
In the Trenches with Third-Party Support

Five True Stories from the
Front Lines of
Software Support



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Introduction

Organizations considering third-party Oracle or SAP support always ask about the “actual” user experience.

They want to know: Who responds? How quickly do you respond? When are you available for support? Does the engineer know our application(s)? What standard processes are in place? What do you cover? What do you not cover? What resources are available for complex issues?

We spend as much time as needed to satisfy these questions. We understand that, before committing to a new vendor, what you really want to know is: “Can I trust you with my critical technology?”

Trust is built on a track record of respect, success, and familiarity. Many organizations come to us because they've lost respect for the traditional support offered by the software vendors. They're not seeing their tickets resolved successfully, or in a reasonable amount of time, to justify the high annual fees. Yet even as these criticisms mount, organizations are often reluctant to leave the only software support they've ever known.

We understand the challenge of leaving a flawed, but familiar, solution.

At Spinnaker Support, we begin to build trust with organizations by offering complete transparency as to who we are and exactly how we support our customers. We offer direct comparisons of the features of traditional and third-party support to help you reset your expectations as you arrive at that “aha moment” for what third-party support will provide.

One of our customers, Tytti Erkman, Head of Solution Development at Vaisala, described the difference like this: “Spinnaker Support has been maintaining our Oracle E-Business Suite version 12.2.3 for nearly three years. Comparing the support levels on a scale of 1-10, I would score Oracle a 2 and Spinnaker Support a 9 - but only because my Finnish culture doesn't allow perfection.”

Here are four ways we help organizations to shift their perspectives:

- 1 We publish success stories and testimonials.
- 2 We offer references and make introductions to existing customers.
- 3 We can review one or two recent support tickets and explain how we would have resolved them.
- 4 We share actual, anonymous ticket examples via our blog.

This booklet follows the last approach. It showcases five real-world support tickets for different issues with different applications and is meant for anyone interested in the user experience of third-party support.

Each example is narrated to highlight what the individuals were thinking and how the third-party support process unfolded from initiation to resolution. At the end of this paper, we offer a direct comparison on how third-party support differs from traditional software vendor support.

Enjoy!

Ticket 1 – Solving an Invoicing Error Message

TICKET OVERVIEW

When users receive an error message from an application, they typically try to determine the cause and fix the issue themselves or with the help of an administrator. But when the obvious solutions are exhausted, the user must reach out to technical support for assistance. This first example helps explain the common processes of third-party software support.

CUSTOMER	Leading B2B integrated distribution company providing business services and supplies
PRODUCT	Oracle E-Business Suite
ISSUE	Unable to cancel an invoice due to a No Rate Hold error message
DATE	September, 2018

PART 1 – REPORTING THE ISSUE

SETTING: Mash Industries, Boston, MA. Wednesday morning

James frowns and shakes his head. Open in front of him on the screen is Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) Financials. He has been unable to cancel an invoice due to a No Rate Hold error message. This error should not be occurring, because the currency of the invoice and the ledger are the same. Aside from the cryptic error message, he has no way to resolve the issue.

James opens a new browser for the Spinnaker Support ticketing system. He decides it's easier to document the problem in an online ticket than to use the toll-free number. James logs into the IT Service Management (ITSM) system using his credentials. He completes the form with his contact information, components, priority, title, description and other information. He attaches a report and screenshot of the error message, submits the support ticket, and returns to his invoicing work.

PART 2 – LOGGING AND INITIATING THE TICKET

SETTING: Spinnaker Support, Denver, CO. Wednesday morning

Within seconds, the support ticket is routed to Cathy at Spinnaker Support, a specific analyst designated to Mash Industries based on her area of application/technology expertise. Cathy has been working as part of Mash Industries' extended team for two years and is very familiar with their EBS Financials deployment. Cathy has 19 years' experience with EBS, as both an end user and as a technical specialist at Spinnaker Support.

