

The Third-Party Software Support Customer Experience



Summary

For more than fifteen years, third-party support (3PS) for Oracle and SAP enterprise software has served as a viable replacement alternative to publisher support. Over the years, it has constantly evolved to meet the changing needs of the enterprise software market and to fill gaps not addressed by Oracle and SAP.

There are any number of articles and papers that address the what and why of 3PS. Beyond a few case studies, however, very little information is publicly available for non-customers to help shed light on what is the actual day-to-day user experience. In part, that's because it's far easier to provide a product demo than a service demo. But it's also true that many vendors are reluctant to explain their processes outside of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA).

When pressed, some vendors will offer a limited proof of concept (PoC) under an NDA. They will work to resolve a few of your outstanding support tickets, mostly Priority 3s. While a superficial PoC of this sort can be informative, it will always fall short of effectively representing the entire customer experience.

We understand that it's natural for you to wonder whether the reality of the 3PS experience will meet your expectations. You want to know: What are the steps for onboarding? Who will answer your support tickets? What types of issues will they – or won't they – resolve? Can a third-party vendor really provide both significant cost savings and more responsive service?

This paper was designed to answer those specific questions and many more that you may have concerning the 3PS customer experience. What follows is an overview of the entire onboarding and support process – as experienced by Spinnaker Support customers (see Disclaimer below). Whether you're an IT expert, C-level executive, procurement specialist, or application end-user, you will find useful insights, stories, and advice to help you determine if 3PS is the right choice for your organization.

DISCLAIMER: The delivery of third-party support varies with each vendor. To provide enough detail in this guide, we will refer to what we know: the practices and standards of Spinnaker Support. You should not assume that what is described within will be identical for another vendor.



How Does 3PS Differ from Software Publisher Support?

Before we dive into the customer experience, it's instructive to contrast the overall third-party support experience with the Oracle and SAP support with which you are more familiar.

Recognizing the Limits of Traditional Support

Most IT teams already understand the limits of Oracle and SAP services (this may be a primary reason why you're considering 3PS). They've become accustomed to partial support for interoperability, no support for custom code, and shallow security protection delivered in the form of patches and may be frustrated by the need to justify support for what they consider to be highest priority (P1) issues.

Customers have become accepting of the vendor-mandated requirement to self-support and to spending more hours in search of fixes for identified issues and fewer hours on the department's strategic initiatives. As a result, they often settle for working with unsolved minor bugs that will never be patched, or they develop their own customizations to address issues in the base software.

CASE STUDY

COST REDUCTION DRIVEN BY MARKET DOWNTURN



Merichem Company was founded in 1945 as a global partner serving the oil and gas industries with focused technology, chemical, and service solutions. The initial driver that led Merichem to third-party support was purely around cost reduction. The IT

team was faced with decreasing budgets because of falling oil prices and needed to do more with less budget.

For their EBS 12.1.3 environment support by Oracle, Merichem experienced long delays in response, a cold shoulder to requests to negotiate price structure, and limited opportunity for future ROI based on Oracle's EBS roadmap.

In moving to third-party support, Merichem realized a significant cost reduction of annual support, greater than 55%. Prior to leaving Oracle support, the 3PS vendor downloaded a full archive for them with EBS 12.2 (to which they were legally entitled), allowing the company to define their own upgrade timeline.



A Direct Comparison of the Support Models

The table below compares the fundamentals of the two support models, with comments on the importance of each feature.

