

Dow

Dow (NYSE: DOW) manufactures products in 104 locations across 31 countries. The company's 35,700 employees worldwide deliver a broad range of products for customers in many high-growth industries, including packaging, infrastructure, mobility, and consumer solutions. In all areas, employee productivity literally drives the business.

With great volumes of product to ship and track on tight timelines, Dow employees need reliable tools. Computer issues that disrupt their work could mean, for example, that sealants used to ensure structural integrity of runways at many international airports might not arrive in time for important maintenance.

As Director of Computer Services at Dow, Chris Anderson bears responsibility for preempting and resolving such disruptions. In 2020, Chris and his team engaged Kyndryl—already a trusted partner—to collaborate on transforming the company's device management program end-to-end. The business objective was to improve the reliability and performance of devices and increase the choices the employees had in selecting them.

In a preliminary business review, Kyndryl advised that owning instead of leasing devices, besides being more cost-effective, would allow Dow users to flexibly choose systems that fit the needs of their role, and also to decide when to make a change from one device to another.

In developing a new portal for ordering and replacing devices, a multidisciplinary team worked with partners in IT, Purchasing, and Finance to integrate into existing systems and align with procurement and other financial processes.

The portal connects to a new asset tracking system that automatically maintains data as part of lifecycle management. Integrated into the tracking system are data from a Digital Experience Management platform (DEM), which is also new.

Results

- 45,000 devices converted to service monitoring in 6 months
- 60% reduction of blue screen of death errors with multiple causes and across multiple device types
- 10% increase so far in device life across the fleet due to component monitoring and remediation



Proactively improving user experience

To drive proactive system monitoring, Chris adopted a framework that combines a Kyndryl Level 3 support team with the Riverbed's Alluvio Aternity Digital Experience Management (DEM) platform. This system enables users to resolve known issues in a few clicks by accepting available fixes that DEM recommends.

Dow relies on the Kyndryl Level 3 team to create these automated software fixes that run in DEM. To explain how the partnership actively improves the fleet, Chris offers a general example. When an unknown issue occurs, a Dow Level 1 team member routes a ticket through ServiceNow to a Level 2 expert for on-site troubleshooting. When that expert figures out a solution, they refer the issue to Kyndryl Level 3 experts. When possible, those developers create an automated solution and stage it in Microsoft Azure. Storing the software fixes in the cloud makes them easily available to Dow users worldwide.

If another Dow user experiences the same issue, support teams can resolve it by running the automated solutions through DEM. Even better, since Chris' team can match symptoms to machine profiles, Dow Level 1 support can preemptively recommend fixes to all users who in time would encounter the same issue. Such proactive monitoring and remediation powerfully augments incident management by resolving problems for groups of users in a regular cadence.

"We've improved performance and reliability through our device health monitoring practice, and that's foundational. We are seeing progress in our employee surveys," Chris says.

Many other operational improvements are driven by the ServiceNow integration Kyndryl implemented as part of deploying proactive monitoring. Before the transformation, multiple tools were used by IT and end-users to facilitate ordering, inventory tracking, consumption calculations, and new hire fulfillment. Kyndryl replaced them with the end-to-end workflow integrated into ServiceNow, optimizing Dow's investment in that platform.

"For us, it was a good employee experience to move that way. We can use the same portal for the catalog that our employees were using for many other IT services, so it reduces context switching," Chris explains.

Innovating based on customer feedback

Dow also uses data from device monitoring to assess progress against issues that show up on the annual employee survey. "In the past, we were turning dials and flipping switches, but it was hard to know how much of an impact we had. With this platform, we're able to see movements in the data—so the action is correlated with results," says Chris.

Survey respondents have also indicated improvement in the reliability of the systems. In the most recent survey, users reported dissatisfaction with applications running slowly on their machines. Through investigation, Kyndryl Level 3 team determined there was a conflicting endpoint policy on the systems; and the Dow team asked Kyndryl to develop a solution that resolved the issue while preserving security.

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Director of Computer Services, DOW



Managing the full device lifecycle empowers Dow users and the business

“Asset management has also improved,” Chris notes. “The tracking of our devices throughout their lifecycle has greatly improved globally, all the way through disposal.”

In the shift from an embedded lease to an ownership model, “We worked with our Kyndryl team to build direct lines to our OEMs, which increased our order visibility,” Chris explains. “The timing was just right. As the supply chain constraints came, we’ve been in a better place to add new models to the catalog. And we’re in a better negotiating position, with multi-vendor purchasing.”

Device health tracking on the existing fleet of leased devices also helps the company determine what devices are slowly reaching the end of their useful life. The performance and reliability data provide guidance when it is time to add or remove desktop and laptop models to their catalog.

“We utilize data to make sure we are not underspending on the systems we put in our catalog, which helps to make sure we have the best platform for our consumers,” Chris notes. “Kyndryl is responsible for ensuring that everything works as expected [based on customer specifications] when a device is shipped to our employees, and the right software is loaded when the ‘On’ switch is pushed.”

“Now, when people pick their new computers, they feel empowered knowing they have the flexibility to make a change if it’s not meeting their needs, which we weren’t getting with full-term leases,” Chris says. “Business leaders within specific parts of the company bear the burden of cost. They have data to forecast future needs but can control the pace of device upgrades based on the needs of their employees. As well as the model selection depending on the unique needs of a role.”

Kyndryl is also helping to manage the complexity behind procuring, shipping, deploying, and billing for thousands of devices across multiple languages and different country-specific accounting practices. Integrating with Dow’s Service Now platform enabled local teams worldwide through a centralized management workflow.

Chris’ team continues to improve the migration from device to device through the adoption of Azure-based Microsoft Auto Pilot. Auto Pilot will provide a better experience than with the Microsoft Provisioning Package, which already enables Dow users to migrate to their machines by themselves. Additionally, using Microsoft Intune improves data protection, endpoint management, and analytics.

“It seems pretty easy just to order a computer, but when you’re trying to make the process as simple as possible, it became a very challenging endeavor,” Chris said. “For us, that took connecting several different systems. We all rolled up our sleeves and worked closely with our Kyndryl team to figure out things we’ve never done before.”





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