

AbilityNet



AbilityNet uses GoToAssist to support disabled with remote assessment services

For more than 20 years, UK charity AbilityNet has been adapting and adjusting technology for disabled adults and children who use computers and the Internet, enabling them to stay in touch and enjoy life to the fullest. The charity supports more than 490,000 people annually, including care professionals, employers, teachers, and central and local government staff. AbilityNet's one-to-one assessments and support services play a vital role in helping those with disabilities use computers and technology to improve their chances of finding meaningful employment in the UK.

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David Banes
CEO
AbilityNet

The challenge: meeting demand for personalized assessments

AbilityNet's one-to-one assessment service helps people with a range of disabilities, including dyslexia and repetitive strain injuries (RSI), to understand and set up their computers. The charity also provides ongoing support to fix IT problems. “It's estimated that more than 90 percent of jobs now require some ability in and knowledge of IT, so we are performing a vital service in ensuring thousands of people with disabilities can actively participate in the UK workforce,” said David Banes, CEO of AbilityNet.

However, with only a small team available to carry out the assessments, AbilityNet was struggling to meet demand for the service. “The assessments are most effective when people are evaluated in their home or work environment, but this meant that our assessors had to travel lengthy distances across the UK to carry out the evaluations,” said Banes. “This restricted the number of assessments we could carry out in one day, and also meant we were spending a lot of money on travel.”

Key benefits

- Enables existing staff to complete 100-percent more assessments per month
- Maintains customer satisfaction at a level of at least 94 percent
- Has cut reliance on technical support team by 70 percent over two years

Implementing GoToAssist for remote assessments

AbilityNet recognized that if its experts could carry out the assessments remotely, they could save significant travel time and expense, and also ensure that many more people were evaluated. However, AbilityNet wanted to ensure the chosen solution was secure, cross-platform and compatible with the company's Microsoft® Windows® XP operating system, as well as easy for its staff to use. The charity deployed Citrix® GoToAssist®, which is now used to deliver remote assessments and IT support to more than 3,000 people per year.

“The security of the remote service was of paramount importance for us, and we needed to ensure compatibility with our existing systems. GoToAssist was set up in a matter of hours, and because it's so intuitive and simple to use, we could start the remote assessments almost immediately,” said Banes.

Cost-effectively meeting increasing demand

GoToAssist provides AbilityNet with a cost-efficient and effective way to remotely assess disabled users' IT needs in their own homes, offices or even local community centers over the Internet. At a pre-arranged time, when the assessor and the client are both at their computers, the assessor invites the client to join a one-to-one online support session. A secure connection is established between the two computers, enabling the assessor to view the client's screen and observe how the computer is being used.

"Providing IT support to people with disabilities can have a significant impact on their lives by helping them to get back to work and become a part of the community," said Banes. "GoToAssist is an impressive tool that bridges the distance between the client and AbilityNet, so our assessors can work as though they are actually sitting next to them."

AbilityNet assessors can also assume control of a computer, if necessary, to demonstrate an application or show the client how to use a particular function. Using GoToAssist, they can give real-time demonstrations of software directly on the client's screen. They are also able to intervene and configure the computer to the user's needs immediately.

"Our team is very keen on the technology as it allows them to easily and accurately evaluate needs," said Banes. However, it's not only the assessors who are impressed with the technology. According to Banes, the new remote assessment service has been a big hit with AbilityNet's clients. "Our customers love what the GoToAssist technology can do, and since we started using the tool we have never fallen below a 94-percent approval rating."

Increasing assessments with existing staff

Following the implementation of GoToAssist, AbilityNet has been able to increase the number of monthly assessments by 100 percent without taking on additional staff. The increased emphasis on remote assistance has also reduced the amount of time that assessors spend on the road, thereby lowering travel and petrol costs.

"As a registered charity, AbilityNet has a responsibility to its fund raisers and supporters to manage costs to maximum benefit, so the GoToAssist remote service is a perfect way to keep our travel expenses down," said Banes. "Also, because GoToAssist is a hosted service, we do not have to invest heavily in our own system or provide additional resources to support the software on an ongoing basis."

Product information:
www.gotoassist.co.uk

Sales inquiries:
europa@citrixonline.com
Phone: +44 (0) 800-011-2120

Channel partners:
resellers@citrixonline.com
Phone: +44 (0) 800-011-2120

Media inquiries:
europa@citrixonline.com
Phone: +44 (0) 800-011-2120

About this customer:
www.abilitynet.org.uk

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