

Cray Customer Service in Europe

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ABSTRACT: *The Cray Customer Service organisation has undergone changes in recent times to ensure continuing high levels of customer satisfaction with Cray Service. These changes are in response to customer expectations of more affordable pricing, and have required Cray to re-invent and refine service delivery methods. This paper describes the Cray Service organisation in Europe and the recent changes, showing how more effective utilisation of resources enables Cray to maintain high standards of service to European customers.*

Background

Cray's Customer Service strategy has changed significantly over the years. In the early days of Cray the hardware technology employed and the repair methods employed dictated that customers enjoyed the services of an on-site engineering team. In most cases a Cray analyst was also required, to help with installing, administering and repairing the then relatively immature software.

Over the years, technology has changed to eliminate the requirements for on-site hardware repair and the need for on site engineers has diminished greatly. Customers do not wish to pay for staff on-site who are under employed when system is running well, as Cray systems do increasingly more of the time as reliability has improved. Customers require a response to their problems in a timeframe to fit their production requirements, and want to see the system repaired efficiently.

At the previous Cray User Group in Alaska a presentation by Norm Belbot of CRI described Alternative Service Solutions which Cray were adopting. The concept of a Call Centre was described and this paper will not attempt to repeat the messages in detail. In summary, Cray Call centres use the latest technology to record and track problems reported by customers, employing well trained staff to diagnose problems remotely, dispatching field engineers to repair problems as needed.

European Factors

While the problem and the solutions described in the previous paper were placed mainly in an American context, it is apparent that other factors and challenges come into play when this solution is deployed in an International context, specifically in Europe as we shall see.

The first factor is the propensity of customers in Europe to speak languages other than English, and many of them. This dictates that it is impractical to serve European customers from one single call centre, unless that call centre is manned by multi-lingual staff able to cover most of the European languages. While it is true that customers expect to have to use English to an extent when working with an American company, they may not have the English linguistic ability to explain with sufficient clarity their Cray problem to an English speaking operator. This being the case many customers would be unlikely to be satisfied with Cray's support if an English speaking call centre were the first point of contact to report problems. It is also likely to be difficult to assemble enough staff with the full range of technical skills and linguistic abilities in the one location in Europe.

Another factor is the existence of the borders between countries which can inhibit the movement of spare parts. Obviously the cost of service and timeliness of repairs is affected by how fast spares can be got to a broken system. Customs procedures can increase the time taken to move spares from one country to another, as well as add to the cost by imposition of duties. It is generally easier to move spare parts between one European Union country and another than to or from non EU countries. If customer's response commitments can not be met by remote spares because of importation delays, then Cray will require to place spares in the country of the customer, which is likely to increase costs, and hence the price charged, for the service.

In the context of Europe, the strategies used by Cray to deal with these issues will be described later, but firstly it is appropriate to give a brief overview of how Cray Service is currently organised in Europe.

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Cray Service in Europe

The Cray Service organisation in Europe is made up of three major regions:

- **Europe Central**

Germany, Austria, Italy
 Manager Juergen Hochlenert, Munich, Germany

- **Europe South**

France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland
 Manager Louis Ancian, Paris, France

- **Europe North**

UK, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Czech Republic
 Manager Colin Campbell, Bracknell, England

For the record, Europe South staff also maintain systems in Morocco, while service in South Africa is managed from Europe North.

The distribution of maintained Cray systems in each European country is as follows. For the purposes of this table, large systems are defined as C90, Y-MP, X-MP and T3D systems while small systems includes YMP-EL, J90 and CS6400 systems.

Country	Large	Small
Denmark	1	
Finland	1	
France	33	43
Germany	26	62
Ireland		1
Italy	8	12
Netherlands	1	5
Norway		1
Poland	1	4
Russia		1
Spain	3	2
Sweden	1	2
Switzerland	2	2
United Kingdom	21	39
Morocco		2
South Africa	1	3
TOTAL	99	179

These systems are supported by a service organisation of 185 staff, based in 10 European countries, plus two staff in South Africa. Countries where Cray maintain systems but has no permanent staff include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, Poland, Russia and the Czech Republic. During 1996

this picture will change with staff being deployed in Russia to maintain a system in Moscow.