	ORACLE & SAP SUPPORT	THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT	WHY THIS MATTERS
Service Model	Self-service-oriented, emphasis on research	Concierge, assigned team of engineers	Convenience of self-service vs. convenience of quick, live response from an expert
My Oracle Support / SAP Support Portal	Full access	Not required	Self-service vs. live, focused assistance
Primary Support Contact	Varies	Assigned senior engineer and team	How well do you know your current primary contact?
Support Expertise	Varies	16-years average experience on version(s) you now run.	Experienced support professionals recognize and solve problems faster
Initial Response Time	Oracle SLA dictates a 90% P1 response within one hour; other service requests can take one business day	Average 8-minute response time for all tickets	Third-party is contracted to respond quickly
Ability to Escalate	Not monitored, request made reactively by customer	All issues closely monitored, automated proactive escalation without requests	Escalations can be frustrating, should rarely occur, and be painless when required
Custom Code Support	Not covered	Included, as is anything that touches the Oracle product	Most, if not all, organizations customize their enterprise software
Interoperability Support	Limited, depends on release version	Included, as are interfaces	Most enterprise software is interconnected with external systems and technology
Rights to Upgrades	Included for on-premise versions, excluded for SaaS product release	Access to an archive of all available on-premise version upgrades, made prior to switchover from Oracle	Upgrades for newer systems to which one has rights; Savings to be invested in SaaS products as they mature few to none expected for on-premise applications
Tax & Regulatory Compliance	Included, one-size-fits-all	Included, tailored specific to each customer's needs	Global TRC is regularly monitored and updated
Security & Vulnerability	Reactive patches only	Full-stack intrusion detection, virtual patching, and compensating controls	Security is multi-layered and complex, which is not addressed by patching alone
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	Important factor for long-term investments
Lifetime Full / Comprehensive Support	Oracle will bill you for a lifetime but only delivers fixes, updates, and critical patch updates created during the Premier Support stage	Standard	Full support should be available for as long as one chooses to use
Advisory Services	Via Advanced Customer Services, at an additional premium, fee	Included	These services can assist development of tech business strategy
Partner & User Community	Access to many online communities and partner network	Access to many online communities and partner network	No difference for either type of support



Many of the differences described in the table can be summarized as a fundamental contrast in philosophies. The business objectives of third-party support providers are completely different from those of Oracle or SAP. Publisher support is primarily "software driven." It's a standardized approach that solves a limited set of issues and tends towards promoting more software and upgrades as a solution.

In contrast, third-party support is "support driven." This is evidenced by the emphasis on more proactive and more comprehensive responses that focus on solving issues more quickly, no matter what the source or who is required to weigh-in on the solution. Spinnaker Support, for example, is intensely focused on the quality and value of customer service, reinvesting its profits into these customer-facing areas. This will be evident in the next section on the customer experience.

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The 3PS Customer Experience

Once you have signed the contract for 3PS services, the vendor will host a formal kickoff meeting to start the transition to third-party support, which can take anywhere from three to twelve weeks. The multi-step onboarding process includes the assignment of your support team, the archive creation, and the overall knowledge transfer and transition from the software publisher support.

The process flow below defines the stages from the start of the customer lifecycle through to the eventual offboarding that occurs for each customer. The average lifecycle is four-to-five years and will vary per the needs of the customer. Note that the critical discovery process and scoping of your organization's needs was already completed earlier in the pre-sales period.





Your Assigned Support Team

As a first step, each customer is assigned a permanent, specifically crafted team for its account. Running point is an assigned Account Support Lead (ASL), an industry expert with an average of 16+ years' experience. The ASL becomes an extension of your own internal IT department and serves as the single business/commercial point of contact, beginning with the onboarding process and continuing throughout the life of the contract.

Each customer is assigned a team of named engineers and archivists (see the example resumes on the next page), determined by your application environment, technology stack, ticket history, geographic footprint, language requirements, IT staff capabilities, planned IT roadmap, etc. The teams we assemble typically combine application, development, technology, security, interoperability, and cloud experts. This team becomes knowledgeable about every ticket logged, every conversation, and your unique technology stack landscape.



Engineers and Archivists Resumes



SAMPLE PROFILE OF A 3PS ENGINEER (ERP / Oracle)

EXPERTISE

- ERP Software Support and Training
- ERP Software Consulting
- · End User Training Implementations

CAREER OVERVIEW

 2015 to present
 Functional Solutions Architect - Financials

 2009 - 2015
 Senior Consultant - Oracle Business Partner

 2006 - 2009
 Principal Consultant - Oracle Business Partner

 2001 - 2006
 Oracle Support Manager and Senior Support Analyst - Served on Oracle ERP implementation team (Financials)

Other Positions from 1999-2001

Various Support Analyst Roles

SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY

Oracle ERP Software

• Oracle Financials – versions 11i, R12



- Accor
- Paym
- Accou
- Fixed

• Cash



SAMPLE PROFILE OF A SECURITY EXPERT

EXPERTISE

- 20 years' experience in both military and civilian cyber security worldwide
- Global CISO, Cyber Security and CISO
 Training Lead
- Served as the cyber security advisor of global enterprises