Almost immediately, Cathy receives an email alert letting her know that she has an open ticket. (If she is unavailable and does not respond, a second email is sent to a larger group where another assigned Financials engineer will pick up the ticket. With support engineers on call around the world, the ticket is always responded to within the Service License Agreement, or SLA, of 15 minutes.)

Cathy opens her email, sees that it's James, and gets to work. She opens her ticketing system dashboard, where she can view all of her active and past tickets. She brings up the new ticket, pores over the details and views the attachments. Although James has the issue listed as a Priority 3, which must be answered within a day, Cathy answers within four minutes. She already has several ideas about the source of the No Rate Hold error and enters her comments into the ticket, which are then emailed to James.

PART 3 – THE TROUBLESHOOTING AND RESOLUTION

SETTING: Online Correspondence

James checks his email and sees that Cathy has already responded. He replies telling Cathy: “When I look in the Invoice Holds and Release Names window the Hold No Rate is Protected against the Update. The Issue is there in our Test Environment. Please have a look.”

As per Spinnaker Support policy, Cathy can only log into a customer’s test or dev environment (we do not touch production environments). She does this and runs a diagnostic report, where she discovers that an Exchange Rate is missing.

Cathy now understands what needs to be done to fix the problem. She sends instructions to James so James can solve his issue in the production environment. Within minutes, James receives the following email.

```
Hi James,  
  
The hold message saying: Invoice is not in functional currency and has no exchange rate  
  
Invoice Amount = 0  
  
Please do the following:  
Open the invoice in the Invoice Workbench screen  
From upper menu press: Help > Diagnostics > Examine  
  
[SCREENSHOT]  
  
Select field: EXCHANGE _ RATE  
and enter Value = 1  
See screen shot below  
  
[SCREENSHOT]  
  
Press Ok and Save the invoice  
Then Cancel the invoice from Actions > Invoice Cancel  
  
Let me know if you see any issue.  
  
Regards,  
Cathy
```

James returns to the issue later in the day, follows the instructions and successfully cancels the invoice. He cheers loudly and reports back the error is resolved. Cathy then closes out the ticket. The entire support experience lasted two hours. A week later, Cathy removes all attachments from the ticket as per Spinnaker Support policy.

NOTE: If Cathy had not been able to resolve the issue with the first solution, she would dig deeper, perhaps running another diagnostic report and SQL queries on the specific problem invoice. This could result in a data fix script for James to deploy in the test environment. She would have continued working until the problem was resolved.

WHAT THIS TICKET REVEALS ABOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT

1 You work with an assigned team of engineers.

Unlike traditional software support, third-party support assigns you a team of engineers. This team knows your users, systems, and releases and works with you for the long term. You are not entered into a support queue and assigned an unknown engineer, as is the practice of the software vendors.

2 You receive a fast response, even for a low-priority issue.

The entire issue – not an uncommon one – took minutes to test and solve, and so the customer was able to quickly return to his regular EBS invoicing workflow. Especially for lesser (P3) issues, third-party support responds more quickly than vendors, who promise to address issues within 2-3 days.

3 The process requires less information when you file a ticket.

Your tickets are automatically directed to your assigned engineer and team. Because they already know you and your organization, you can quickly submit a support ticket without the abundance of extraneous information required in the traditional software vendor support process.

Ticket 2 – Accessing the Technical Team Directly

TICKET OVERVIEW

What happens when the software issue requires a more technical response? How long does it take for the support provider to introduce the right resources and bring them up to speed on the problem? With third-party support, the application specialist and developers work side-by-side, so that developers and other technical experts are tapped as soon as possible. The following ticket describes how this happens.

CUSTOMER	Manufacturer of automatic test equipment to the semiconductor industry
PRODUCT	EBS Supply Chain Management
ISSUE	Field category value cannot be removed using front end standard functionality
DATE	August and September, 2018

PART 1 – REPORTING THE ISSUE

SETTING: The Wilkins Company, San Diego, CA. Thursday afternoon

Susie is frustrated with EBS. Her team no longer uses the category “Product Group” in EBS Supply Chain Management and has eliminated the items associated with this category via a mass update. Yet the field still appears in the list of values (LOV), and the value cannot be removed using front-end standard functionality.

