



**Telerik Silverlight Controls Accelerate Development of
Tracker OnDemand**

*The Only Web-based Customer Service and Support Software
Created with Silverlight*

Telerik Silverlight Controls Accelerate Tracker OnDemand Development

Why was this project undertaken?

Our customers have been requesting a web-based version of our Tracker Customer Support Solution for some time. We hesitated to offer this delivery model of the application if it could not retain the clean look and extreme functionality of the desktop version.

We already use Telerik ASP.Net controls for our Self Service Center product so we were familiar with Telerik products and confident Telerik Silverlight controls would allow us to build the application we envisioned. Telerik RadControls for Silverlight gave us the tools to develop a truly interactive user experience without sacrificing speed, capability, or screen customization options.

About the Project

PhaseWare Tracker is a very powerful and successful customer service and support application. It is used by small and medium sized businesses for customer information management, incident management, knowledge management, and billing and service level agreement (SLA) management.

Tracker is primarily used in customer support or help desk environments where the user interface must be as intuitive as possible in order to streamline the call process. The learning curve for new users of the application is generally less than a day.

Incidents, or trouble tickets, are created and submitted to the system along with any required customer information, service agreements, and billing. If this customer is already in the system, the information is easily recalled for incident submission. The incident is automatically routed and tracked from submission through resolution and closure using a workflow template. Incidents can be administered separately, as part of a project, or split into more than one incident. Incident status can be determined at any time in the process.

Tracker has a Screen Designer tool that allows easy modification of templates and graphics without the need for programming skills. A Dashboard application shows multiple processes in real time for workflow management. Reporting, incident classification, and a knowledge base are also part of the package.

We wanted to create a web-based version of Tracker that was just as powerful and feature rich as the desktop application. We wanted Tracker OnDemand to be as similar in look and functionality to Tracker as possible. And we needed to create this new version in Silverlight™ on a short deadline.

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Challenges of the Tracker OnDemand Project

Delivering a fully functional Tracker application through software as a service (SaaS) required adjustments to the function of the desktop features Tracker depended upon. Our goal here was to keep the user interface and functionality as smooth and similar as possible to our Windows Forms version. This reduces the learning curve for anyone switching to the web-based model.

Porting the Windows Forms application to the web and retaining the functionality required greater capabilities than ASP.Net offered. It was also imperative that we utilize third party controls as much as possible to speed up our development process with the Silverlight platform.

Needless to say, porting a Windows Forms application, such as Tracker, to Silverlight introduced a number of challenges. We needed to be able to:

- display and present tabular data,
- create dropdown controls to display multiple columns of data within a dropdown menu,
- open and interact with multiple windows simultaneously,
- display modal or dialog windows within the application, a function not easily created using Silverlight.
- show docked windows at the bottom of our main incident screen in order to easily link to other data relevant to the incident, customer history, and existing solutions from a knowledgebase,
- display data in a hierarchical tree format to show information panels and provide users a list of items to choose from when classifying an incident,
- provide consistent color, appearance, and functionality from screen to screen within the application
- provide keyboard support

In addition to all this our Windows Forms application relied on multiple menu systems to provide a clean way to present the large number of commands available throughout the application. The menus were required at both application and screen levels to support dynamic creation of customized child menus, icons, and dialogs.

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Solution

We reviewed a number of Silverlight third-party control packages during the Tracker OnDemand development process. After an extensive evaluation Telerik's RadControls for Silverlight suite proved to be the leader in terms of features and functionality. Telerik's customer support also proved to be a great benefit.

Telerik Silverlight controls used:

- RadGridView
- RadMenu
- RadWindow
- RadDocking
- RadDragDrop
- RadTimePicker
- RadTreeView
- RadTabs

The **RadGridView**, **RadMenu**, and **RadWindow** controls are core to our application. The other controls were not used as extensively but that does not subtract from their importance to our project.

Telerik's **RadGridView** became an essential component of Tracker OnDemand. Telerik's GridView control was chosen because of its features, flexibility, and performance. It provided all the advanced grid features for moving and showing/hiding columns, sorting, grouping, row filtering, and formatting individual rows.

It was important that Tracker OnDemand have the ability to create columns dynamically and support a large number of records, both functions that **RadGridView** handles very well. Performance was a key factor, as well as the ability to customize column content to show more than just basic tabular data, such as displaying other web controls inside the grid.

