

COHO HELP DESK APPLICATION BACKGROUND ON GENERATION ONE



The first generation OSU Helpdesk Project (Coho) was launched in January 2003 by Oregon State University's Information Services, Technology Support Services unit. The project was a response to many attempts by various internal departments to obtain commercial helpdesk software or develop their own systems. In each case the initial investment and recurring costs were found to be excessive. The goal of the project was to create a modular, web-based, open-source helpdesk system that would meet a variety of users' needs.

Interest from a myriad of Colleges and Departments quickly expanded the scope of the project with the goal of evolving into a helpdesk solution that could be utilized by all. A "baseline feature" document developed to include the features that everyone wanted in a helpdesk system was used to identify the overall feature set and establish priorities. Bugzilla, the bug tracking solution developed by Mozilla.org, was chosen as the core after evaluation of several existing Open Source and home grown products.

The current implementation of Coho includes the call-tracking module plus optional knowledgebase, calendar and inventory modules based on various open source products. Using Bugzilla as the core of Coho allowed us to fast track development and testing on the Call Tracking module began in March of 2003. It was in use in a production environment by May of 2003. Knowledgebase and Calendar modules were added in 2004 and the Inventory/Contract module is now in final testing and should be released in early 2006.

The software allows a call center to record all support requests, communicate with the customer, monitor consultant responses, and track support issues and trends across a variety of problem categories. The call tracking module is closely tied to a searchable knowledge base. The scheduling module gives you the ability to schedule on-site appointments with customers and view the appointments in a web-based calendar. The equipment inventory module allows you to inventory hardware by support group, department, user, and location. Equipment can be linked to requests in the call tracking module and there are optional Service Contract maintenance and billing options.

Coho is now widely used within the University; it has been in production at the OSU Computer Helpdesk since May 2003 and serves more than 19,000 students and over 4000 staff and faculty. We currently have two installations with 18 active queues. The main installation, with 17 queues, is mainly used by IT staff in various departments across the campus. The other installation is used by KidSpirit, an after school and summer camp program, for tracking customer/parent contacts.

Coho is also successfully deployed by other universities and organizations. We've had more than 90 inquiries from interested parties, including Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of British Columbia Microbiology & Immunology, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Discussions are underway to deploy the application at clinical trial sites in Nairobi, Kenya and possibly India to meet the needs of an AIDS Vaccine Project.

Today, OSU Technology Support Services joins the next generation development project as both founding partner and active member of the Coho community development.

For further information on the current help desk application in production, please contact Tammy Barr, Director of Technology Support Services at 541.737.5404.