The presence of the value in the category set is confusing and unnecessary, and Susie wants it removed so users will not mistakenly assign it to an Item. Searching her document archive and the Web, she finds documentation that specifies Category Set values cannot be deleted. She knows she needs technical help from Spinnaker Support.

It's late in the day, but Susie opens a browser to reach the Spinnaker Support ticketing system. She logs into the ITSM system using her credentials, completes and submits the ticket, and prepares to head home.

PART 2 – LOGGING AND INITIATING THE TICKET

SETTING: Spinnaker Support, Denver, CO. Thursday afternoon

Within seconds, the support ticket is routed to Reggie, a functional specialist at Spinnaker Support with 16 years' EBS experience as both an end user and support engineer. He has been working for the better part of a year as a de facto member of the Wilkins IT team and is well familiar with their EBS setup.

Reggie immediately receives an email alerting him to the open ticket. Reggie opens his email, sees it's Susie, and examines the ticket details via his dashboard. Although Susie has the issue listed as a Priority 3, which must be answered within a day, Reggie replies by email within five minutes. Susie responds that a good time to talk will be in the morning, and the two set a time to speak. Reggie also sends a note to Ravi, a technical developer on his team, to let him know about the issue and possible need for his assistance.

PART 3 – THE TROUBLESHOOTING BEGINS

SETTING: Phone and Online Correspondence, Friday morning and through the next week

The next morning, Susie, Reggie, and Ravi meet via video conference to discuss the ticket. Reggie already has a simple solution to share with Susie and walks her through it during their call. But while this solution renames the category as "Do Not Use," Susie still wants it removed entirely from the LOV.

Reggie explains they can delete the category from the back end with a data-fix, but it is not recommended as it could cause serious data corruption issues. Based on what he heard from Susie, Ravi (the technical developer) begins to work on an alternative solution. He creates a custom script to remove the category from the category set and shares it with Susie.

PART 4 – THE FINAL RESOLUTION

SETTING: Online Correspondence, Ongoing

Because the issue is only a P3 and Susie has business meetings and vacation, the final resolution comes several weeks later. Reggie keeps in touch, waiting for her response. Susie meets with her team to discuss the script, and they apply it in the Wilkins Company EBS test environment. Susie reports success: the category "Product Group" was deleted so it is not selectable in the LOV during category assignment.

As Susie continues to test, she does want one refinement. The Code "Product Group" is still visible in the Key Flexfield Segment for Application Inventory – Item Categories. After meeting once more, Ravi updates the script to handle the additional request and adds an additional enhancement for renaming the category code description and name. Susie tests the update, approves the result, and Reggie closes the ticket.

WHAT THIS TICKET REVEALS ABOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT

1 The required staff was engaged and available from the very start.

Third-party support brings the right talent and expertise to the table as soon as it's required. Both teams worked closely with the customer, irrespective of the priority level of the issue.

2 Communication is immediate and through whatever medium works best for you.

While email is often an easy way for support to share information, we communicate in whatever method the customer prefers, whether that's online, via conference call, or through desktop sharing. Customers can even call their engineer directly as opposed to logging a ticket online.

3 The issue is resolved when the customer agrees.

Even once the problem was resolved, the customer asked for an additional refinement to the solution. Spinnaker Support closes tickets when the customer is satisfied.

Ticket 3 – Pinpointing the Root Cause of an Interoperability Issue

TICKET OVERVIEW

SAP Support is not comprehensive because it will refuse to handle a technical issue that is out of scope for their standard support services. Comparatively, third-party support covers a wider scope of standard services, encompassing technical issues where they exist, whether that's with standard code, custom code, or integrations with other programs. The example below shows how we resolved an interoperability issue between SAP ECC6 and a third-party program.

