



This ServiceNow case study is based on an interview with Link Alander, vice chancellor/CIO, and Butch Juelg, associate vice chancellor for technology services, at Lone Star College.



**Highlights**

Better communication through a hybrid in-house/outsourced service desk

**Organization**

Lone Star College

**Business**

Higher education, community college

**Headquarters**

The Woodlands, Texas, USA

**Geographies**

Greater Houston area, Texas

**Modern ITSM Software**

Change, incident, request, problem, project and knowledge management; service catalog and CMDB

**Implementation Timeline**

Three months to build service desk (internal portion of hybrid model)

## IT Integration and Consolidation to Support 100,000 Students and Employees

Recognized for its visionary thinking and the size of its student body, Lone Star College provides 100,000 students and faculty members across six campuses with 24/7 support through a hybrid, in-house/outsourced service desk. Lone Star has consolidated its IT services using ServiceNow and its outsourced partner uses it for after-hours support.

Link Alander and Butch Juelg describe how they've arrived at that model and how they've also derived value from ServiceNow outside of IT.

### Changing the service desk model

First, Lone Star College weathered the journey to find the right tool, one that would help them move more of their support burden to self-service. Initially, each campus operated their service desk and service desk software independently. A 2007 move to implement a single solution using Peregrine (then HP) Service Center as an internal service desk was not successful due to organizational complexities, each campus operating independently. Then, in an effort to stabilize IT service delivery, IT was centralized, and the service desk was outsourced. The outsourcing partner initially implemented FrontRange. After eight months of struggling to meet Lone Star's service and reporting needs, the outsourcing partner acknowledged problems and switched over to ServiceNow.

At the same time, customers began to make it clear that they really didn't like the idea of an outsourced service desk. In January a hybrid model was implemented across the college system in which Lone Star runs its own service from 7am until 10pm, then the outsourcing partner picks up calls from 10pm until 7am, plus weekends. The model provides 24/7 coverage with a better level of service for customers calling after hours. In May of 2012, Lone Star changed the model again by moving from the service provider's ServiceNow instance to its own instance.

Link Alander, vice chancellor/CIO at Lone Star College, says, "We announced that we thought we could improve the service delivery during the day by bringing it back in house, and users were ecstatic. Even six months into it, most people didn't notice that we had moved to a hybrid model. When customers log into our portal, they can see their service tickets, check their status and submit new work orders. And cost-wise, we have plowed the savings from the hours we're not outsourcing into creating and maintaining our own service desk."

The on-campus service desk personnel are all in the same phone system, and thanks to ServiceNow, they all see the same dashboards and get the same reports. But each campus has one of the service desk operators on site, which enables customers to walk into the building and get face-to-face service if needed.

### Importance of CMDB

Besides finding an improved service desk model, Lone Star needed to make better use of the information collected by Altiris, a discovery tool used to administer servers, manage campus desktops, deploy software, image hardware and track performance of individual machines. Through its integration with Altiris and WASP (Asset System), ServiceNow updates its own CMDB nightly, giving IT staff insight it never had before into links and relationships among systems.

“The value of ServiceNow to us is the integration between all the applications,” says Butch Juelg, associate vice chancellor for Technology Services. “We can now see and use information on our configuration items (CI) in incident, problem and change, whereas before we didn’t have that level of integration.”

Juelg values the integrations between ServiceNow and other products like WASP, an asset management database. Anything that Altiris does not discover goes into the WASP database manually, which is then integrated to the ServiceNow CMDB. Lone Star also uses VMware to automate the deployment of its virtual servers. Altiris collects information from VMware, such as location, services provided by the server and any hosted software. ServiceNow, in turn, captures the information from Altiris and updates the CMDB each day.

### Change management

The integrations have been especially beneficial for change management, where a clear view of the relationship among CIs helps IT know what each change is going to affect. In the past, Lone Star had performed change management manually and created documentation around it, but only since implementing ServiceNow could IT automate the process and begin to see how systems and applications depended on one another. The result is much better information and the ability to make much better-informed decisions.