Europe Service Strategy

As in the rest of the world, strategy in Europe is to improve service efficiency by increased use of Call Centres and more efficient logistics operation for spare parts. In addition the typically high travel costs within Europe dictate that remote support capabilities be used to maximum advantage, with networks such as the Internet being used to make information available to customers and Cray staff across Europe. Work is also being done to ensure that service resources can be shared effectively across countries in Europe.

Call Centres

With the considerations mentioned earlier regarding language Cray has decided against using one English language Call Centre to serve all European customers based remotely from a Cray Service centre. At this time a Call Centre at Bracknell in the UK serves Europe North customers, utilising the same database technology as is used in the North American centre in Eagan and Atlanta. This database, known as CRUISE, allows the call centre operator to view customer and system information on a workstation in real time while customer describes his problem over the telephone. Details of the problem can be entered to the database and, if problem can not be resolved at once, will be available to whoever the call is assigned to for resolution. Because the database used in Bracknell contains the same data as in Eagan/Atlanta, calls can be escalated seamlessly from Europe to other support groups when appropriate.

At this time further work is being done to implement CRUISE database servers at the Call centres in Paris and Munich to provide service to Europe Central and South customers. It is anticipated that this will be in place by mid 1996.

Spares strategy

In recent times Cray has worked hard to reduce costs associated with the spare parts needed to repair faulty Cray equipment. From a customer perspective of course the expectation is that parts will be available when required, and traditionally Cray has placed an appropriate inventory of spare parts at or close to each customer site. With increasing reliability of systems and changing customer response requirements this strategy has been modified to make more use of spares "banks" in central locations, from which parts can be shipped quickly whenever required.

In Europe such a parts bank has been set up at Eindhoven, in the Netherlands. This location was chosen because of the availability of good road and air links to the major centres in Europe, plus the availability of expertise in warehousing, shipping and customs requirements. This parts bank has a "duty-free" status which means European import duty has not been paid on stored parts, but is paid after a part is dispatched to a country in Europe,

according to the rules and rates of that country. Procedures are in place however to ensure that payment of duty does not slow down the shipping process; it has been agreed between Cray and the authorities that paperwork can be done after the goods are shipped.

Cray use this parts bank either to replenish local spares after use or in some cases as the primary source of spares. Parts in Eindhoven can be replenished quickly from Cray Logistics in Chippewa Falls or from a US partsbank.

Another factor which is helping to improve spares efficiency is the increasing use of an on-line database to record and track spares holdings in all locations. This allows Service staff to quickly locate spares when needed, and also facilitates sharing of spares between systems. In most European countries spare parts are already on-line, and by year end 1996 this process should be complete.

Summary

In this paper it has been shown how Cray Service is responding in Europe to ensure that customers continue to receive the high levels of service they expect, but at increasingly affordable prices. The increasing use of Call Centres and improvements in the methods used to ensure availability of spare parts when required are making major contributions to this effort. It remains the case that Cray Service are committed to

ensuring high customer satisfaction with Cray products and services in Europe, whether service is delivered using new methods or the more traditional local service teams.

Europe Call Centres

Finally, this is a reminder to European customers of how to contact the Call Centres in their region:

- **France** (Services France, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, and Morocco)
 - Hours 0900 -1730, Monday - Friday
 - Phone +33 1 69 29 33 00
- **Germany** (Services Germany, Italy, and Austria)
 - Hours 0830 - 1630, Monday - Thursday, 0830 - 1530, Friday
 - Phone +49-89-14903-146 (in German phone network 0130-865173)
- **UK** (Services UK, Czech Rep, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Holland, South Africa and Poland)
 - Hours 0900 - 1730, Monday - Friday
 - Phone +44-1344-868666
 - Fax +44-1344-722133
 - E-Mail support@uk.cray.com