Telerik's **RadWindow** proved to be a great solution for displaying modal dialog windows in Tracker OnDemand and saved us significant development effort. One feature particularly useful to us was the ability to intercept and prevent window closure based on validation rules if needed.

Telerik's **RadDocking** control allowed us to easily provide a way to display docking windows at the bottom of our main incident screen. This saved significant development effort and conserved screen real estate by establishing windows at the bottom of the screen that roll open only when needed.

We needed to create various menus throughout the application. For example, menus were needed on the main screen, on each form, and on dialog windows. **RadMenu** provided

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the solution. The most important feature of this tool was being able to create the menus dynamically.

Telerik's **RadTreeView** control provided a great solution for displaying hierarchical data in the application. We took advantage of its ability to load child tree nodes on demand as the user expanded the tree, which sped up the initial load process and prevented data from loading that was not needed.

As for applying consistent colors, appearance, and functionality across the application, Telerik's **theme creation** capabilities made it easy to have a consistent look for all the Telerik controls we used.

Results

The Telerik Suite of RadControls for Silverlight helped us deliver an innovative and feature rich web-based application that rivals the functionality of its Windows Forms counterpart.

In a competitive environment, speed to market for new applications is essential. Telerik's toolkit of Silverlight controls saved a significant amount of development time. There are several advantages to this:

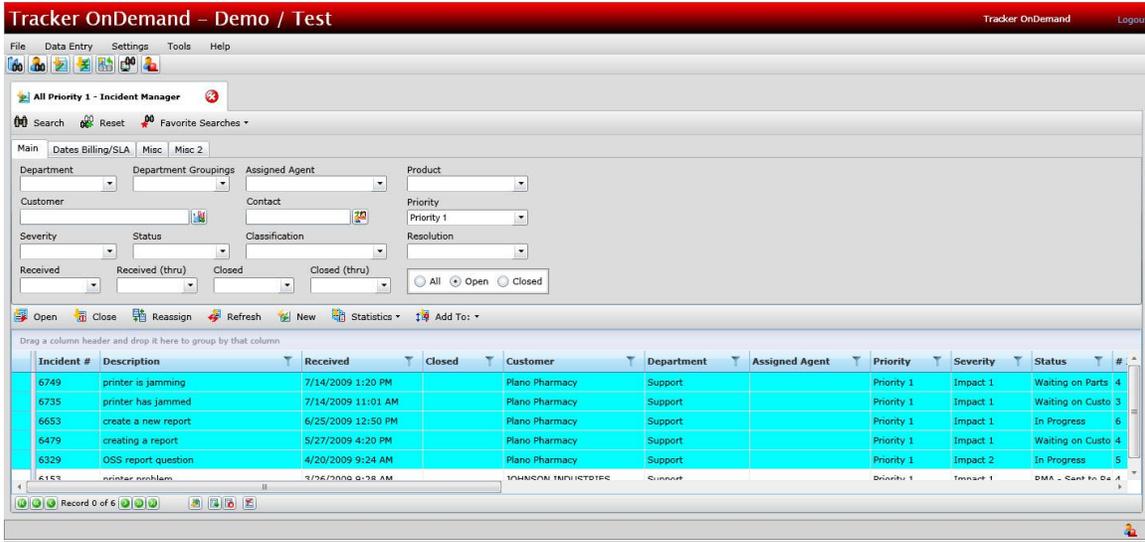
- By getting our application to market sooner, we have the potential to generate more revenue from Tracker OnDemand before other companies deploy competing applications.
- We have the opportunity to reach prospective customers early in the SaaS adoption curve and those who are prepared to implement a new solution but seek the upfront cost savings of a web-based application.
- We are in position to take advantage of the financial recovery as companies begin to spend on customer support and IT projects.

Telerik helped us bring a unique application to customer service and support. Those switching from the desktop or hosted version of Tracker to Tracker OnDemand will find the same structure and features they used before. Those who may wish to change from one delivery method to another in the future will not need to worry about learning a new application layout as both desktop/hosted Tracker and Tracker OnDemand share nearly all functions.