CUSTOMER	International leader in the baking industry
PRODUCT	SAP ECC6 and a third-party program
ISSUE	Unable to import data into a third-party Web-based invoicing add-on for ECC6
DATE	November, 2018

PART 1 – REPORTING THE ISSUE

SETTING: Large International Bakery, Manchester, England, UK. Tuesday morning

Thomas had tried to install a custom, third-party, Web-based invoicing add-on for ECC6 in their sandbox. But instead of smoothly installing, the process was aborted, ending in a dump for no obvious reason. The error read: "During import the system discovered that the target object has a different length than the object to be imported." Not very helpful.

Was it an SAP software problem or was something wrong with the add-on? Hoping to resolve the issue quickly, he first reaches out to the third-party app vendor to report the issue. "Sorry, but it's an SAP problem," they tell him. "We can't help with that."

Perplexed, Thomas opens a browser to reach the Spinnaker Support ticketing system. He logs into the ITSM system using his credentials and completes the ticket form, attaches a file with the dump information, submits the support ticket, and awaits a response.

PART 2 – LOGGING AND INITIATING THE TICKET

SETTING: Spinnaker Support, London, England, UK. Tuesday morning

Within seconds, the support ticket is routed to Ankita, a basis administrator and Technical SAP Applications Analyst at Spinnaker Support. Three years earlier, when Large International Bakery switched from SAP Support to Spinnaker Support, Ankita was designated as an assigned support engineer. With 16 years' SAP experience, she is a trusted resource for their staff and understands their ECC6 deployment and business needs.

Ankita responds within a few minutes to let Thomas know she's on the case. She then reviews the details and attachment. She asks additional questions regarding the add-on, customizations, and the data it is importing into SAP. When no obvious answer emerges, she escalates to Gerald, a more technical colleague on the Spinnaker Support development team.

With over 20 years of SAP experience, a Masters in CompSci, and years of programming in other languages, Gerald has seen his fair share of obscure interoperability issues. Gerald determines that the object that is being imported has a different structure, and so a version mismatch has happened between the two programs. Unable to solve this issue directly, he arranges for a three-way meeting with Large International Bakery, the third-party add-on vendor, and Spinnaker Support.

PART 3 – A CONVERSATION AMONG COMPANIES

SETTING: International Conference Call, one week later

Soon 15 stakeholders from all three companies are on the conference call. As the technical lead, Gerald leads and describes the problem. He knows that the true challenge for this call is less technical than political. He first notes that the problem is not with SAP but with the add-on, despite that vendor's vigorous denial of responsibility.

Gerald carefully explains that the custom add-on was using SAINT to install their code and to upload data, and that there was no problem with the software installation. Instead, the failure was catastrophic because the add-on was attempting to upload an invalid or outdated structure that was incompatible with the SAP system. The add-on broke the class structure, and the SAP Class Builder (the tool for reviewing, updating and changing classes) could then no longer load any classes.

As Gerald lays out the evidence, everyone involved now understands where the responsibility lies: with the add-on vendor. Because Large International Bakery needs the invoice function, the add-on vendor is now faced with a decision: lose the customer or invest in developing a patch for the structure class issue. They opt for the fix.

Gerald explains that, while Spinnaker Support cannot fix the issue itself, it can advise on the solution, and so the two companies coordinate plans to move forward.

PART 4 – THE RESOLUTION

SETTING: Large International Bakery, two weeks later

The add-on vendor developers then review their own structure and verify that it – not ECC6 – was the true cause of the dump. Gerald provides them with his assessment of the class structure configuration and helps them figure out the technical challenges and information they need to exchange to implement the solution.

The developers create a new ABAP report to correct the placement of data and send the fix to Large International Bakery, who tests it in a new sandbox and verifies that the add-on is working perfectly. Thomas can move ahead with his work, and Spinnaker Support closes the ticket.

WHAT THIS TICKET REVEALS ABOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT

1 Unlike Spinnaker Support, SAP Support would have rejected this ticket at the outset.

SAP would not have handled an interoperability issue where a third-party application could not move data into the SAP system. They would have told Large International Bakery to either diagnose and fix the problem themselves (which would not have worked) or to purchase a different add-on for their invoice process.

