Spinnaker Support
The New Wave of SAP Support Services

Maybe not today or tomorrow, but at least on the day after, migrating to the cloud is inevitable for businesses, and a mighty proponent of the evolving cloud era is SAP. The company's cloud solutions, namely, S/4HANA, HANA Database, and Leonardo exhibit cutting-edge potential and surely are SAP's tools for the future. But until that day when the cloud starts raining benefits, one mustn't forget the days in between; the days when most organizations will still want to use their on-premise solutions. They will continue requiring valuable support to run those solutions. And here comes the catch.

In its quest to become the most innovative cloud company, SAP has been aggressively pushing customers from on-premise applications like ECC6 to its next-generation solutions. But, many SAP users have invested heavily in their on-premise solutions, customizing them to adapt to their unique businesses. Greenwood Village-based Spinnaker Support is a firm that offers a superior support experience for such customers for a lot less cost. Under its "no sunset" policy, the company offers support for as long as customers need them. The goal here is to let users remain on their current software version until they are ready to upgrade or migrate to something better than what they run today. "Many SAP users don't want to pay to go backward from a business value perspective. We give them the opportunity to redirect the savings made on support services toward accelerating their digital transformation journeys on their own terms and timeline, not SAP's. Our customers get a maintenance vacation from the portal-based, high-cost SAP support," says Shawn Du Plessis, VP, SAP Global Support Services, Spinnaker Support.

Though SAP's support services, unequivocally, are as robust as its solutions, the underlining aspect is its business model. SAP's revenues and profits fuel its investment in next-generation solutions and shift away from on-premise applications. "SAP uses support as a lever to move customers through a perpetual upgrade and migration cycle, whereas, with Spinnaker, support is a means to an end," comments Du Plessis. The centerpiece of SAP support services, called the SAP Support portal is a one-stop-shop support solution for SAP customers. It allows customers to search for solutions to issues, download patches and updates, access tools, and collaborate with the community. There is very little, if any, personalization. The burden is largely born by the customer to self-support their own software as access to SAP support engineers has diminished. "Moreover, SAP uses roadblocks to counter lost maintenance and support

customers, including audits/indirect access, various sales and licensing tactics, threats of back-support fees should customers leave and then wish to re-engage, etcetera. Any roadblock is easy to counter with the right coaching, which Spinnaker Support or its partners can provide."

At Spinnaker Support it is a different ball game altogether. It is laser focused on quality and value of service wherein the profits are promptly reinvested to improve service quality in the form of new engineers and training for all service delivery personnel, more operations centers, new and enhanced service offerings, etcetera. Over 70 percent of its employees touch customers

Shawn Du Plessis

every day, delivering high-quality, personalized support. An important part of the company's process is the onboarding of a new customer. Before the team even starts taking tickets from a new customer, there is an extensive onboarding process where the company identifies the customer's environment intimately, including applications, hardware, OS, and database. Every Spinnaker Support customer gets a dedicated "very senior and battle-tested" Account Support Lead (ASL). After a deep dive into the customer's application landscape, a named team of cross-functional experts is also assigned to the account, based on the customer's application environment, technology stack, degree of customization, ticket history, geographic footprint, language requirements, IT staff capabilities, and planned IT roadmap. This insight ensures a smooth transition and positively impacts service response time: Resolutions can begin almost immediately because the team knows its customer's account and the customer doesn't have to "repeat" the answers to a bunch of introductory questions. The very first contact here is with a senior SAP expert, not a junior level person who mostly escalates an issue to a senior person. "This is much different than SAP's approach, the first and every issue response from Spinnaker Support is from either the ASL or an assigned member of your support team. Highly personalized."

The support, however, is not just restricted to the SAP applications a company runs; it is a full stack support. Spinnaker Support works closely with customers to understand the interoperability of their system and identify the components that interface with external systems. Their standard support

offering is designed to extend the value of SAP software, despite ongoing changes to surrounding technologies. And all onboarding, support, and off-boarding processes are ISO 9001:2015 certified which means that the company's approach, documentation, and issue resolution do not vary from customer to customer or team member to team member. The company is ISO 27001:2013-certified, showing its customers an ongoing commitment to information security management and achievement of European Union General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR) compliance.

> **Our business objectives are laser-focused on quality and value of service by delivering high-quality, personalized support**

Unlike market competitors that offer flat 50 percent discount on such services, Spinnaker Support's pricing provides for shelf-ware concessions that align support fees with actual software used. This translates into customers enjoying an average of 62 percent savings as opposed to initially tempting 50 percent off deals. "A rising number of our SAP support customers are utilizing incremental services we provide. We remain the only third-party support provider to deliver application and technology managed services and consulting services when organizations prefer to consolidate services under a single vendor. They benefit in numerous ways from having a single vendor that delivers this rare combination of services, not the least of which is our technology services that can help organizations with their IT roadmaps," adds Du Plessis.

Today, Spinnaker Support is the third-party support industry's growth leader. With strong financial health and balance, the company envisions continuing its growth. "We have and will continue to expand our array of service offerings. By listening to the voice of our customers, we anticipate where they are going and what services they will most need going forward. We will continue to scale our business to meet demand in the fast-growing world of SAP support and managed services," concludes Du Plessis. CR