



**Darden Restaurants** is the largest casual-dining restaurant company in the world. It operates more than 1,300 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Smokey Bones, and Bahama Breeze restaurants in North America, leading each market segment and employing more than 122,000 people.

## DARDEN'S CHALLENGE

Darden's sheer size, combined with rapid growth, and high employee turnover, typical for the restaurant industry, resulted in a strained and inefficient employee services call center operation. Darden turned to BMC Software and RightStar Systems, a BMC business partner. Together with BMC and RightStar, and by consolidating several support functions into one, Darden found the ideal employee services support environment, one that resulted in annual savings of 40 percent over the cost of several outdated support systems.

Darden's information technology organization, although decentralized, had made significant gains towards consolidation, including the recent implementation of PeopleSoft and Oracle Financials throughout the organization. Darden Employee Relations, Benefits, Payroll, and the Restaurant Help Desk combined forces to consolidate several support systems into one. Each department was anxious to procure and implement a single system to replace several disparate Lotus Notes-based support systems. Darden's challenge was to select, procure, and implement a single support system before the start of the busy holiday season.

The Payroll, Benefits, and Employee Relations Call Center handles as many as 6,500 calls per week during periods of Open Enrollment and the W2 season, from late January through April 15, when current and former employees call with questions.

The Restaurant IT Help Desk supports the IT needs of all restaurants, especially the NCR and IBM electronic cash registers, and the point-of-sale and back-office systems. This is a 24x7 operation due to the six time zones supported and the mission criticality of 100 percent restaurant up-time. Average call volumes range from 18,000 to 27,000 calls per month.

**DARDEN**  
RESTAURANTS



## SOLUTION APPROACH AND OUTCOME

RightStar, utilizing BMC Service Desk Express (SDE), implemented a 96-concurrent seat consolidated service desk, with 35 seats allocated to Payroll, 25 to the Restaurant Help Desk, 15 to Employee Relations, 2 to Corporate Security, 16 to Facilities, and 3 to the internal IT Help Desk. Dana Ney, Restaurant Help Desk manager, was instrumental in organizing an internal Darden Service Desk Council to discuss administration, security, and support issues. According to Ney, "Communication between departments has been the biggest challenge of a consolidated service desk, but if you share something as an enterprise, you have to think of it as an enterprise."

RightStar and BMC combined forces to provide a truly consolidated service desk centered around BMC SDE, a browser-based open systems solution. BMC's SDE application is designed around Microsoft's Windows Distributed InterNet Applications (DNA) Architecture, which Microsoft has recently relaunched as its Web Solution Platform. This n-tier technology model divides the SDE application into distinct presentation, application, and database services, all of which exploit core Microsoft component technologies. The proposed architecture consisted of a SQL database service on Windows NT supporting 265,000 current and former employee database records. The database is segmented such that only data specific to the specific department application is visible in a Dynamic HyperText Markup Language. This provides the tremendous cost advantage of a single shared database approach combined with the security required of an HR-based system.

Melissa Sublette, director of Darden Payroll Services, measured the before and after cost savings as a result of the new system. According to Sublette, "consolidating several systems into one and moving to an open systems browser-based environment reduced our annual IT operating costs. Fewer temporaries were required during the peak busy period, and, of course, our hardware and support costs were greatly reduced."

"We require reliability and high quality," noted Sublette. "BMC and RightStar offered the combination of software and integration services that offers high availability, flexibility, and a growth path for the future."

Integration, which was completed with a minimum of customization by RightStar, included database synchronization with PeopleSoft and automatic dispatch to NCR and IBM Support for any NCR or IBM related POS issues. Dispatch to AT&T Frame Relay support is also integrated as a result of the large dedicated AT&T Frame Relay network connecting all the restaurants together.

Additionally, Darden implemented RightStar's MagicWand, a bar code scanner used to accurately track all IT assets. The result is a more efficient, less costly, inventory reconciliation.

## **BENEFITS TO DARDEN**

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"We made the right decision to select BMC SDE and RightStar. We can operate all our department support applications on the same system, and we expect to save 40 percent every year," explained Sublette. "With these savings, we can continue to support our growing employee population with nominal budget increases."

In addition to the cost savings, Darden now has a highly reliable, open systems solution that offers improved performance, employee self-service capabilities, and flexibility for the future that allows Darden to continue to add new restaurants and employees.

## **PROJECT DURATION**

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The SDE implementation and service desk consolidation was completed in three months.