



## Customer Spotlight



**INTERNET  
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## "WOW" Support

### Introduction

For Sally Foster, vice president of worldwide customer support at Internet Security Systems (ISS), helping the company get to \$250 million in revenues was pretty straightforward - the sales department would sell, and support would resolve any subsequent problems. But the march to \$1 billion in revenues was another story. Building a scalable support organization with the right mix of people, process, and technology was the challenge. The answer, and the cornerstone to getting there, was the SCP Certification program.

### Company Profile

Founded in 1994, Internet Security Systems, Inc. provides security products and services that preemptively protect enterprise organizations against Internet threats. ISS remains on the leading edge of security innovation, inventing cornerstone technologies such as vulnerability assessment and intrusion detection/prevention. While its global support center and company headquarters are in Atlanta, GA, ISS also maintains more than 35 offices in 20 countries worldwide.

### Situation

Creating a scalable environment requires consistent processes and a reliable system to measure performance and customer satisfaction. Before beginning the certification process, ISS management was constantly putting out fires. If the company was going to grow, the support organization needed a dramatic overhaul.

When Foster joined ISS, the support department's internal reputation was based on dubious anecdotal information. There were several opinions as to why things weren't working at optimum levels, but no hard, corroborating facts.

"Pre-certification, anecdotes became huge issues, often with few facts, if any, associated with them. We felt as if we were under siege because we didn't have our arms around the data. We didn't have the systems or the processes in place," Foster explained.

Retooling the support organization would need to include reworking the hiring process; creating consistent, repeatable processes; creating a streamlined customer experience; and leveraging technology to maximize the customer experience and create business efficiencies.



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## Business Solution

ISS needed to make across-the-board changes to processes to meet its revenue goals. The certification program gave ISS the tools to implement new practices and strategies by providing a framework and roadmap to scalability.

Through SCP Certification, ISS capitalized on industry best practices that included documenting processes, soliciting and taking action on customer feedback, implementing soft skills training, and increasing employee retention.

Andy Cimowsky, ISS' manager of certifications and process and project manager for the SCP implementation, recalled that some teams went "kicking and screaming" into the certification process. But because SCP Certification is a proven, industry-tested methodology, buy-in was eventually universal. Daily, weekly, and monthly reporting showed evidence of significant improvements.

"Certification allowed us to push our tentacles outside of the support organization and drive this change into other parts of the company," Cimowsky explained.

## Benefits of SCP Certification

- ISS now uses SCP Certification as a competitive differentiator.
- ISS' support organization has gained elevated importance and credibility.
- Certification created better communication between the support organization and other cross-functional teams.
- ISS has a benchmark to build upon.
- Over the certification timeframe, ISS experienced an increase in average employee longevity in the support area from 1.52 years to 1.95 years.
- ISS saw a steady increase in customer satisfaction scores: Over the course of certification timeframe, combined average support satisfaction rose from 93.6% to 96%. Support overall experience scores rose from 91.2% to 93.5%.
- ISS saw a dramatic increase in customer loyalty: Over the course of certification timeframe, its Reichheld Net Promoter Score went from a -6 to a +33.



## SCP Certification Provides Hard Facts

Cimowsky noted that prior to being certified, one customer making a statement about an issue became a blanket statement for customer consensus. "There was no way to track customer complaints or customer satisfaction so it was impossible to validate the issue or follow up to assure resolution."

"We measure satisfaction now so we know what our satisfaction levels are. We have real quotes from real customers and real numbers," he said.

Foster added that the certification methodology gives her the power to drill down to the minute details of a customer transaction. "If an account executive reports that one of his or her customers waited on hold for an extended time, support staff can find that call and see exactly how long that customer held and, if needed, call them back to assure we resolved their issue and that they are satisfied," she said.

Daily, weekly, and monthly dashboards provide detailed information on a dozen different support organization metrics. Through the dashboards, ISS is able to compare itself against benchmarks for industry best practices, as well as track other key metrics such as customer satisfaction levels, abandonment rates, and hold time.

## SCP Certification Creates a Proactive Environment

When Foster first started with ISS three years ago, she began wearing a Kevlar vest to meetings because there were so many "bullets" to dodge. She recalls handling at least a dozen escalations per day during the early part of her tenure. Since certification, however, she's put the vest in the closet.


"I went to a recent meeting for our worldwide sales organization and we were searching for issues to work on. We were speaking much more strategically rather than about tactical anecdotes. My time now is about cementing customer relationships and getting global strategy more cohesive," she noted.

## SCP Certification Sets a Higher Standard for Hiring

To maintain a standard of excellence, it is crucial to hire quality employees. ISS already had a reputation as being one of the toughest technical interviewers in the Atlanta area. Certification pushed their recruiters to standardize their already established hiring practices and create uniformity.

"One of the SCP challenges was to determine how our good hiring practices would lead to retention," Foster said. "We're hiring good people, but can we keep them? Certification took us to the next level."

Cimowsky added that hiring practices that recruiters once kept solely inside their heads were now documented and available to all recruiters to allow for consistency.



"There's the challenge when you're scaling a company to get that repeatable process that will allow you to scale," Foster said.

## Service Strategies' Expertise Adds Value to Certification

Throughout the certification process, ISS worked with a senior SCP auditor with more than twenty years experience in the information technology industry.

"A key benefit for us is having access to the auditor. When we have a question about best practices we put in a call and they soon have a contact name for us or they relate to us experiences they have had with other companies," Cimowsky said.

Cimowsky added that having the auditor's historical experience and expertise helped to clarify what would and would not work for their particular needs.

"The auditor really coached us through the process. He made it seem possible for us, which was helpful because it was a pretty daunting task. His constant coaching and mentoring was an invaluable resource for us from a knowledge standpoint to connect us with best practices in the industry," noted Foster.

## SCP Certification Raises the Bar

ISS' project managers consider their first year of certification just the tip of the iceberg. Becoming certified was no easy task, and when they started the project they were not sure if they would be able to achieve certification by the specified date.

But everyone at ISS was focused and driven, and they surprised themselves with how much they could accomplish as an organization. Inspired by their achievement, ISS is looking toward the next hurdle with a clear goal in mind.

"What we're really challenged with now, and what we want to use SCP to do, is create that 'Wow' experience. We want to take it to the next level," Foster explained. "As the SCP auditor continues to work with us and the SCP program continues to raise the bar, we will get there!"



To learn more about the Support Center Practices (SCP) Certification program and what it can do for your support organization, contact **Service Strategies Corporation** toll free at 800.552.3058, via email [info@servicestrategies.com](mailto:info@servicestrategies.com), or visit [www.servicestrategies.com](http://www.servicestrategies.com)

