

Unisys Drives Significant Productivity Improvements While Reducing Costs with Optimized Scheduling



The Company

Unisys is a leading technology company, providing a number of services for its diverse clientele. Based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the company's service organization focuses on maintenance services for Unisys' outsourcing and technology businesses, as well as performing "private label" service for other vendor's technology equipment. Roughly 1,000 field service technicians in the United States focus primarily on break/fix work that fall into either a same day or a next day service level agreement.

Unisys' business has continued to evolve over time, and its service organization needed to undergo the next phase of evolution in order to run more efficiently. Unisys looked to ClickSoftware to help reduce the number of schedulers needed while increasing the number of jobs completed per day.

The Challenge

In the early days of Unisys' service organization, field technicians were mainly supporting mainframe systems. This kind of work often resulted in significant wait time at the job site. Since a complex scheduling system was not needed to handle this type of work, Unisys set up a zip code-based routing and scheduling system to meet the need.

With the advent of the company's high volume, next-day business for third parties, the service organization started experiencing problems with workload. To support the mainframe business, Unisys had developed a dispatching tool where a bucket of calls would be assigned to a technician in accordance to the zip code(s) he or she covered. With the higher volumes of calls coming in, techs would often get overloaded, requiring frequent retooling of service schedules.

To help mitigate the workload challenge, Unisys changed its approach to a slightly more centralized form of scheduling. All jobs for zip codes in an area came into one centralized bucket for that area, and a team of schedulers manually assigned them. This system had its problems, as well. The schedulers were not necessarily familiar with the work they were scheduling and how long it would take. Technicians' days weren't filled up, because schedulers were overly cautious about overloading them. The number of calls scheduled per day, was low, and the number of schedulers assigning the work was high.

Benefits

- 40% improvement in jobs completed per day
- Greater than 90% of next-day business scheduled automatically
- Decreased number of schedulers by 40%
- Decreased number of field technicians by 40%
- Maintained average mileage between jobs even though workload was being spread out among fewer, and more geographically-separated technicians

Unisys was also looking for efficiencies in its same-day service business. These calls usually take longer and come in with some level of urgency. Thus, there needs to be slack time in the system to accommodate. The service organization hired a number of schedulers to help manage job assignment according to zip code, similar to the process for the next-day business. And similar to the challenges faced with the next-day scheduling process, Unisys was looking to make some significant process improvements.

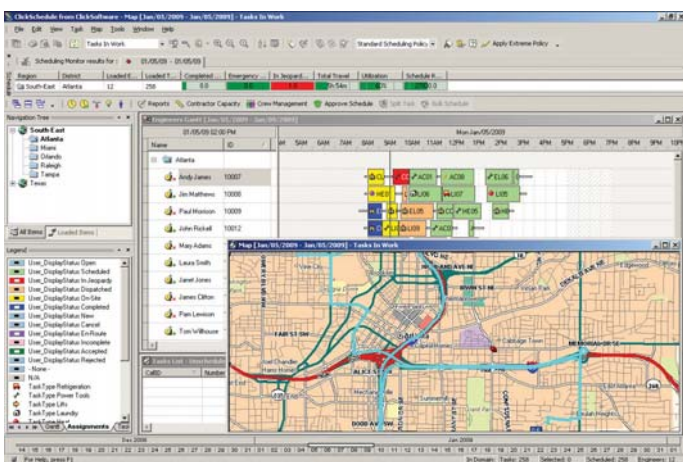
Unisys was not running at optimal efficiency and looked to ClickSoftware to help increase the number of service calls assigned per day and reduce the number of schedulers and technicians needed to assign and complete the work.



The Solution

Unisys selected ClickSoftware's ClickSchedule solution with street-level routing, which had to be integrated with several of Unisys' existing backend systems—including appointment booking, the dispatching tool, and a database of service level agreement information.

The process for next-day work, that used to require a large number of schedulers, has now been significantly streamlined. When an appointment is booked (with a specified time window) that job then flows into the ClickSchedule solution to be built into the next day's schedule. The ClickSchedule optimization engine runs overnight, and the next morning technicians receive their schedules for the day on their Palm mobile devices.



A key component of Unisys's success in completing more jobs per day is the use of street-level routing. "The more information you can feed into ClickSchedule to allow it to optimize, the better off you are," said Steve Moore, Director of Operations at Unisys. "To have a real schedule, we have to know how long it takes to get from Point A to Point B. The other types of routing just aren't very successful."

Another component of success in the next-day business is ClickSchedule's ability to incorporate parts pickup as part of the daily schedule for each technician, based on a pick up/drop off methodology that was jointly developed by ClickSoftware and Unisys.

Unisys and ClickSoftware are currently working on implementing ClickSchedule's real time optimization for Unisys' same-day business. With the implementation of ClickSchedule, Unisys is looking to automate as much of its same-day job scheduling as possible and reduce the number of schedulers.

Results

As a result of ClickSoftware's ClickSchedule solution, Unisys was able to start centralizing its scheduling process, reducing the number of schedulers involved with its next-day business. "We used to manage every call that came in and needed to have a scheduler 'touch' every job," Moore said. "Now our schedulers just manage exceptions that fall outside our normal scheduling parameters, reducing the need for manual touches. Today, more than 90% of calls in our next-day business are scheduled automatically."

Reduction in schedulers has not been the only improvement Unisys has seen. By letting the business logic set up in ClickSchedule determine the daily schedule for each technician, Unisys has been able to safely assign technicians more work without the risk of overloading them. As a result, the service organization has seen a 40% improvement in completed calls per day and has been able to realize cost savings through the reduction of its field force.

When it comes to drive time and number of miles between jobs, Moore believes the street level routing system is having a positive impact on its next-day business, but the extent of the impact is difficult to track. "We minimized the number of technicians while the number of calls coming in remained consistent," he said. "The lower density of techs in the field, by default, means that each technician will need to drive further between jobs. That being the case, we would have expected to see an increase in mileage between calls. But, overall, it has stayed pretty much flat."

Integrating parts pickup into the schedule has also helped Unisys' service organization with efficiency. By building time for parts pickup into the schedule up front, technicians begin their days with the parts they need already in-hand, minimizing the need for mid-day parts runs or job delays associated with not having the correct parts at the point of service.

In these two biggest areas of dispatch work for our business, where techs are driving miles, and where we had lots of people doing the scheduling, we have been very successful using ClickSoftware and fine-tuning our process to reach our goals."

Steve Moore, Director of Operations, Unisys

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