

RESULTS:

ITIL Modules

ITIL modules enabled them to identify huge volumes of such incidents and resolve them much more quickly by recording and managing incidents and requests separately.

Saved Time

From an organizational perspective, the service desk is critical for saving time: they're continually reducing the number of incoming tickets.

Tracking

With SysAid's reporting capability, they're able to track where requests are coming from, types of requests, and how long they're taking to deal with them.

St Patrick's
Mental Health Services



THE CHALLENGE:

1. The management team found that their existing IT service desk (an outsourced service provider) was failing to respond to the needs of hospital personnel.
2. The service provider had zero understanding of the patients' or clinical teams' needs, which caused significant problems.
3. It was a disaster timewise. There was frustration across all departments.

THE SYSAID APPROACH:

1. SysAid's service desk was their #1 choice because it was so easy to configure to their needs. They got it up and running within a couple of days.
2. It allowed them to streamline incident management and make the process so much less time-consuming for the nurses and other medical staff.
3. SysAid enables clinical staff to log and monitor medication queries, which are automatically printed onto customized stickers for patient files.



"SysAid is crucial for our organization. From a clinical perspective, it means improved patient safety."

Andrina O'Neill, Service Desk Supervisor,
Saint Patrick's Mental Health Services

IN CONVERSATION

Hospital IT Heroes

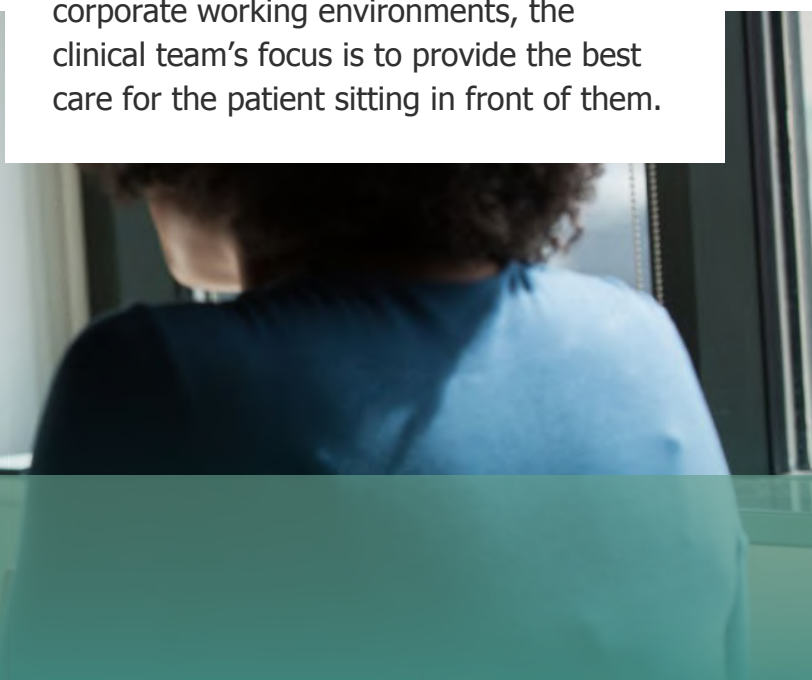
Over the last few weeks I had the opportunity to speak with several customers in various industries about the exciting and quirky ways that they're using SysAid's ITSM solution in the field. I'm truly amazed at the myriad of ways in which they have implemented their service desks – from Australian emergency services to Italian fashion designers; from elite U.S. universities to Irish hospital networks.

I was fortunate enough to talk with Andrina O'Neill, Senior Systems & UC Engineer/Service Desk Supervisor at St. Patrick's Mental Health Services – Ireland's largest independent provider of mental health services for adults and adolescents. Andrina is based at the organization's main campus – St. Patrick's University Hospital (associated with Trinity College). She is the pioneer IT professional who was brought into the hospital six years ago to assist in revamping the existing ineffective service desk in order to provide better quality IT services. Coming from a background of IT in the corporate sector, Andrina experienced a professional and mental shift upon entering this not-for-profit hospital environment.

I asked Andrina what it's like to switch working environments, what challenges she faced in reconstructing the IT processes across multiple centers, how the hospital is making use of the service desk, and what she believes she's achieved so far.

What was it like to move from the corporate sector into a charity-based healthcare organization?

When I started working at St. Patrick's Mental Health Services, I was forced to change my whole mindset from being focused solely on making a profit to focusing on the wellbeing of hospital service users. At the core, St. Patrick's is a charity which employs 600-800 staff including consultants, therapists, nurses, administration and support staff who are located across the country and actively rely on their service desk daily for the logging of IT-related incidents and requests, to ensure they're providing professional care to mental health patients. For me, it's an ongoing challenge to understand the clinical team's thinking and needs, because unlike the end users in my previous corporate working environments, the clinical team's focus is to provide the best care for the patient sitting in front of them.





