

CASE
STUDY



Vertex Energy

Fully Managed 24/7 Transatlantic Service Desk

Creative's agility and expertise enable rapid spin-up of IT support to smooth oil refinery acquisition



Executive Summary



Creative's relentless focus on customer enablement, speed, agility and seamless service throughout the acquisition process ensured critical business operations were able to continue uninterrupted.



**Cameron Williams, Chief Information Officer,
Vertex Energy**



CHALLENGE

Rapid provision of IT support for 600-plus employees and critical infrastructure to enable a multi-million-dollar acquisition.



SOLUTION

Creative's 24/7 Managed Service Desk underpinned by latest ITIL best practice and first, second and third-line technical experts.



RESULTS

Cost-effective 24/7 technical cover

Lower risk of outages and user downtime

Near two-thirds reduction in IT tickets

Improved asset register accuracy



CHALLENGE



Headquartered in Houston, Vertex Energy is an energy transition company focused on producing and distributing renewable and conventional fuels. One of the largest processors of used motor oil in the United States, the company has built a strong reputation as a key supplier of base oils to the lubricant manufacturing industry throughout North America.

The opportunity to further grow operations came when Shell decided to divest its 91,000 barrel-per-day oil refinery in Mobile, Alabama, and the acquisition by Vertex Energy was agreed. It was essential to maintain 24/7 operations at the refinery at all times before, during and after the acquisition process. This included providing seamless IT support for 600-plus refinery employees, along with ensuring critical infrastructure, systems and applications remained in constant service.

“The IT keeping all the refinery operations running simply can’t go down,” said Cameron Williams, CIO for Vertex Energy. “We knew the deal had to be vetted and approved at the highest levels by the government. We couldn’t afford to leave anything to chance.”

The acquisition was subject to detailed scrutiny by the US government. When there was a delay, resources to continue the required level IT support for the facility were severely stretched. With limited in-house availability and internal support for refinery applications and infrastructure coming to an end, the companies urgently needed a partner with a proven track record that could quickly spin up and scale 24/7 technical support capabilities.

SOLUTION



With time of the essence, Shell approached Creative ITC on Williams' recommendation.

“Creative ITC has consistently provided a broad spectrum of exceptional service and support spanning the entire technology vertical for me for many years,” explained Williams. “They are the first number I dial when I need thoughtful feedback on any IT related project or initiative. They are my first recommendation to anyone asking me for recommendations on IT related services and support. I had absolutely no hesitation in calling them in.”

“Normally, we'd be looking at up to eight weeks to set up and migrate IT support. We explained the situation and Creative originally proposed three to six weeks. Then, when we had to meet even more aggressive timelines, Creative pulled out all the stops and got everything up and running in 10 days without major incident.”

Following stringent vetting by Shell, the Creative Managed Service Desk solution was initially introduced to work alongside the Shell IT support team, who were still legally liable for all the refinery IT services ahead of the acquisition being completed. Creative service desk engineers liaised directly with the Shell teams onsite at the refinery, and with the wider teams based in the US and the UK, providing around the clock IT support to keep the facility fully operational at all times.

Adhering to latest ITIL best practices, services covered the full technology stack – desktops, networking, cloud, virtual servers, storage, apps and security.

First line support covered initial troubleshooting and user requests via Creative's 24/7 technical service desk and ticketing services. Second line support was provided in collaboration with the Shell IT team, ensuring fast resolution of issues involving the refinery's specialist systems and applications. Creative's team also included Azure experts providing third line support to refinery employees and critical cloud-based infrastructure.

Creative engineers assisted with ongoing maintenance tasks like software patching. Smart remote-management tools were used to resolve issues quickly. If that wasn't possible, response was co-ordinated with the onsite Shell IT team.

Where required, the Creative team also acted as a conduit for bridging applications and management processes between Shell and Vertex throughout the prolonged transition period.

Recognising the quality of the Creative delivery, Vertex has maintained the service following the acquisition.



RESULTS



“The crack team of specialists from Creative proactively detect, triage and resolve performance issues before they escalate and outages occur. We saw our ticket levels reduce by nearly two thirds over five months,” said Williams. “Their first line managed service has been an invaluable part of supporting Vertex as we acquired the large Mobile refinery, lowering risk of IT outages and downtime.”

Creative also helped Vertex Energy build an accurate picture of service desk tickets raised, enabling them to plan and budget effectively for future IT support for the refinery as the company acquired the facility.

One of the many ways Creative added value was the time they invested in verifying and cleaning up legacy IT records, bringing expertise and robust processes to de-risk the acquisition. No stone was left unturned by Creative specialists who worked directly with the outgoing IT team at Shell to painstakingly validate asset registers and build vital system knowledge for the incoming Vertex Energy business. Manual discovery of end user apps and the refinery’s Microsoft Azure environment was undertaken, along with exploration of the tools to automate the validation process for Cisco networking devices and operating software. Each individual application and associated management process were analysed.

“Their people knew all the right questions to ask,” adds Williams. “That made the difference between just seeing a list of switches and servers, to knowing all their details right down to serial numbers, life expectancy and what the devices actually do. It gave us the confidence that we were starting with a clean bill of health and the same level of insight for the refinery as we have for our own corporate IT environment.”

“There’s a huge difference between an ordinary IT provider and a true partner. Creative’s relentless focus on customer enablement, speed, agility and seamless service throughout the acquisition process ensured critical business operations were able to continue uninterrupted.”

“Post-acquisition Creative ITC continues to deliver outstanding 24x7x365 service. In two years, they have a 100% success record on meeting SLAs and have continually invested in building a close relationship with all Vertex employees to ensure an excellent ongoing experience.”





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Lower
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Reduction
in IT
tickets



Improved
asset
register
accuracy



Excellent
user
experience

Find out more

To learn more about how our managed Service Desk solution can help you unlock strategic and practical benefits for your business, please get in touch:

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