CAREER OVERVIEW

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2017 to present	Cyber and CISO Training Program Lead	
2015 - 2017	CISO, Deputy CIO for County Government	
2013 - 2015	PCI ISA and Technology Risk Management Auditor	
2010 - 2013	CISO and Cyber Security Expert	
2008 - 2010	CISO and Head of Privacy, Security and Cyber Secur	
2006 - 2008	Senior Cyber Security Project Manager	
2002 - 2006	Director of IT and Cyber Security	

EDUCATION

B.A. in Management, Political Science and International Relations

CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Hacker Tools, Techniques, Exploits and Incident Handling SANS SEC50
- PCI SSC PCI Internal Security Assessor (ISA) and PCI Professional (PCIF
- ISACA Certified Information Security Auditor (CISA)
- ISACA Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)



SAMPLE PROFILE OF A 3PS ENGINEER (SAP)

EXPERTISE

- Senior SD Engineer with over 20 years of SAP R/3 experience
- Expert knowledge of the Sales and Distribution (SD) module
- · Problem solving expertise in multiple industries
- Trained as an internal ISO 9001 Auditor

CAREER OVERVIEW

2012 to present	Senior Application Support	
2008 - 2012	Global Order-to-Cash Domain Lead & Problem Management Lead	
2007 - 2008	Senior Global SD Support Engineer	
2005 - 2007	Senior SD Implementation Engineer	
2002 - 2005	SD Support Lead	
1997 - 2002	SD Solutions Operations Specialist	
1995 - 1997	Various ABAP and SD Consulting roles	

SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY

SAP ERP Software - Versions SAP

• R/3 Releases 2.0. 2.1. 3.0D. 3.1I. 4.6C. 4.7



SAMPLE PROFILE OF AN ACCOUNT SUPPORT LEAD (ASL)

EXPERTISE

2008 to present Functional Solutions Architect & Senior Application

- ERP Software Support and Training
- ERP Software Consulting
- End User Training Implementations
- All areas of Accounting
- Managing personnel in Training, Support, and Accounting

CAREER OVERVIEW

	Support Analyst - Financials
2005 - 2008	Senior Application Support Engineer – 3rd Party JD Edwards Support Company
2004 - 2005	Senior JD Edwards Financial Consultant – JDE Business Partner
1991 – 2004	JD Edwards/PeopleSoft - Master Instructor for UPK ExpressEnd User Training – Team Lead Editor Product Education Manager APS Practice Lead Education Financial Instructor Manager Senior Consultant Staff Consultant Training Coordinator

SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY

JD Edwards Software

- WorldSoftware v. A5.2 A6.1, A6.2, A7.1, A7.2, A7.3, A8.1, A9.1, A9.2
- OneWorld / Enterprise One v. B7332, Xe, 8.0, 8.9, 8.10, 8.11, 8.11SP1, 8.12, 9.0, 9.1

JDE Functional Expertise – Financial Suite

- General Accounting
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- Multi-Currency
- Budgeting
- Allocations
- Fixed Assets
- · More...

JDE Functional Expertise – Distribution Suite

- Some Procurement
- Some Sales Order Management
- Some Inventory Management



At Spinnaker Support, engineers can be located in up to eight global operations centers, in strategic locations around the world. This global team works high-priority (P1 & P2) issues through an efficient hand-off from one team member to another, using a follow-the-sun, 24 x 7 x 365 resolution process. Because your team is familiar with the specifics of your deployment, the hand-offs are smooth, and issues are guickly resolved.

With deep experience, your assigned team has seen it all – supporting the application versions you run within a wide range of the combined surrounding technologies. As time progresses, current customers have found that the assigned team will adjust to their specific needs and assist in advising on their roadmap, all while ensuring that the applications remain available, effective, and secure.