2 Spinnaker Support self-escalated the ticket and immediately brought in a developer resource.

Even if it would have accepted the ticket, SAP Support would likely have waited for the customer to ask for a ticket escalation. They would not have acted as quickly, nor offered this level of access to engineering resources.

3 Three companies and departments worked together to resolve the issue.

Even after determining that the issue was due to another vendor's binary code, the Spinnaker Support engineers brought together all the stakeholders, led productive conversations, and coordinated a final solution.

Ticket 4 – Applying DevOps to Fix a Customization Issue

TICKET OVERVIEW

Outside of a Priority 1 ticket, the Oracle or SAP Support experience is typically a self-directed search through an online knowledgebase. While this approach is fine for common questions or known error messages, it generally leaves you in the dark for older releases, niche products, or highly customized deployments. The example below demonstrates how we used DevOps – the close collaboration between our software development and information-technology operations staff – to resolve a custom report issue in Oracle's JD Edwards.

CUSTOMER	US-based, nonprofit, statewide educational association
PRODUCT	JD Edwards OneWorld 9.0
ISSUE	An error on Form Type on the printer selection screen
DATE	October, 2018

PART 1 – REPORTING THE ISSUE

SETTING: School Board Association, United States. Wednesday afternoon.

Leslie was deep in her JD Edwards (JDE) OneWorld 9.0 Financials reports. When they worked as expected, the custom reports provided valuable insights for the association's operations. But when the occasional error occurred, Leslie's progress came to a dead stop. Her team lacked the depth of knowledge and development resources required to solve those issues, and the education association did not have the resources to bring that level of expertise in-house.

On this day, after submitting a specific report, OneWorld returned an error on Form Type on the printer selection screen. It had worked the first time, but now it was throwing a hard error. Leslie tried to change the form type from Letter to Legal but was unable due to a grayed-out screen.

Locked out, frustrated, and unable to further resolve the issue, Leslie knew it was time for Spinnaker Support. She logged in to the Spinnaker Support portal and quickly submitted an online P3 (medium priority) ticket with screenshot attachments to the ITSM.

PART 2 – LOGGING AND INITIATING THE TICKET

SETTING: Spinnaker Support, Denver, CO. Wednesday afternoon.

Within seconds, the support ticket was routed to Oscar, a Senior Technical Support Analyst at Spinnaker Support. The association had been a Spinnaker Support customer for almost ten years, starting with World and then moving to OneWorld. Over the years, they had enlisted Spinnaker Support's assistance for both technical support and a wide variety of JD Edwards managed services.

Designated as their assigned engineer, Oscar had worked closely with Leslie for the past several years. He was familiar with their technical environment and applications, and with over 19 years' JDE experience, was a trusted resource for the association's staff. He responded within a few minutes to let Leslie know he had received the ticket and started investigating.

He pored over the details and attachments and immediately asked whether the form type was missing or no longer defined. Leslie responded that she was unable to tell, and so they set up a live conference call for additional information on the report and the specific error.

PART 3 – ASSEMBLING AND DEPLOYING A DEVOPS TEAM

SETTING: Conference Call, same day

Later that afternoon, Oscar and Virginia, a Spinnaker Support CNC administrator, held a call with Leslie and Walter, the association's junior CNC administrator. They reviewed the facts and the error and requested logs from Walter. Walter was able to produce a debug log, and working together, the group determined that the resolution also required a development resource to update the code to match their printer requirements.

Oscar and Virginia then reached out to Layla, a Spinnaker Support senior support engineer and developer with over 20 years of Oracle and JD Edwards experience, to assist with the code development. Oscar created a subtask for the ticket and filled Layla in on the issue.

After reviewing the ticket and code, Layla found that the Universal Batch Engine (UBE) was set to 'Custom' for paper type and that it needed to be changed in the Report Design Aid (RDA). Layla fixed the code to allow a print setup for legal and landscape settings. She then uploaded the code to Walter at the association so that he could do a full package build and deploy the solution to the association's development and test servers.

