University of Brighton

Computer Science (Games)

Placement Year - CI282

Reflective Report

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Introduction

For my placement I worked as an ITS Intern within Bard Ltd, a company that is a global leader in its industry for developing innovative medical devices for people around the world. During my year I worked predominantly as an end user support and service desk member.

Daily I dealt with an array of problems and tasks from basic issues such as locked accounts to issues with the Windows OS and Microsoft Office. I also preformed in-depth checks on reports that were run using J.D Edwards to ensure they had run successfully and had not produced any errors.

These daily tasks helped me to realise and appreciate the variety of issues I could face daily and I feel that I learned a lot about what it would be like if I continue onto a career as an end user support and service desk member both the knowledge needed for the jobs and the communication skills required.

Disaster Data Recovery Training

Each year the infrastructure team take part in a 2 day data recovery training session at the IBM server site in Greenford, this is for multiple reasons; it ensures that data being stored off site via Magnetic tape is intact and all accounted for, to account for any variation in the recovery process since the last recovery session and to ensure everyone knows how to restore key systems as quickly as possible to reduce downtime a server failure may cause.

During the two days I shadowed several members of the team to observe each role and see how each persons dedicated knowledge is essential to the recovery process. There were many steps involved with most being dependent on several other aspects. The initial step involved was simply a matter of loading the tapes to begin the data copy, a process that was lengthy but allowed time for myself and others in my team to begin spinning up servers and the virtual machines that run upon them.

As with most things in IT this did not go smoothly with several unforeseen issues occurring initially with the IBM contract. The external broadband connection within the contract had lapsed resulting in no external internet access which was required to connect to Crawley site; to overcome this we had to arrange for a temporary broadband connection, this was not ideal as the cost is highly inflated however it was a necessity. Once the broadband had been arranged we were then able to open the required ports for the desktops provided at the IBM base and we were then able to proceed as planned. Due to the cost it was of important for the broadband connection to be included in the contract and my manager dealt with this as soon as possible.

There were also issues with configuring the virtual machines as they failed to detect the hardware support for virtualisation. This required us to research and apply a work around found by the server architect. On top of this we experienced issues with restoring some data to the server once it had been started, however this was not critical data and was not seen as an immediate issue.

At the end of the first day after starting at around 9am and calling it a day at just past 6pm all critical systems were back up and running with some extra

systems started and most data restored. I was aware from my observations at Bard that during a real crisis this would not be the case and myself and my team would have worked through the night to fully restore the system.

In the evening we all went for a meal as a team and had time to talk and relax before the next day, it was especially nice for me to be able to talk to members of the team who I did not get to see often for example colleagues who worked from home and get their views on the days training.

Over the 2 days IBM were able to fulfill mostly any need required and were quickly able to provide the broadband access needed; this alone made it clear to me performing these sessions were crucial to outline any issues in the recovery process. Anything and everything can go wrong and it is critical to have processes and reviews of those processes in place not just for large companies but any company as disasters can happen in any situation.

One key point that I will take away from this exercise is that any issue can be resolved as long as I work systematically and logically. By applying my new learned skills, working as a team and breaking large tasks into smaller manageable ones we were able to restore the critical components along with several others for the entirety Europe and emerging markets network in just one day.

Overall the training session taught me that although a basic knowledge of different IT platforms and roles is advantageous in most if not all IT career paths everyone has their own specialties and experiences and these can be used to help others troubleshoot and resolve issues by either first hand help or the documentation of processes and procedures. Using process documentation helped me during both the data recovery training and in my main role at Bard to overcome obstacles I faced without causing a time delay that would affect the company.

Project Mobilise – Phone upgrade and carrier porting

The scheme *Project Mobilise* was brought in to save money for the company, originally with Vodafone the usage of most users was regularly exceeding the allowance in data and minutes costing in some cases thousands for a handful for of users in extra fees. Many users travel abroad regularly and are often out of the office for three weeks in a month resulting in extra fees from usage abroad. This resulted in the finance department being prompted into finding better deals either with Vodafone or a competitor; after approaching multiple providers it was decided to change over to EE as they provided the best deals and would allow the company to combine its overseas phone contracts in line with EE or a sisters company.

