



From issue resolution to value creation: The Oracle application support journey

Deloitte and a major healthcare service provider deliver integrated application support for Oracle Peoplesoft

Building a new foundation for quality healthcare

This company is amongst the largest healthcare service providers in the world. It has hundreds of thousands of employees who serve millions of members through hospitals and their subsidiaries. For decades, they have been providing top-quality healthcare services to better the lives of their patients and communities.

In 2009, the company began implementing one of the largest single instances of Oracle's Peoplesoft application platform, particularly in the healthcare industry. The initiative was undertaken to digitally transform core end-to-end processes of the organization, including:

- Procure to pay (all aspects of procurement and inventory)
- Record to report (treasury, general ledger,

grants billing, contracts)

- Acquire to retire (asset and lease management)
- Financial data warehouse (reporting, analytics)
- Various bespoke software applications

Digital transformation is often portrayed as a journey, and the roadmap for the Oracle implementation certainly reflected that. Over the next 10 years, the company would



systematically implement key modules of the Oracle Peoplesoft platform, to be followed by major upgrades, optimizations, and innovations.

A complex Operate environment

From the outset, company executives knew that application support would be critical. Users of the platform and, by extension, the company's patients and suppliers depended on timely, accurate information and transactions. For the Oracle application support team, which was tasked with application support, maintenance, and upgrades, the pressure was on from day one to create an ongoing Operate environment to meet four strategic goals:

- Manage costs
- Sustain an agile and knowledgeable team
- Elevate user experience
- Ideate and improve

The attainment of these goals was challenging for the application support team because of the scale and complexities of the Oracle Operate environment, including:

Batch processing. Millions of transactions would be flowing through the Oracle platform every year, so continual monitoring of batch processes would be critical. As interdependencies exist among many of the batch jobs and job streams, a delay of even a few minutes could have repercussions for critical business processes. For instance, if hospital purchases relied on a batch job that failed to run as scheduled, the relevant purchase order might not be created in time, potentially preventing the hospital or medical office from receiving their medical supplies as necessary.

Break/fix support. The application support team would need to respond to thousands of user-generated support requests each month. Failure to keep up with them could impact any number of vital processes across the health care system.

Application stabilization post-deployment. With the implementation of additional Oracle functionality, as well as the extension of each capability across regions, the Operate environment would

constantly change and need continual stabilization.

Platform planning and design.

Throughout the transformation journey, the application support team would also need to participate in planning and design meetings, providing valuable input to help refine the approach to upcoming implementations, upgrades, and enhancements.

By the third year of the digital transformation journey, it was clear that the company's in-house application support team needed help. They had multiple priorities, from supporting systems in production and stabilizing newly deployed functionalities and modules, to participating in planning sessions for future projects. The company began the search for a support services provider and ultimately selected Deloitte to provide Application Management Services (AMS).

The evolution of an integrated application support team

With reinforcements in place, the newly integrated Oracle application support team focused first on stabilizing the application ecosystem and standardizing support processes. Despite the constantly changing nature of the Operate environment and continual expansion of the Oracle platform and user base, the team quickly gained control. Key indicators of their impact included:

- Backlogged application support tickets often stretched out as long as six months; today, closure rate has improved from 54 percent to 87 percent, with less than 1 percent tickets aging greater than 30 days
- The average turnaround time for tickets outside change requests has improved from 21 days to three days
- Processing time for long-running queries through code optimization and performance tuning has been reduced by 98 percent.
- The team's goal was to meet 95 percent of tiered application support response and resolution targets, but they have consistently met over 97 percent of those service level requirements.

As the Operate environment became more stable, the integrated application support team began turning their attention toward fulfilling

the organization's broader strategic goals.

Manage costs

Working under a standardized annual budget, the application support team began finding ways to do more with less capacity through:

- *Process standardization*—developing application support processes that are more efficient, repeatable, and sustainable.
- *Automation*—seeking opportunities to automate processes to reduce human error, increase processing capacity, and free up team members for higher value activities.

Sustain an agile and knowledgeable team

A critical element of managing and sustaining the application support cost structure was to develop and retain talent. The Oracle team has continually found ways to:

- *Cross-train and upskill* application support team staff so they can take on a wider array of support activities and increase their value to the user community.
- *Motivate* application support team members through recognition programs and career enhancement opportunities, thus improving talent retention.
- *Encouraging a culture of "us" vs. "you and me"* through annual team visits to Deloitte's global service delivery centers and frequent virtual interactions between team members.

Elevate user experience

Given the geographic and functional scope of the Oracle platform's reach, user experience is critical to the company's ability to provide quality health care services. To enhance that experience, the application support team has implemented:

- *A new user interface* for more graphical, mobile-enabled, user-friendly access to the Oracle platform.
- *Enhanced communications*, including tools, templates, and processes for promoting user adoption of Oracle capabilities.



- *Self-service reporting* that allows users to access and interactively analyze a catalog of reports on a wide variety of topics rather than depending on the application support team to produce them.
- *A newly designed Oracle intranet site* that enables an intuitive and interactive mechanism for self-service for commonly asked questions about the Oracle platform and applications, thus freeing up application support team members to address more complex issues.

Ideate and innovate

Over the years, as trust in the stability of the Operate environment has increased, the application support team began offering fresh ideas for adopting new technologies to simplify Oracle application usage, improve support efficiency, and to empower users for more informed decision making. The company has enthusiastically supported this approach, which includes:

- *Quarterly and annual reviews* of innovation initiatives.
- *Technical innovations* from other industries, including joint pilot projects to test the innovations in the Oracle environment.
- *Industry benchmarks* to determine how Oracle application support measures up to that of industry peers.

A united effort to achieve a corporate vision

The company has always strived to be a model for quality healthcare by being the great place to work and receive care. Over the past decade, the Oracle transformation has been a cornerstone of the organization's efforts to achieve that vision.

During that time, the company has deployed the major modules of the Oracle platform across geographic regions, completed many platform upgrades, optimizations, and enhancements, and begun planning to migrate the platform to the cloud. The platform now supports nearly a quarter-million users, and it processes nearly a million batch jobs monthly, as well as many millions of distinct financial, supply chain, and general support transactions annually.

The Oracle application support team has played a vital role in the transformation journey by bringing stability to the Operate environment as each new capability was deployed. It has helped to establish and reinforce a relationship of trust between the Oracle team and the user community. And, it has collaborated as one team with other functional areas within the healthcare organization to achieve business and operational goals.

In addition to the business performance indicators, the success of the team approach

can be found at a very human level:

- Business users of the Oracle platform often send thank-you notes to the company's management when the application support team has provided exemplary service, whether issue resolution or help with some other aspect of the user experience. It's clear from those notes that users don't distinguish between the company's and Deloitte's staff—they all perform as one cohesive unit that users simply perceive as Oracle application support.
- Each year, Oracle application support team members from the company and Deloitte travel to Deloitte's global service delivery centers for training and team building. The meetings and informal team events are video recorded and shared with other members of the company's application support team when they return to the United States.

In these and many other ways, the company and Deloitte have built a collaborative and highly productive relationship that endures through challenging and rewarding times—one that provides a solid foundation for future phases of the company's transformation journey.

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