“All the information used to be in people’s heads,” continues Juelg, “and ServiceNow has given us a modern way to manage our changes. We would create changes, then schedule a phone conversation to get everybody’s oral agreement on them. Now we can communicate, track and link changes to other services like incident and request. We all receive change notifications from ServiceNow so there’s no longer any need for a phone call to approve a change.

“We can handle emergency changes much more efficiently because people receive text and email messages that let them pull up the incident in any browser. When they see the issue and the relationships among affected CIs, they can make better decisions. This huge improvement has helped us reduce the number of incidents caused by changes.”

### Measurable progress

Alander faults the problems with Service Center and FrontRange for leaving him without useful baselines against which to quantify gains under ServiceNow. In general, though, service delivery at Lone Star College is more closely monitored and better informed than ever before.

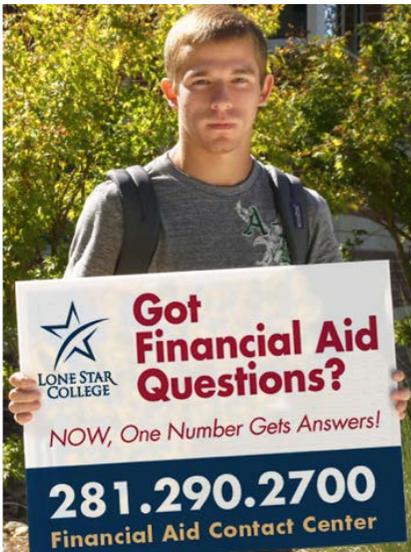
- **Service level agreements (SLA)** – IT had always had SLAs around incident response times, but the lack of notification – “Your SLA is about to expire” – meant that they were not always enforced. Notifications from ServiceNow allow both customers and IT to track them better.
- **Customer service** – With a better handle on ticket resolution times and workforce management, IT can continue to improve service delivery.
- **Risk** – By anticipating the effects of changes to CIs and avoiding service outages, IT now plays a role in mitigating risk and maintaining productivity across the organization.

“Now we can all work in an environment where everybody sees the same thing. Modules and processes in ServiceNow allowed us to become a distributive service desk, with many locations acting as one entity to improve our efficiency.”

### Consolidating line of business applications

ServiceNow is also catching on outside of IT, notably in Lone Star College's financial aid call center, where a staff of 30 handles inquiries and applications for 55,000 students annually from the time a student calls to request financial aid all the way through award.

The problem was that processing was decentralized, with each of the six campuses functioning independently of the others. Students would contact multiple campuses and receive different answers, and each contact center had different information on the same applicant. Worse yet, none of the centers had call tracking on the thousands of students who applied each year.



The resulting confusion and poor student experience prompted the financial aid department to turn to IT, which recommended consolidating the calls in a single contact center. Then, IT built a simple

form to manage requests and generate tickets in ServiceNow. Students now have a single point of contact and financial aid reps can track them efficiently and accurately throughout the application process.

"This integration project with Financial Aid is an excellent example of how our IT department partners with different departments in the institution," says Juelg. "They brought us in to help them handle a non-IT issue, and we were able to use our experience in setting up the IT service desk in ServiceNow for their line-of-business application. We've done similar work for another department, the **Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness**, which uses ServiceNow to manage requests and tickets."

In fact, Alander sees as much value in ServiceNow outside of IT as inside IT, supporting business processes that, while essential, are not easily covered by business systems such as ERP, for example. He has his eye on an HR process for posting new positions called Chill, which is a series of approvals prior to posting a vacant position. Lone Star College's ERP, PeopleSoft, isn't right for Chill, so staff members are obliged to use inefficient email messages to track approvals, then email different areas to check the status of the request. But IT is planning a new approach using ServiceNow's self-service catalog so that staff can submit information on the position and check the status of approvals.

"ServiceNow is a phenomenal IT service management tool," says Alander, "and I really see how it can help us constantly improve processes in our IT organization. At the same time, I see us taking ServiceNow outside the realm of IT service management into business processes all around Lone Star College."

"[Before ServiceNow,] customers didn't have a way to go in and see the status of their ticket. Now they can check status and get updates from the technicians resolving the request they've reported. The communication jump has been of huge value to us."

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