FLIR Systems, Inc.

FLIR gets a detailed image of remote users' computer issues with GoToAssist

❝ Screen sharing with GoToAssist enables us to resolve issues significantly faster than using just the phone. It's so much more efficient to pinpoint the issue on screen or make the changes ourselves instead of trying to describe a complicated fix to the customer. **❞**

Shawn Dirksen
Senior Applications/Software Engineer

FLIR

www.flir.com

Based in Wilsonville, Oregon, FLIR Systems, Inc., is a global leader in thermal imaging infrared systems that are used to enhance perception and awareness. The company name is an acronym derived from "forward-looking infrared." Commercial uses of FLIR systems include infrastructure security, transportation safety and night vision, firefighting and recreational boating, as well as thermography. Government applications include surveillance, search and rescue, law enforcement, perimeter security, border and maritime patrol and drug interdiction. The company's Commercial Vision Systems Division is located in Santa Barbara, California, where employees produce infrared cameras for surveillance and security and marine products for detection of oil spills, icebergs and pirates, along with cores and components.

The challenge: enhancing IT support for remote sales teams and global customers

Although FLIR is a world leader in imaging technology, ironically its IT support team in Santa Barbara was still using the phone to provide assistance to customers and internal sales teams around the world. These calls were often extremely time-consuming and challenging. According to Shawn Dirksen, senior applications/ software engineer, "We typically handle complex customer installations, with a large number of cameras that use proprietary and third-party software and may be integrated with other technologies, such as radar, video analytics and ground sensors. We also provide support to FLIR salespeople who travel around the United States in a customized bus that is specially equipped to provide demos to prospects and customers."

Dirksen noted that in addition to conducting lengthy support calls, team members were traveling extensively by plane and car to assist customers and salespeople. These demands on their time, together with the technical complexity of the applications they were supporting, put a strain on the small team.

Seeking to shorten call duration and minimize traveling by giving team members the ability to view users' screens, Dirksen evaluated several remote support solutions. "Our top requirement was excellent graphical quality, especially when viewing video from the cameras, so we could see what the customer sees. Video quality had to be good even over bandwidth-constrained networks, because our customers and our sales teams could be connecting from remote locations. We were also looking for a solution offering unattended support to give the team more flexibility."

gotoassist.com

Implementing GoToAssist for remote support

FLIR selected GoToAssist because of its superior graphical quality, unattended support capability and exceptional simplicity for both users and the support team. Dirksen explained, "GoToAssist features the best compression techniques for video as well as text, even over poor network connections, which is critical for effectively supporting our thermal camera systems. It's very impressive."

He added, "The service has some nice tools, such as the ability to set parameters to meet our specific requirements. Users find it very easy to join a support session, and they especially appreciate the fact that they don't have to install software. Some organizations don't permit installations, and they can cause compatibility issues." Dirksen also values the Software as a Service (SaaS) model used to deliver GoToAssist, which relieves his team of routine software administration tasks.

GoToAssist offers unlimited live support to PC and Mac users, as well as the ability to access and control unattended machines. Features include in-session chat, simultaneous support for multiple sessions and file transfer.

The support team uses GoToAssist for about 60 percent of customer and sales interactions

Screen sharing is their preferred approach by far, but in some cases, customers are out in the field without access to an Internet connection. In others, an organization's extremely tight security prevents external access to its network.

Customers typically request support when they are experiencing video quality issues. Using screen sharing, the FLIR team can tune encoder settings and tweak controls to optimize the images based on the customer's particular network setup. They can provide product training at the same time: for example, by switching presenters and allowing the customer to view his screen, Dirksen can run a software demo.

Typical interactions with the global sales organization include adjusting computer settings, updating FLIR applications and setting up PCs and networks. GoToAssist gives Dirksen and his team the flexibility to schedule in advance or conduct a spur-of-the-moment session.

They use the unattended support capability of GoToAssist to assist certain customers that want very close involvement from FLIR as they complete their camera system implementations. "Unattended support enables us to get access at any time without bothering the customer, so we can proactively complete updates and fixes and resolve issues on our own schedule," he noted. The team also provides unattended support for PCs in the sales bus to keep the demo systems running smoothly.

Cutting session time by up to 75%

The team typically supports numerous complex customer implementations around the world at any given time. Thanks to GoToAssist, this workload has become much more manageable. "Screen sharing with GoToAssist enables us to resolve issues significantly faster than using just the phone," Dirksen said. "It's so much more efficient to pinpoint the issue on screen or make the changes ourselves instead of trying to describe a complicated fix to the customer."

Key benefits
- Cuts support time by up to 75% vs. phone only
- Allows team to support one-third more customers
- Minimizes travel to customer sites
- Provides immediate backup to sales team

He continued, "This time savings frees our team to support more installations. In fact, GoToAssist allows us to handle one-third more customers with the same number of people." Keeping the team lean is important to FLIR's business strategy of cost-effective operations.

In addition, GoToAssist allows support representatives to handle several sessions simultaneously for even greater efficiency. The chat feature contributes to this multi-tasking ability, which previously was "impossible" using just the phone, according to Dirksen.

Another important result of the GoToAssist service is increased self-sufficiency of FLIR salespeople. "We used to travel with the sales team quite a bit to run demos for them," he said. "But now that they know they can receive remote support in an instant, they feel more secure and confident on their own. We don't have to be there in person to back them up."

Dirksen concluded, "We're very happy with GoToAssist."