMonitor™

When Mary Blom stepped into her new role as the I.T. Service Desk and Training Administrator for a rapidly growing and recently reorganized Corporate Services Division of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, she faced a daunting task. Charged with creating a Service Desk for a large department that oversees administration, budgets, financial reporting, I.T. solutions and building services - basically anything to do with administrative functionality to support the other regional departments for Niagara - Blom needed to be backed by a service management solution that she could count on.

Not only did it need to be flexible enough to meet this department's expanding needs, but it also needed to be sufficiently cost-effective to achieve the demands inherent within the recently launched era of fiscally-responsible government.

The ultimate answer - as recommended to Blom by an independent consultant - was Monitor 24-7 Inc.'s award-winning IncidentMonitor™ solution.

For approximately five years, the department had been employing Computer Associates Unicenter product as its service desk solution. However, with the product nearing end of life and the cost of upgrading looking prohibitively high - not to mention doubts about whether Unicenter was the right product to help the department move to the next phase in its development - it was time for them to explore other options, Blom says.

"Some of the challenges that we faced with that product (included) reporting, and the big factor was cost," she said. "The cost of upgrading and licensing and the maintenance of that product was very high without the advantages of the reporting that we needed, the flexibility."

This became all too clear to Blom when, at the time operating under the assumption that this was the direction they would go, she attended a training seminar for the new version of Unicenter.

"I was very disturbed by the inflexible way that this product worked for simple things, which I thought 'this shouldn't be this hard.'"
There was a lot of DOS-type interface that "was just nasty, as far as usability," she said.

She expected the new version to be "click and drag and nice and easy and touchy, feely, "but it was none of those things."

Blom went to her supervisor and told him that it might be time to explore other options. Ironically, that's when he told her about the process study they had planned, bringing in a consultant to suggest business process improvements. So it was decided that they'd also have the consultant suggest some alternative Help Desk solutions at the same time.

IncidentMonitor™ the Logical Choice for Niagara

The consultant recommended a couple of different solutions, one of which was IncidentMonitor™, an enterprise management framework that is packed with features out of the box, including the ITIL® templates that Blom's department needed to achieve its mandate. Blom was given a demo and came away impressed: "They were very reasonably cost effective, and the maintenance and so on was also very reasonable."

The clincher, she says, was the fact that she received from other customers "very good recommendations and glowing remarks about the level of service and the level of support" that Monitor 24-7 provides.

That, Blom said, was very important to them, "because we basically, with CA, had zero support."

IncidentMonitor™ Helps Usher in New Age for Niagara

The main component the department is using is IncidentMonitor™'s IncidentManagement process, which has helped them evolve from a catch and dispatch system that included "one person just going crazy trying to keep up with the calls, but not doing any upfront troubleshooting" to a full Service Desk which includes four analysts capable of taking calls and solving problems on the spot.

Now, the department can log all of its calls that come into the service desk either by phone or by e-mail and sometimes even walk-in, tracking everything to do with application issues, password resets and anything to do with software, hardware or break-fix, Blom says.

Another project the department is using IncidentMonitor™ for is moves, adds and changes, "which in essence, is Change Management, but more in a practical, standard change format," she says.

This involves network account changes, user-focused updates, and purchases of equipment that is provided by

their telecom group (issuing hardware like Blackberry devices and phones or any changes to do with those devices). The department also uses the ChangeManagement process for any hardware changes, such as getting new monitors or printers, software installations and virtually anything to do with I.T. device functionality.

The Change Management process is a component Blom expects to provide greater value going forward as the department personnel gain more expertise on the solution.

IncidentMonitor™ Making Life Easier for Niagara

Now that the Region of Niagara's Corporate Services Division has had a few months to adapt to IncidentMonitor™, the benefits are starting to be appreciated on a deeper level, Blom explains.

"The flexibility it provides in terms of being able to see what's going on per activity level, like our finance group or our infrastructure group, what tickets they have open, that sort of thing" has been very well beneficial. In a nutshell, she explains, "sharing information has made our life a lot easier."

Adapting to a new service management solution can prove to be difficult, as some users will undoubtedly be reticent to change, however, "I think people are seeing the potential" with IncidentMonitor™, Blom says.

Kathy Tkachuk, an analyst in the Corporate Services Division who was very involved with the rolling out of IncidentMonitor™, says she has seen the solution pay instant dividends.

"The fact that (IncidentMonitor™) allows us to take an ITIL®-approach to what we're doing, and we're dealing with first contact resolution, which we never did before, we now get a different relationship with our customer because they can remain on the phone with us until the task is done, and there's a more positive response from that perspective."

Improving customer relations has definitely been one of the biggest benefits from the IncidentMonitor™ implementation, Tkachuck says.

"The customer feels like 'well, I've been looked after right away,'" she says. "So there's a certain customer satisfaction element that may not have been there previously where things may have gotten deferred - that can make a huge difference."

Customers love the fact that they can send the Service Desk requests themselves and get an immediate e-mail

response "After they've gone through the process of resolving their issue, and it's closed, if it recurs, they have that option of being able to reopen it themselves, and it gives them a sense of control," Tkachuk adds. Blom definitely has no regrets about switching solutions from Unicenter: "The cost would have been higher than what we set aside for IncidentMonitor™, for sure. And we wouldn't have been, I don't think, much further ahead in what had currently for reporting and flexibility."

Best of all, the concerns they had experienced under Computer Associates in terms of support are history with Monitor 24-7, Blom says.

"I think the product is very good and we've had excellent support when we've had problems," she says. Blom was particularly pleased with the fact that they developed an actual relationship with the Monitor 24-7 sales and support staff, through the sales process, the implementation and now, during the after-sales support period. "That's really comforting. That makes a big difference."

Plans for the future include employing IncidentMonitor™ for network management monitoring and tracking infrastructure changes, eventualities that have her enthusiastic about going forward with this solution.

"It is exciting," she says.

About Monitor 24-7 Inc.

Monitor 24-7 redefines service management with a full-featured out-of-the-box service desk and customer-facing business process.

The award-winning IncidentMonitor™ delivers state-of-the-art business processes and intelligent workflow capabilities in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost of other solutions. IncidentMonitor™'s single platform approach does not require expensive customization or additional modules.

The ITIL® compatible IncidentMonitor™ open framework allows for rapid implementation of enterprise level service desk capabilities without being tied to legacy systems or costly customization.

For more information please visit **www.monitor24-7.com.**