You paint a picture of a ‘Tower of Babel’ scenario that required a total rethinking of process & culture. How did you approach this momentous task?

Why did the hospital bring you onboard? What sort of IT services existed at the time?

St. Patrick's has an excellent nationwide reputation for providing mental health services, but six years ago the management team acknowledged that its existing IT service desk (an outsourced 3rd party phone service) was failing to respond to the needs of hospital personnel. The service users, mostly clinical and administration staff, whilst competent with computers had a limited understanding of the IT jargon used by the external service provider.

The service provider had zero understanding of the patients' or clinical teams' needs, which caused significant problems. The internal staff were never provided with a confirmation that their call had been processed, and the prioritization of requests was random, with no problem management in place. It was a disaster time-wise. There was frustration across all departments. The hospital decided to replace the service provider with an in-house IT department, of which I was one of the first recruits.

My greatest challenge was to tackle the organization-wide frustration of staff whose IT issues had been frequently misunderstood or left unresolved. Their poor experience of the previously outsourced service left them with little confidence that things could change. I needed to establish a completely new process across all departments involving new technology, training, and at a deeper level, restore the staff's trust in service request management.

Firstly, it was crucial that the terminology on the end-user portal be easily recognizable to clinical and administrative staff in order to ensure a smooth transfer of data and requests. The problem I faced was that most service desks I evaluated were extremely rigid, and couldn't be configured to serve our specific hospital needs, such as the use of medical terminology. This is why we adopted SysAid because it was so easy to configure to our needs, and we got it up and running within a couple of days. Of course, it was a change for the end users, but it allowed us to streamline incident management and make the process so much less time-consuming for the nurses and staff. Their requests were finally being logged and were instantly trackable through automatically-generated emails, which gave them a renewed sense of security.

What was the scope of the new service desk implementation? How difficult was it to introduce new technology to staff who aren't so tech-savvy?

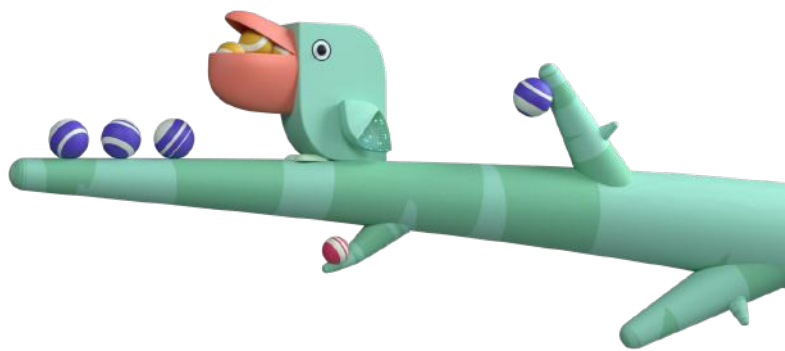
We implemented the new service desk across all hospital departments. Thankfully the task of re-educating the staff was a breeze because the platform was so user friendly that our end users could get onboard immediately. It was without a shadow of a doubt far more efficient for staff and it included reporting, which was essential for ensuring effective service for their patients.

What were some of the specific pain points and what processes have you implemented to respond to these?

The hospital relies on a complex share-drive system and privacy of patient data is of utmost importance. In the past, we were wasting a lot of time on new hospital employees – determining which drives, folders, and mailing lists should be made accessible to them. Although the heads of departments had defined file-sharing rules, in practice, new employees often required access to additional folders. These changes cost our team enormous time – up to 5 follow-up calls per new recruit. SysAid's ITIL modules have enabled us to identify huge volumes of such incidents and resolve them much more quickly by recording and managing incidents and requests separately. It allows the hospital to focus on serving patients, instead of wasting time on administration. From an organizational perspective, the service desk is critical for saving time: we're continually reducing the number of incoming tickets. Our team would be lost without this platform for problem management.

What about your remote 'Dean Clinics' for outpatients; how do you cope with managing IT processes for off-site centers?