Onboarding Your Organization

Prior to the cutover, your customer success team and ASL will lead you through a phased onboarding process designed to ensure a smooth transition to Spinnaker Support. This onboarding process drives:

- 1. **Clear roles and responsibilities** We work with you to identify crucial roles, responsibilities, communication protocols, and resources. You will know who is responsible for each onboarding activity.
- 2. **Project management** Using our proven, ISO 9001:2015-governed processes, we communicate with you about needed action steps, predictable timetables, task owners, and progress for a seamless transfer to Spinnaker Support. You know what will happen, when, and by whom.
- 3. **Knowledge transfer** Using our established approach, we gain detailed knowledge of your environment during onboarding, including customizations, previous support issues, and relevant business processes, and we begin to build relationships with key individuals. As a result, our expert staff delivers tailored, effective support during live operations from the first call to final resolution.



Each phase of the onboarding process is clearly associated with activities to support the continuous knowledge transfer of your practices, processes, culture, and technologies to the core team. The duration of each phase is based on customer and system complexity, as well as the scope of services to be delivered.





Creating Your Archive

Archiving is the download and storage of relevant software and data that a customer is legally entitled to download and store. Spinnaker Support has performed this service for hundreds of customers, from small to very large organizations in virtually every industry segment, using an ISO 9001:2015-certified archiving approach and ISO 27001:2013 processes for data security.

During the onboarding process, the assigned archiving team creates a searchable library on your network that includes licensed, uninstalled upgrades, patches, and related materials. Going forward, you will have the ability to retain, access, implement, and use the archived material.

To be clear, this archive only contains the specific information you were legally permitted to download as a support customer. In this way, we also carefully protect the software publisher's intellectual property (IP) rights. In the past, the reputation of the third-party support industry has unfairly suffered when other vendors have faced litigation for not respecting Oracle IP during the archive process.

Archiving occurs after you have decided to make the switch to 3PS, but before the end of your publisher maintenance contract. You will want to budget 4-12 weeks, depending on your application landscape, to allow enough time before cutover date, especially before the end of the software publisher's fiscal year. For example, SAP has been known to throttle back download speeds from the SAP Support Portal at the end of the year to manage the increased amount of traffic they experience.



Ticketing and Issue Resolution

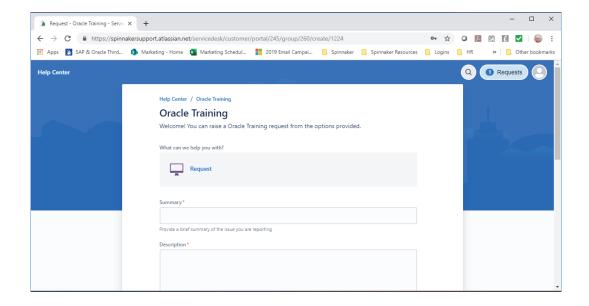
Support should be fast: responses to tickets should arrive within minutes, not days. 3PS delivers a completely different approach and philosophy from that of Oracle or SAP. High priority tickets, as defined by the customer and not the software publisher, come within 15 minutes guaranteed. For tickets of lower priority, SLAs provide equally reasonable response times. The leading objective is to ensure that every issue presented is successfully resolved in a timely manner.

This section describes the various types of support and processes you should expect.

Submitting Tickets

Instead of a portal-centric, self-support model, where you search for fixes, you simply log a ticket with a brief description of the issue or question. Since your assigned team is already familiar with your system(s), you are not required to submit extensive background information, although attaching and uploading documentation such as screen shots with the ticket is always helpful.





In minutes, a senior engineering expert will respond and begin to diagnose and resolve your issue – even if it originated in custom code or an integration. The process is identical for general inquiries, such as questions on technical to functional aspects of the software or "what if" questions around modifying business processes or system settings.

Issues with Standard Code

As a standard part of 3PS, diagnostic services, product fixes, and/or operational workarounds for software issues identified in standard delivered code are delivered.

Break/Fix for Custom Code and Customizations

Most customers have created custom functionality to support unique business needs that the software was not originally designed to handle. Many issues originate in code that has been previously customized by users - at the application, tools, and database levels. 3PS vendors troubleshoot and resolve problems that may be caused by such customizations.

If there are problems related to existing customizations or customer code, engineers will work with a customer's resources to analyze the issues. If the root cause is the core software code, we will develop a fix for it. If the root cause is with the custom code, we will provide guidance to the changes needed to support the customization.

