

SupportSuccess!

Custom Software Maintenance

Software applications are key assets to the people, businesses and organizations that count on them. To maximize an application's lifetime, it must evolve so it continues to serve the business and the user community while operating reliably.

Chartwell I/T's *SupportSuccess!* service is designed to allow an organization to outsource support of custom software programs, whether developed by us, developed "in-house" or built by another outside firm. *SupportSuccess!* is structured to address the three major issues that are encountered with custom systems:

- Software and system error handling
- Implementing new features and functions
- Compatibility with the latest version of underlying technologies

Optionally, *SupportSuccess!* may include special services that are outside the scope of the client's I.T. Operations department, such as usage reporting for an Internet or intranet application, or search engine positioning for a web or e-Business site.

The major elements of *SupportSuccess!* are described in the following sections.

THE SOLUTION EXPERT

Chartwell I/T assigns a Solution Expert to each application. This person acts as the primary point-of-contact and technical lead for all activities related to the application. In the first phase of the contract, the Solution Expert assesses the application to determine its architecture, components, and the status of supporting technical material. Missing elements key to the continuing support are resolved, and legacy software is brought into the source control system. Also, the Solution Expert works closely with the client to ensure that he/she (the Solution Expert) is fully trained in the functionality of the application, the usage patterns of the user community, and the details of the operating environment.

Upon completion of the startup phase, the Solution Expert's role changes to focus upon:

- Responding to problems as they are reported
- Coordinating development priorities with the client's management team
- Managing changes to the application and ensuring they are implemented properly and completely

DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

Chartwell I/T provides the development components, tools and environments for each application we support¹. Each development environment consists of programming tools (developer IDE's, data access tools, etc.) and server systems (database, web, application). Source control programs are used to manage the software source code and enforce change control procedures.

The programming tools are available to the Solution Expert and each developer on the team. The server systems are setup on a permanent basis and reflect the production environment configuration as closely as possible for optimal testing. Furthermore, the server environments are configured with multiple instances of the application in support of the various stages of a development cycle (i.e. developing, testing, mimic production rollout).

By dedicating these tools and resources to the *SupportSuccess!* applications, Chartwell I/T can implement changes confidently and efficiently while minimizing or eliminating the client's capital expenditures for development infrastructure.

Note 1: Contact Chartwell I/T for a list of the supported technologies

ERROR HANDLING PROTOCOL AND SLA's

An important element of *SupportSuccess!* is the ability to handle errors and problems, especially production system problems that need to be escalated by the client's I. T. Operations or Help Desk teams.

The error handling process is broken down into multiple components. Every problem reported to Chartwell I/T is logged. The Solution Expert reviews the problems and rates the seriousness. He/she will collaborate with client personnel if necessary, and client personnel will have the final decision on the rating. If, upon initial reporting of a problem, it is rated by the person reporting it as "critical", the Solution Expert will be notified immediately. Once notified, the Solution Expert will assess and analyze the problem, and determine how quickly it requires resolution. The assessment process for "critical" problems is handled within the contracted Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Once problems have been reported and rated, the Solution Expert will work with the client and determine a schedule for resolving the problem. Problems can be corrected either within a scheduled release ("in-sequence"), or outside of a scheduled release ("out-of-sequence"), depending upon the impact to the user base.

MANAGING CHANGE REQUESTS AND UPDATES

SupportSuccess! addresses both "in-sequence" and "out-of-sequence" changes. The former involves a series of enhancements and error resolutions that are scheduled. The later includes emergency releases when a serious error is encountered that needs to be fixed in the production environment quickly.

All change requests (errors and enhancements) are logged. On a periodic basis, the Solution Expert collaborates with the client's management to determine the priorities of logged change requests for the next "in-sequence" release. Once decided, the Solution Expert is responsible for:

- Defining requirements for all items to be included in the next release.
- Designing each change and communicating the change details to the developers
- Creating a release schedule and determining staffing needs
- Leading the development team to implement the changes
- Ensuring quality of the changes, including the update of test plans to reflect the latest changes
- Managing the rollout of the release to the production environment
- Producing communication documents (e.g. release notes) and providing them to the client's personnel for dissemination to the user community
- Updating documentation to reflect the latest changes, as applicable