PART 4 – THE RESOLUTION

SETTING: School Board Association, one week later

Once Walter had the test server ready with the new code, he and Leslie attempted to create the custom report but still encountered the error. Oscar used remote desktop sharing to walk them through the new settings and print process on the test server. Now, however, when the report ran, the printer truncated a portion of the end of the PDF report so that not all the data was displayed.

Undeterred, Oscar decided that perhaps the printers themselves needed further review. They logged in again with the remote desktop sharing tool to check and found that not all of the settings were the same in the test and development servers. They corrected the settings, switched the printer to the new Legal setting, and manually cleared the cache, which finally resolved the issue.

As a final adjustment, Oscar also helped them add alternate printers set to have Legal as the default paper type and then set a default mapping for the specific custom report to use those printers. Leslie was pleased with the results, and so Spinnaker Support closed the ticket.

WHAT THIS TICKET REVEALS ABOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT

1 Unlike Spinnaker Support, Oracle Support would have rejected a ticket involving custom code.

Oracle would not have handled an issue on a custom report, leaving the association to fix the problem themselves or to involve additional, expensive support resources to help diagnose and resolve the issue.

2 DevOps in action: the functional and development staff both worked closely and with the customer.

Once the need was identified, Spinnaker Support quickly included a JDE developer resource to diagnose the issue and create a code fix. Even if it would have accepted the P3 ticket, Oracle Support is not required to respond immediately, nor would it have offered this level of access to engineering resources.

3 Spinnaker Support worked transparently with the entire group through its ITSM.

This case included five individuals. Spinnaker Support engineers tracked all correspondence and progress in the ticketing tool so that all stakeholders could see the latest progress and who has responsibility for moving the case forward.

Ticket 5 – Resolving Multiple Issues, Faster, Through A Supportive Partnership

TICKET OVERVIEW

The third-party support is closer to a partnership relationship than a transactional one. Many customers feel that their third-party support engineering team is a natural extension of their own internal team. Shared knowledge and close communications help to speed up the resolution process.

The example below demonstrates how we resolved not one, but two interoperability issues for Oracle Database and E-Business Suite. The story describes how two real support tickets, separated by a year, were worked on by the same team members and resolved using a similar technology solution.

CUSTOMER	Global provider of drilling services, drilling equipment, and performance tooling for mineral exploration
PRODUCT	Oracle Database and E-Business Suite
ISSUE	Update security protocol between the database to the payroll vendor and reconnect iProcurement and third-party punchout system
DATE	June 2018 and September 2019

PART 1 – REPORTING THE FIRST ISSUE

SETTING: Global Mineral Exploration, Salt Lake City, UT, Monday morning.

It was June 25, and Connor was about to panic. As of July 1, Global Mineral Exploration's (GME) payroll vendor would be turning off the older TLS 1.0 security protocol. Because their current Oracle Database (11.2.0.4) was using TLS 1.0 and did not make utl_https calls, this meant they would not be able to connect to the web service. They needed to do whatever was required – an upgrade? a patch? – to establish a TLS 1.2 (https) connection from the database to the payroll vendor. Otherwise, GME's payroll processing could be impacted until the issue was resolved.

While he was aware of the approaching deadline, Connor just hadn't had the time to consider a solution. He turned to Spinnaker Support for their technical advisory and support services. Chances were the Spinnaker Support engineering team had seen this issue before and would know the most efficient and expedient solution. He logged in to the Spinnaker Support portal and quickly submitted an online Priority 1 (high priority) ticket with details.

PART 2 – LOGGING AND INITIATING THE TICKET

SETTING: Spinnaker Support, Denver, CO. Monday morning.

Within seconds, the support ticket was routed to Wally, Connor's designated technical engineer at Spinnaker Support. Wally and Connor had worked closely for the past several years. With over 18 years of Oracle experience, Wally was a trusted, familiar resource who knew GME's technical environment and applications.

Wally responded within three minutes to let Connor know he had received the ticket and began investigating. Wally verified crucial technical details, including what patches they had installed in the past, and began to bring in additional team members for an initial set of solutions.