The most common method to deliver fixes is through remote connection to your environment, where issue analysis, troubleshooting, and debugging occurs. You may think of your 3PS assigned support team as an extended component of your internal support team. Once the issue is isolated, a solution is designed and tested within your test environment / sandbox, affecting only the required changes. This minimizes the impact to other programs and objects.

Software publishers do not support customized code. The 3PS method differs from the typical publisher method, which requires the installation of a packaged update that, in turn, may contain changes that are undesired in other parts of the application, including your customizations. The latter method increases the risk of "breaking" other parts of the application, which can result in lost time, frustration, and greater expense to



you, the customer. The installation of the vendor patches usually requires significant regression testing that adds to the time to deliver a production solution, especially if you need to test multiple areas of functionality.

Spinnaker Support's policy is to keep the results of our work product, in the form of software modifications and updates we create for you, on your servers. At case closure, the support resource ensures the customer-specific work product and any related supporting documents used while solving the issue have been located on the customer's machine(s). The resulting code fix is the property of the customer and/or the software vendor and IS NOT stored on any third-party vendor computers once the case has been closed.

Interoperability Support

Tickets that relate to issues of interoperability are handled in the same manner as other technical issues. As a standard feature, Spinnaker Support helps maintain interoperability and manage the changes in diverse application, database, and other computer system layers of any technology stack that can ripple across SAP and Oracle enterprise applications.

Technical Advisory Support Services

Spinnaker Support provides advisory services as part of the standard support model including virtualization, cloud migration, license compliance and audit defense, and roadmap planning. These independent services are included to help customers make more informed technical and business decisions.



Full, Ongoing Support Services

Beyond ticketing, customers receive ongoing support services for security, tax and regulation, and customer success.

Embedded Security and Vulnerability Protection

Oracle and SAP provide security patches for some customers, depending on the software version being utilized. In the case of Oracle, these patches are terminated upon a switch to 3PS. In the case of Spinnaker Support, a more responsive and comprehensive security and vulnerability protection solution is provided for every customer as part of the standard 3PS agreement – at no additional charge.

Spinnaker Support authors unique fixes for each issue, does not share or distribute these with other customers, and does not require access to patches from Oracle or SAP. Every fix matches the customer's unique needs, so there is little risk of peripheral problems arising. The on-demand, customer-specific security configurations allow much faster implementation of solutions through changes that have little to no impact on the actual code, requiring less testing time and quicker implementations.

Security is much more than a patch. Again, in the case of Spinnaker Support, comprehensive security is embedded based on a framework of discover, harden, and protect. The framework involves a refined, continuous, tailored, and proven approach that integrates multiple services and security products.



Regular Global Tax And Regulatory Updates

Governing authorities in dozens of countries and all 50 U.S. states implement tax and regulatory changes throughout the year. These are typically provided by the software publisher in one-size-fits-all updates. 3PS alleviates the challenges of ever-changing tax, legal, and regulatory requirements by continually researching, monitoring, and gathering specific requirements on your behalf.

This is a personalized tax and regulatory process, delivered proactively in timely, accurate updates. We work directly with customers to schedule and implement all required changes. For Spinnaker Support customers, the tax and regulatory solution provides:

- A standardized, repeatable process to deliver tax and regulatory changes.
- Personalized net change documentation and test scripts for each customer.
- Implementation code changes specific to each customer's software version.
- · Quality assurance testing for all changes.
- Comprehensive follow-up and support for all changes.
- Routine communication throughout the year to prepare customers for changes to their tax and regulatory environment.

The tax and regulatory experts have developed a proprietary research database that delivers the ability to quickly scale those services and solutions as they identify new companies and new country requirements. Our ISO 9001:2015 certified process alleviates risk by helping you prepare for cyclical and new changes across the tax and regulatory landscape.

Customer Success and Additional Services

In addition to the active work of the ASL and engineering team, the Customer Success team takes over the account management, facilitating the overall relationship throughout the entire customer lifecycle. Customer Success works with your organization's leadership to provide maximum value through quarterly or semi-annual executive sponsor meetings, escalation management, and roadmap and strategic planning.