Supporting off-site centers is a constant challenge for the IT Department. The main bugbear is the inherent sense of isolation felt by staff at these 5 remote sites. Our Dean Clinics are an integral part of the mental health services we provide, each staffed by specialist multidisciplinary teams who provide appointment-based outpatient services. Due to the volume of appointments (there were over 12,000 visits last year), the clinical and administrative staff stationed there are under a lot of pressure to provide efficient and comprehensive services for the patients standing in front of them, so their technology and network connections must be reliable at all times. We were receiving many complaints from frustrated staff saying certain services weren't functioning as they should be. With SysAid's reporting capability, we were able to identify common issues across the clinics and implement comprehensive solutions, such as improving training for off-site staff and improving WAN connections between the main campus and the clinics.



Have your process improvements been appreciated by staff outside of the IT department?

The heads of departments definitely acknowledge tangible improvements to the service they receive. In fact the Chief Pharmacist for the organization, Amanda Fitzpatrick, was so inspired by how easy it was to use SysAid's end-user portal that she recently approached me to find out if SysAid would be suitable for streamlining the clinical request processes within the pharmacy. For me, this was treading in uncharted waters as I'd only used SysAid for IT service management. We conducted a brainstorming session and it quickly became apparent to me that SysAid, when customized and tailored to the pharmacy's requirements, could be the solution Amanda was looking for. Amanda supervises a growing team of 16 pharmacy staff, who until recently were using Microsoft Access to record medication-related queries received from doctors and nurses. These 'end users' would either ask in person, call or email the pharmacy. This meant that the query needed to be manually entered, and only one permitted admin had access to the software. Request logs were often delayed or not recorded at all. Also, it was a very laborious process to enter the data; it wasted hours of pharmacy time each week.

How did you go about adapting the service desk for non-IT processes?

There is a major drive for the pharmacy department to report activity levels and resources more effectively in order to improve efficiency, so Amanda's manager gave her full backing to find more efficient software for their needs. We worked together with some help from SysAid's Professional Services team to customize our platform: we configured the categories and labels with terminology that's familiar to the pharmacists so they're not scratching their heads thinking "What does that category mean?" We're even using SysAid for a special project that enables clinical staff to log and monitor medication queries, which are automatically printed onto customized stickers for patient files. And for the purpose of working more efficiently, all of the pharmacy's clinical incidents are now categorized, so it's become much easier for Amanda to identify recurring incidents; she's actually implementing problem management without even knowing it!

After hearing Andrina's story, I decided to catch up with Amanda – the driving force behind this special project. Amanda started working at St. Patrick's University Hospital pharmacy 15 years ago and is very committed to the cause of mental health and providing an effective service for patients. I asked her what value SysAid brought to her team and activities.





What sort of value does the service desk provide for the pharmacy?

Amanda: St. Patrick's is a university hospital, so knowledge and continued learning are fundamentally part of the organization. It's been my personal challenge to centralize requests and archive the learning from our clinical cases and queries relating to medication. SysAid allows us to retain good information on our activity levels. It provides a rich source of information allowing junior staff to learn from more senior staff and enabling pharmacists to learn and share evidence-based knowledge.

The service desk enables us to do multiple jobs at the same time. Firstly, my team can record their activity in real time and print their recommendations into each patient's chart. Secondly, it has enabled us to centralize a log of our activities which allows me to oversee and supervise all clinical pharmacy activities.

The automated reports have made all data accessible at the click of a button, and we're now able to track where requests are coming from, types of requests, how long we're taking to deal with them, and how effective our solutions are. My whole team finds it a far more effective system for tracking our activities.

All of these benefits can improve patient safety. For instance, where a query is received about medication use in pregnancy, the pharmacist will undertake a literature review and prepare a report. SysAid's internal communications system combined with our new customized printouts allow us to provide the information to the relevant members of the team securely and confidentially. Cases such as these are saved in the **knowledge base** and provide a starting point for similar queries in the future. When such a query arises again, we can apply the service desk's 'duplicate service request' function to capture and resolve these queries more efficiently. Staff can also learn from previous reports and save time.



Finally, I asked Andrina how she feels about her managerial IT decisions and achievements over the last 6 years.

We've come a long way in streamlining the hospital's internal processes and our teams have grown considerably. Both the IT and pharmacy teams would be lost without the platform. From an IT perspective, SysAid is crucial for our organization. From a clinical perspective, it means improved patient safety. The value of implementing efficient processes for the hospital has been clear and even our facilities department have queried if they too can implement SysAid as they've heard how useful it's been for the pharmacy department and how configurable the end-user portal was in terms of specific terminology and needs.

We're always looking at better ways to manage our IT requests. Our latest development is that we've recently started to roll out **ITIL** via the service desk, and we can already see tangible benefits in terms of being able to resolve and track requests and incidents separately, which yet again saves us time.

"From an IT perspective, SysAid is crucial for our organization."