PART 3 – REVIEWING OPTIONS

SETTING: Online Correspondence, Monday and Tuesday

The Spinnaker Support team immediately set out to determine the best possible solution given the need to have a solution within a week. Top candidates included modifying the configurations on the existing F5 load balancer, upgrading Oracle Database to at least version 11.2.0.4.160119 PSU, or installing a Linux virtual machine with an Apache reverse proxy server.

GME researched the F5 option with their network team and found it would not work. The upgrade was possible but would have taken far too long to install and test, would disrupt the business, and risked introducing multiple issues to an already stable system.

This meant the Apache reverse proxy server was the preferred solution. The server was a simple proxy that would accept regular TLS 1.0 (HTTP) traffic from the database, open a TLS 1.2 (HTTPS) connection, and send the traffic to the payroll provider. The Spinnaker Support team had implemented a similar solution for other customers and knew it would work well. This proxy server would move the upgrade to a simpler component and avoid a security risk since the HTTP traffic would all be routed on the internal network.

PART 4 – THE RESOLUTION

SETTING: Online Conference and Correspondence, Wednesday

Connor agreed on the proxy server solution. Spinnaker Support documented the process for the installation and configuration of the Apache 2.4 proxy server and sent it to Connor to implement.

The next day, Connor needed some additional advice, so the group organized a quick conference call to hash out and verify details around the proper web addresses, ports, and SSL configuration. After testing, Connor determined the proxy server was functioning properly in the test environment. On July 1, he migrated the solution to the production environment, and Spinnaker Support closed the ticket as resolved.

PART 5 – ONE YEAR LATER: A DIFFERENT, BUT RELATED, PROBLEM

SETTING: Global Mineral Exploration, Salt Lake City, UT, Over one year later

Connor had a new communication problem. GME had a supplier whose punchout system was integrated into Oracle iProcurement. Punchout enables GME's buyers to click a link that goes to the supplier's catalog, search for items on the supplier's site, and return those items directly to the buyer's shopping cart.

At an unknown time, the supplier had upgraded their system. GME's EBS was no longer able to use the punchout system from within iProcurement. Connor logged a P3 ticket with Spinnaker Support with screenshots and documentation to see if they knew of any possible solution GME could implement to fix the problem.

Once again, Wally at Spinnaker Support reviewed the ticket within minutes. Working with Connor, Wally verified facts including that GME had not changed settings recently and had installed the latest certificate, and that the firewall was not the issue. Connor reached out to the supplier for the latest documentation and files, while Wally reached out to Linda, a Senior Technical Support Analyst from Spinnaker Support, and brought her up to speed on the ticket.

PART 6 – A SIMILAR RESOLUTION

SETTING: Online Correspondence, Over one week

From the supplier's information, Linda learned the supplier had renewed their certificates and updated the TLS version, precipitating the issue. She verified the 'SSL handshake failed: SSLSessionNotFoundErr' error, meaning the SSL handshake between EBS and the supplier site was not happening. She asked Connor to ask the supplier for the G2 (Generation 2) certificate, then had Connor install and test the certificate. The problem persisted.

Linda then recommended GME set up another entry in their Apache reverse proxy server that they had configured the previous year with Spinnaker's guidance. Connor agreed, and he and Linda set to work. After working for several days through multiple configurations and new error messages, they changed the Apache configuration files so the Apache reverse proxy server converted from http in EBS to https in the supplier program. The punchout now worked, and the case was closed.

WHAT THESE TICKETS REVEAL ABOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT

1 A support provider familiar with your systems can solve more problems, faster.

Your assigned engineers track your issues, become conversant with your products and technical stack, and can even build on past interactions to solve new problems. In this instance, the same proxy server was used to solve two different issues.

2 The customer did not need Oracle patches to solve either issue.

Many Oracle customers believe that publisher patches are the best and only solution for complex errors. Spinnaker Support works hard to quickly fix customer issues without having to apply patches and perform all the testing around other potential issues that can arise with those applied patches. The simplest solution is often best.

