

CTG Provides 24x7x365 Production Support for the Independent Health Association



The Client

The Independent Health Association (IHA) is a large payer organization based in Western New York. Established in 1980, IHA consistently rates among the top health plans in the U.S. for customer service and member satisfaction. IHA's offerings include HMO, POS, PPO, and EPO products; Medicare and Medicaid plans; traditional indemnity insurance; consumer-directed plans; coverage for self-funded employers; plus health savings account (HSA) and pharmacy benefit management (PBM) services. The organization provides health benefits and services to nearly 400,000 total individuals.

The Challenge

IHA's IT development resources were tasked with developing solutions for their strategic initiatives in addition to responding to incidents generated from daily production processing. Because incident triage took priority over their development responsibilities, it caused delays in delivering solutions. By outsourcing the Production Support activities, IHA IT development resources could focus on their project-related work, resulting in the on-time delivery of these solutions to the business community and allowing IHA to realize their strategic goals.

IHA selected CTG to provide these on-site Tier-2 Production Support Outsourcing services for their legacy applications, including 24x7x365 support responding to production incidents during business and non-business hours.

These services are provided by a team of technical consultants (analysts/ developers) led by an engagement manager. The skill sets of the consultants include the following technologies:

- AS400/Cobol development
- Informatica
- Cognos
- Kalido MDM EDW development
- Java
- SOA

The CTG Solution

During this engagement, CTG's goal was to provide IHA with 24x7x365 Tier-2 triage support using our Application Management Services methodology. The scope of the engagement initially included all Business Intelligence applications and processes and all PC applications. A transition phase was executed during which application documentation was developed and the Production Support services plan and operations manual was established. This provided the foundation for the support to be provided in an effective, consistent manner. New metrics were developed that enabled IHA to better understand the overall workload and throughput of the Production Support team.

IN THEIR WORDS

"The changes brought on by CTG's managed service have been monumental to IHA as they have created a successful Production Support department and Production Support methodologies, which we will carry on with for many years.

Prior to this arrangement, production application support was performed by the developers who originally created it. This became problematic as they left or were engaged in other time-sensitive issues. CTG brought us best practices on how to engage in proper application 'turnover,' documentation, and run-time data, allowing us to support applications without having the knowledge held by the creator. They also brought us 'on-call' methodology that ensures 24x7 coverage of critical applications and processes without running off-hour shifts. These practices, and their inherent efficiencies, are utilized today and will continue.

Over these years, our primary development language and technologies migrated from Cobol/AS-400 to Java and Web Services/SOA-ESB. We also changed from pure Waterfall development to an Agile methodology. CTG's flexibility, along with their excellent recruitment abilities, provided new resources with valuable skills as our needs changed. We were never in a position of having the wrong balance of skills.

– William St. George, IT Director, Production Services

The CTG engagement manager then introduced IHA to CTG's Application Change Turnover process, which was incorporated into their Engineering life cycle and is still used today. All changes that go into production from any source have to have accompanying documentation, ensuring the best production support possible. This process provided the project teams with a tool to knowledge transfer modifications and new processes to the support team.

CTG's Production Support service also includes developing continuous improvements for existing processes that are supported in the production environment.

The Results

By using CTG's methodology to create a Production Support services plan and operations manual, combined with launching the Application Change Turnover process, CTG production support staff was able to support five times more processes than the original scope with the same number of resources. Because IHA recognized the effectiveness and efficiency of CTG's support service and process, they decided to add a new scope that included supporting AS400 Cobol custom processes, SOA services, and all of the new applications and processes being developed as part of a new Core Application Platform.

The initial contract with CTG was for three years and consisted of four support technicians. The team grew to 10 as additional applications and processes were added to the CTG responsibility. The team was a mix of on and off-site resources who provided 24x7x365 support. CTG's support ultimately allowed IHA to transition support and service of additional newly acquired and developed applications, enabling critical resources to stay focused on strategic initiatives.

IN THEIR WORDS

"24x7 production support is generally not viewed as a worthwhile career path for strong application developers. CTG knew this and ensured that we received developers who would look at these responsibilities as a positive learning experience and give us their 'all.' Resource turnover was minimal and never negatively impacted us. CTG always ensured adequate knowledge transfer and that the responsibilities remained with them. CTG also considered the necessary soft skills. They found developers who struck the right balance between development and analytical skills with the proper amount of business acumen and strong communication abilities. I personally never had to deal with any personnel issues with any CTG resources. In a few rare cases, where we had someone who wasn't quite 'working out', CTG quickly made the appropriate change of that resource and always ensured our satisfaction throughout.

Finally, I must commend the management that CTG provided with their resources. They were extremely professional and ensured professionalism from their staff. The managers also never gave us the impression that they were representing CTG, they were always representing us and cared as much, and were as passionate as any of our own internal managers. Also, I must mention how well they prepared every resource that they brought in. They not only trained and prepared them with the processes that CTG brought with them, but they ensured proper training of our internal processes, procedures, policies, and even our corporate culture and general knowledge of our business. We didn't have to train them at all. The CTG managers even conducted their onboarding training to our own IT associates just as if they were from CTG. Obviously, I have been very pleased by this managed service agreement and hope that we can continue with the methodologies that CTG brought and taught to us during this engagement."

— William St. George, IT Director, Production Services



Partial IT Outsourcing



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