With over 200 users within the scope of Bard ltd and nearly an extra 100 to be distributed to the recently acquired Rochester medical a couple of months later a big task was ahead. Two of my colleagues produced the lists of users and mobile numbers of the users that would need porting over, however due to holiday and sickness both were unreachable the week prior to the change date. Alex another one of my colleagues who mainly deals with infrastructure was put forward to take on the task having to pick up where the others left off. I felt I had to help.

The time leading up to change consisted of multiple calls daily from different users requesting confirmation and more information on the change process; to assist I typed up documentation dealing with the porting process and how to backup and restore an iPhone to transfer the data and keep all contact information, I also took as many calls as I could to stabilise the incoming workload.

I discovered that as most members of staff work remotely and some of them abroad it was difficult to get a complete list of people that would be in need of having their devices sent to their home address. Another issue was which day would be suitable for dispatch, luckily we were able to work quickly as a team to get the phones dispatched two days prior to the changeover date which allowed us to use next day delivery. With several of us packaging and

labelling the devices, they were ready for posting quickly resulting in every member of staff getting their phones before the change date.

On the day of porting many users experienced lack of service from either their Vodafone device or their EE devices; in rare cases both and for much longer than the stated hour from EE, this caused a lot of users to contact the help desk, unfortunately when I contacted EE they explained that Vodafone had yet to release the numbers causing the delay. Many users accepted this was an issue and understood they would need to continue performing the steps I had outlined and most within an hour would regain service.

It was clear that this task was too much to be handled by one person alone and I am happy to report that the documentation I had created was used company wide to assist users and helped greatly towards reducing the service desk calls and helping myself and my colleagues meet our deadline for this project.

LogMeIn rescue user creation

One objective I took upon myself to learn and show my desire for work was to develop a console application using C# and SOAP. I worked on this to assist my colleague to create over 100 new user accounts which would have been very time consuming if performed manually. The application using the command line to allow an admin to sign into LogMeIn using their credentials and select a CSV file with the new users, the command line would then prompt for a container for the users; a container would be a region such as Europe, North America or Asia.

I developed this application during quiet points within my work day and occasionally on the weekend or after work. C# although very similar to languages I had used before such as Java and C++ it had differences that I needed to learn such as importing libraries and methods. SOAP or the Simple Object Access Protocol is being used by LogMeIn rescue and provides a way to interface between any application developed and their back-end servers; there's plenty of documentation in relation to this and how to use SOAP in multiple ways but some examples had issues and inaccuracies that did cause some issues.

After around a week of development a fully functioning version of my application had been created and was used to create all of the new users and worked nearly flawlessly with the exception of a couple of users having umlauted or other special characters in their names; these caused slight issues in transition between two different encoding styles which were then amended easily through the online LogMeIn admin portal.

Reflection

During my year I have experienced a multitude of new things such as; active directory account management and network software deployment using the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit, I have also assisted in the installation of multiple rack mounted servers for the data expansion initiative being undertaken to improve and expand storage using the latest technology and have witnessed some very talented IT technicians and software specialists, all of whom were very helpful and provided me with useful information and training in their fields of expertise and allowed me to experience roles in networking and security, software production and IT support.

With my work experience I found myself doing a majority of work different from what I had been undertaking during my first two years of University. Several modules such as *professional and study skills* and *Introduction to requirements analysis* although they didn't have a one-to-one correlation to work, provided a good stepping stone for what I would be facing day to day. I feel that the divergence from a more coding based work flow in different languages and platforms while learning, to one that consisted of a much more varied task set allowed me to expand my knowledge and experience a wider array of the field of IT. I believe the time I have spent at Bard has begun to give me an idea of what direction I would like to go in and has helped me to visualise a career plan for the future.