3 Unlike Spinnaker Support, Oracle would not have solved an interoperability issue without a patch.

Both tickets involved communications with outside systems, and interoperability is not covered in the standard Oracle Support services. Spinnaker Support works on identifying the source of data and communication issues and resolves them even if are outside of the Oracle product.

Comparing Spinnaker Support to Oracle and SAP Support

You've invested deeply in your Oracle and SAP software and systems, and your organization relies on them to run smoothly and reliably. When publisher-provided support becomes too costly and provides progressively less value in respect to the quality of delivered services, the alternative of proven third-party support is well worth investigating.

Spinnaker Support differs from Oracle and SAP Support by offering greater responsiveness, dedicated staff, and deeper issue coverage. The table below directly compares the primary features of each support model.

	ORACLE & SAP	THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT
SERVICE MODEL	Self-service-oriented, emphasis on research	Concierge, dedicated support
MY ORACLE SUPPORT/ SAP SERVICE MARKETPLACE	Full access	Not required
PRIMARY SUPPORT CONTACT	Varies	Dedicated lead with assigned team
SUPPORT EXPERTISE	Varies	16-years average experience
RESPONSE TIME	SLA dictates	Average 8-minute response time
ABILITY TO ESCALATE	Not monitored, request made reactively by customer	All issues closely monitored, done proactively without requests
CUSTOM CODE SUPPORT	Not covered	Included, as is anything that touches the Oracle or SAP product
INTEROPERABILITY SUPPORT	Limited, depends on release version	Included
RIGHTS TO UPGRADES	Included	Access to an archive of all upgrade rights, made prior to switchover from Oracle or SAP
TAX & REGULATORY COMPLIANCE	Included, one-size-fits-all	Tailored specific to each customer's needs
SECURITY & VULNERABILITY	Patches only	Full-stack intrusion detection, virtual patching, and compensating controls
TERM OF SUPPORT	No new fixes or interoperability support after end of standard support	Lifetime support - for as long as you need your current version
LIFETIME FULL / COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT	Available, but very little offered	Standard
ADVISORY SERVICES	Via Advanced Customer Services, at an additional premium, fee	Included
PARTNER & USER COMMUNITY	Access to many online communities and partner network	Access to many online communities and partner network

WHY SUPPORT-DRIVEN MODELS SURPASS SOFTWARE-DRIVEN MODELS

The differences highlighted above are fueled by the objectives of the business.

Oracle and SAP Support are primarily *software driven*, which results in a standardized approach that solves a limited set of issues. This model offers more automated solutions and often promotes software purchases and upgrades as the only solution to complex issues. SAP has acknowledged that support fees are primarily diverted away to engineering initiatives rather than to upgrading support capabilities.

In contrast, third-party support is *support driven*, with an emphasis on more proactive, comprehensive responses and sound technology advice. Third-party support focuses on solving issues quickly, no matter what the source or who is required to weigh-in on the solution. We immediately tap into the staff required to help assess and solve a product issue. Spinnaker Support is intensely focused on the quality and value of customer service, reinvesting its profits into continuous improvement and initiatives for added customer value.

Spinnaker Support: Your Wins are Our Wins

At Spinnaker Support, we believe **your wins are our wins**—and the biggest win of all is when we unlock value. We deliver highly rated SAP and Oracle support (98.6% overall customer satisfaction in 2019) at the industry's lowest price point, allowing our customers to experience unparalleled ROI. We also reinvest our own profits right back into our business—and ultimately you, the customer.

As the tickets in this booklet prove, Spinnaker Support's global support team exists solely to serve our customers' technical support needs. Irrespective of whether the product is Oracle, JD Edwards, or SAP, our functional solution analysts, technical engineers, project managers, and developers engage directly and immediately with you on technical issues.

It's yet another example of our manifesto to provide "support that is actually supportive."

Learn more about how Spinnaker Support can serve your specific needs.

[Contact us directly today.](#)