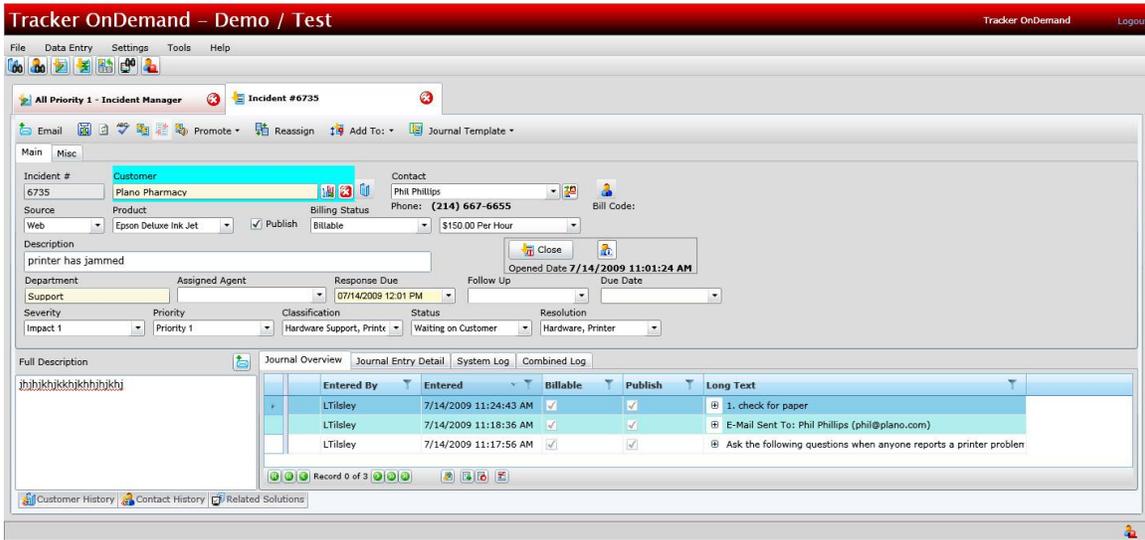
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Screenshots

This screenshot shows the incident search screen which utilizes the **RadGridView** and **RadMenu** controls.

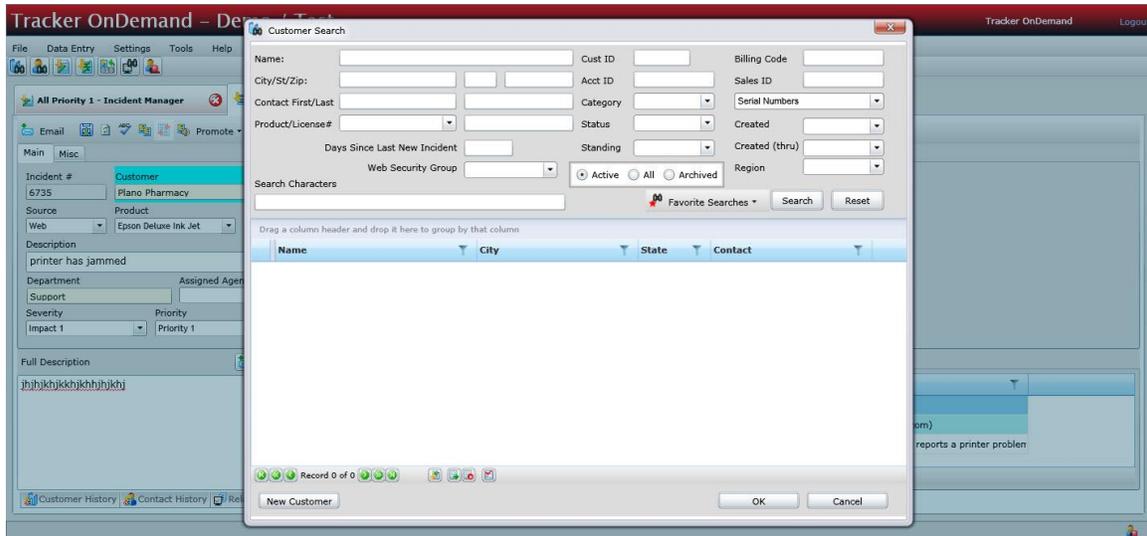


This screenshot shows the main incident screen which utilizes the **RadGridView**, **RadMenu** and **RadDocking** controls.



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This screenshot of the Customer Search screen shows the use of the **RadWindow control** to display a dialog. It also shows the use of the **RadGridView and RadMenu controls** within the dialog.



About PhaseWare

[PhaseWare, Inc.](#) is a private company headquartered in McKinney, TX. The company provides customer service and support software solutions especially for the small to medium business. PhaseWare Tracker and its Event Engine and Self Service Center add-on components provide service desk automation, incident tracking, and knowledge management, along with a wide variety of self service options.

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July 2009