

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



“SHODEN VALUES
INTEGRITY, TRUST,
HONESTY AND
CARING.”
TREVOR KOEKEMOER



INSTALLATION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER'S ARSENAL. BUT GETTING THE LONG-TERM SUPPORT SERVICES RIGHT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT.

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Much of Shoden Data Systems' success over the past ten years can be attributed to its unparalleled maintenance and support excellence. Its unique combination of a highly-skilled workforce, exemplary work ethic and culture, and unrivalled technology specialisation allows the company to offer the highest possible level of service to clients.

"Mission-critical storage and server environment failures can be devastating and lead to financial loss, data risk, and damage to reputation," explains Trevor Koekemoer, services and support director at Shoden. "Yet, most of the time, these environments are not adequately understood or managed by those responsible for them."

Ensuring data centre continuity should not just be another IT department function – it must be handled by highly-skilled specialists who continually monitor the environment for potential risks.

PEOPLE – SERVER AND STORAGE SPECIAL FORCES

"Our engineers are top of the class," says Koekemoer. Shoden's engineers are carefully chosen and undergo years of training and guidance before they can be considered expert enough to be responsible for a client's data centre.

The selection criteria of new recruits go well beyond technical skills. Personality and attitude are also highly important, as is a strong desire to learn. Shoden's engineers never stop learning, whether through training, experience or knowledge-sharing. "Our engineers get fulfilment from continuous

learning and are driven by self-improvement. Money alone should never be a driver," says Koekemoer.

The Shoden Academy is an additional source for recruiting resources. The Shoden Academy recruits previously disadvantaged individuals who spend many months at the Academy learning about the company's solutions and products. The more experienced engineers provide guidance and mentorship to the trainees and internal relationships are strengthened.

Once they prove themselves adequately knowledgeable within the Academy, the trainees are allowed to accompany experienced engineers to clients in order to gain hands-on experience.

It takes years before an engineer is considered skilled and experienced enough to handle client support on his/her own.

Despite their rigorous training and the company's high standards, engineers remain humble. Not only do they know how to correctly deal with often agitated and difficult clients, but they are not afraid to ask for help, and are confident enough to admit when they are wrong. They understand that finger-pointing and relaying blame only leads to a loss of reputation and trust, from both clients and fellow engineers.

Interaction and feedback between engineers is continually practised. Superiors provide mentoring and remain open and supportive.

"Shoden values integrity, trust, honesty and caring. These form the foundation of everything we do," says Koekemoer.

PROCESSES – NO CUTTING CORNERS

Adherence to proper procedures plays a vital role at Shoden as they help minimise the margin for error. For example, the implementation process is done in such a way that the client is never put at risk.

"Shoden provides multiple measures against failure," says Koekemoer. "We use proactive methods and tools to identify potential faults and weaknesses before they even become a real threat."

For example, machines have a built-in alert trigger system that activates when there are certain changes in the hardware's characteristics. This form of early detection allows Shoden to prevent hardware deterioration, a common cause of failure.

A remote monitoring tool is also used that continually scans the environment for potential

risks. It also detects whether or not the machines are running optimally.

Shoden provides clients with a 24-hour support desk in case they experience problems. If an issue cannot be resolved or handled telephonically, an engineer will be dispatched to the client as soon as possible.

TECHNOLOGY – VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE

To further minimise risk of failure in a client's data centre environment, all units are fitted with built-in spares in case there is a failure. Additional spares are kept at Shoden as well so that clients never have to go through the unnecessary delays of ordering parts and waiting for delivery from suppliers.

Shoden maintains direct relationships with its suppliers and its hardware manufacturers. "We regularly send feedback to the machine manufacturers regarding our experiences with faults," explains Koekemoer. "This helps them build better products, which, of course, benefits us as well as our clients." **B**

SOME BENEFITS OF USING REMOTE MONITORING SERVICE

- *No investment in hardware (e.g. servers, storage, etc.) required.*
- *No administration required by customers; Shoden does it all.*
- *Instantaneous value is derived through the use of the Out-of-Box-reports.*
- *Used by all levels in the organisation – from users to management.*

HIGH-LEVEL SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDE:

Installation services – Installation services are offered on basic and advanced levels. Shoden installs and configures the solutions it sells to clients and trains staff on the handling of all equipment provided to them.

Equipment maintenance and support services – Shoden holds a substantial inventory of spares in order to enable support to its clients within the quickest time possible with equipment and maintenance requests.

Onsite maintenance support services – Shoden offers onsite maintenance support services based on the client's requirements and needs.