After switching, many customers find that they have the need and budget (thanks to those cost savings) for additional services. Spinnaker Support offers add-on services, and a customer can conveniently append them to their existing contract. These can include:

- Managed Services High-value application and technical managed services designed to optimize performance, build in agility and flexibility, reduce cost and complexity, and mitigate risk complemented by a powerful array of technology advisory services.
- **Business and IT Consulting** Focused, smart consulting services help customers build and execute strategic business and IT initiatives including implementation and migration support, roadmap planning, staff augmentation, and more.





Offboarding from Third-Party Support

While many customers choose to remain on third-party software support indefinitely, others view 3PS as a time-limited option used during a specific project, like a migration between environments or from an on-premise to a cloud solution. In these scenarios, Spinnaker Support offers cloud migration advisory services that free up our customer's time and resources for an accelerated journey to the cloud.

When it comes to offboarding, the "Roll-Off" process is straightforward:

- 1. **Work through all outstanding issues** (if any) and find a suitable resolution to each issue where possible. Where we anticipate that no resolution can be found by the service termination date, the appropriate support engineer will transition the issue over to you with all related documentation.
- 2. **Provide an Issue Management Report** with all your ticket activity.
- 3. **For Internal Customer Systems De-activate all access granted to third-party support** including VPN connections, user profiles or ID's, TeamViewer (or similar remote connection tools) sessions, and access to shared support folders.
- 4. **Ensure backups are made** of the shared support folder information, which may contain code changes and documentation.
- 5. **For 3PS Systems De-activate customer access to the ITSM system** (e.g., JIRA), customer profiles, and all related address book records the day after the service termination date.

Counter to Oracle and SAP messaging, customers can re-engage with their support at any time they choose without negative consequences. At Spinnaker Support, we follow software publisher and industry standard practices for code changes and documentation. This enables an organization to move back to the software publishers support with no potential technical or legal issues.

Customers can renegotiate terms that work in their favor knowing that Oracle and SAP will always take them back. Interestingly, it is also not uncommon for customers who have appreciated their third-party support experience to eventually return to third-party support for future projects.

CASE STUDY

A SUCCESSFUL MIGRATION AND OFFBOARDING



Regis Corporation is the largest hair salon chain in the world with over 10,000 locations. During their long stint using Oracle-provided support, Regis endured annual support fees increases while service level continued to diminish for their version of the JD Edwards software. They switched to third-party support in June of 2013.

After significant cost savings over a four-year period with 3PS, Regis returned to Oracle at the end of 2017 to purchase Oracle cloud HCM licenses, initiating migration away from on-premise software. Oracle welcomed Regis back with open arms, with no support penalties enforced as a result of having moved to third-party support.



The Support You Deserve

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 relation to the quality of delivered services, the alternative of proven third-party support is well worth investigating.

As described above, the 3PS customer experience is "support-driven" from start to finish. The upfront onboarding effort translates to fast responses, speedy issue resolution, and far less frustration for your employees. With an assigned account leader and named engineering team, your 3PS partners are familiar with your enterprise environment and more knowledgeable on your past issues than Oracle or SAP Support can ever be.

The third-party software support experience means that your IT team has product experts on call for everything from answering general inquiries to resolving unexpected issues. You proactively receive customized security and tax and regulation updates, and unlike with Oracle or SAP support, the third-party vendor owns the issue, no matter where it originates. Your employees no longer need to solve their own problems via time-consuming knowledgebase searches, and you can redirect their attention to strategic, value-add projects.

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.

<u>Contact us today</u> to start the conversation.

In Their Own Words

These quotes on the customer experience are taken from our 2019 customer satisfaction survey:

Very proactive approach to customer needs. Significant difference if compare with Oracle standard support stream. For a critical ticket P1 open from one of our branches, the Spinnaker team stayed on the phone for several hours while troubleshooting activities and data collection was being executed.

Very capable and knowledgeable team with positive attitude!
They understand the business, importance and severity of the issues and time criticality.

Overall, working with Spinnaker is a very positive experience...I know that my issues will be responded to quickly and once triage is over, will be assigned to the appropriate technical analyst and resolved in a timely manner.

Doesn't matter the problem, all get involved until they find the right person for the job. All staff are friendly, knowledgeable, and most helpful.

For the complete results and more feedback, visit the April satisfaction results.