

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Case Study

Leading publisher improves first call resolution and handles support incident peaks with remote desktop support appliance

The Organization

As the second largest publisher in the United States, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt develops and delivers a comprehensive set of K–12 learning solutions. Through different platforms and various environments, more than 16 million educators, administrators, and students nationwide are active users of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s software and services.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt has more than 1,000 products across nine business units. Internally, Harcourt has 15 front-line help desk representatives covering 15-hour virtual work days, and the company is anticipating tremendous growth during the next 12 months.

The Challenges

According to Robert Baird, Manager of Technical Support Center at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, the organization was facing several challenges that led them to evaluate remote support alternatives. These include high growth in the number of active users, significant seasonal fluctuations in call volumes, and a need to more efficiently support thousands of non-technically savvy users.

“We expect the number of active users to double over the next year. This includes teachers, students, network administrators and basically anyone who needs an account to access information on one of our applications,” said Baird. “With this rapid growth, we needed to find a tool that would be able to support all users no matter where they are located, and no matter which platform on which they operate.”

In addition, call volumes fluctuate dramatically for the company, depending on when schools are in session. For example, Harcourt’s annual volume is approximately 100,000 incidents, but 40 percent of that volume comes in the fall when teachers and students are back to school. From August to September there is a 300 to 400 percent increase in call volume compared to the summer months.

Harcourt’s customers are teachers, administrators, and many non-technical staff members, which poses the challenge of supporting a variety of users across all ranges of technical experience. For example, support representatives often assist teachers in classrooms and computer labs with 20-30 children. If the teachers cannot get an application running in the computer lab, the situation can quickly get out of hand.

Prior to implementing Bomgar, Harcourt was using Citrix Online’s GoToAssist solution for several years. While some of the basic functionality was there, the hosted licensing model and monthly fees were not a good fit for the organization. It also didn’t enable Mac access, which is a primary concern for schools. Since about 25 percent of the company’s calls were Mac-related, Harcourt was unable to remotely access and support these customers. Harcourt identified that 50 to 60 percent of incident research time was spent on Macs because they were not able to access those systems.



Summary

- 15 internal help desk reps supporting 1,000 products across nine business units
- 300-400% increase in call volume Aug.-Sept.
- 50-60% of incident research time Mac-related
- 90% of incidents resolved on first call
- \$12,000 per year saved in licensing/hosting fees

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Robert Baird | Manager of Technical Support Center, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

The Solution

Baird and his team researched several different applications, including the latest version of Citrix. They did a side-by-side comparison against each of the competitors, and after a rigorous evaluation, the team chose Bomgar.

With the Bomgar solution in place, Harcourt was able to maintain high quality service and efficiencies during peak times. According to Baird, “During the peak times, we must bring in temporary workers. While these workers are very tech savvy, their expertise with our applications is not as developed as our regular staff. We are able to quickly train them on the Bomgar tool and get them up and running and productive right away. We rely heavily on Bomgar during these peak times. With the assistance of Bomgar, we are able to jump on the system and quickly resolve the problem, helping to decrease resolution times during peak call volume.”

In addition, the IT team was able to more rapidly resolve incidents. “Now, educators prefer to contact us instead of their local network administrators or support teams because we are more equipped to diagnose and resolve their problems much faster. They don’t have to be technically savvy to let us in and get the problem taken care of. What could take days with other support resources typically takes us less than 12 minutes with Bomgar,” said Baird.

Since implementing Bomgar, Harcourt regularly receives positive feedback from educators saying how pleased they are that problems are resolved so quickly. Customers also like that they are able to see what the agent is doing with their system on the screen in real-time.

“We also like the license model with Bomgar. As I’ve mentioned, with Bomgar we were able to host the service internally ourselves and save about \$12,000 a year in licensing and hosting fees,” described Baird. “In many cases, we have to work with our customers’ machines at the operating system level and Bomgar enables us to automatically reattach to that system instead of having to walk the customer back through each step. This step alone saved us two to three minutes per call.”

First Call Resolution (FCR) has improved greatly with the use of Bomgar, with 90 percent of incidents resolved on the first call. Of the remaining 10 percent, six percent are closed within an eight day period. The remaining four percent happens when the incidents aren’t resolved within a certain timeframe and are escalated to the development group of supervisors.

“Internally, even our supervisors use the Bomgar solution to assist support reps from the back lab more quickly, instead of getting up from their workstations and walking to the rep’s station. This helps keep the supervisor in his or her environment and stay focused doing their day job even better,” said Baird.

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Robert Baird | Manager of Technical Support Center, Houghton Miffl in Harcourt

About Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Boston-based Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company is a global education company with approximately \$2.5 billion in combined revenue. The Company publishes a comprehensive set of best-in-class pre-K–12 educational solutions, ranging from research-based textbook programs to instructional technology to standards-based assessments for students and educators. The Company also publishes an extensive line of reference works and award-winning literature for adults and young readers. With origins dating back to 1832, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt combines its tradition of excellence with a commitment to innovation.

About Bomgar Corporation

Based in Ridgeland, Miss., Bomgar Corporation specializes in appliance-based solutions for remote control support. Bomgar allows companies to connect to remote clients and co-workers via the Internet anywhere in the world, in less than 10 seconds. The company is the only provider in the industry offering an appliance-based solution, providing companies with an unparalleled level of security and the ability to scale efficiently. Backed by venture capital, Bomgar has grown steadily since its inception in 2003, securing more than 4,000 customers in all 50 states in the US and over 45 countries, in addition to resellers in Canada, South Africa and the U.K.