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STAR Awards

2026

2026 TSIA STAR Awards
Featured Application

Overview

Dell Technologies Professional Services delivers over 80,000 projects annually across 147 countries. Before Merlin, staffing the right expert to the right project meant juggling multiple disconnected tools, manual workflows, and institutional know-how locked in people's heads. Roughly 300 resource managers had to weigh dozens of shifting variables, such as location, skills, availability, and project complexity, often leading to mismatches, scheduling conflicts, and wasted effort.

Merlin Staffing is a patent-pending intelligent decision engine that sits on top of Dell's existing Certinia/Salesforce platform. Rather than replacing those systems, it adds a smart automation layer that handles routine staffing decisions autonomously and therefore requires no human searching, matching, or approving, reserving human judgment for complex, strategic engagements.

What We Did

The Problem, Simply Put: Imagine trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces keep changing shape while you're placing them. That was resource staffing at scale; hundreds of managers, multiple tools, and constantly shifting calendars and requirements.

How Merlin Solves It - Four Patent-Pending Innovations:

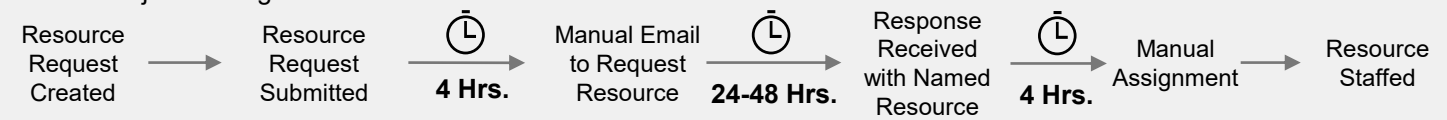
1. **Real-Time Eligibility:** Instead of relying on outdated skill lists, Merlin evaluates every resource's qualifications against project requirements at the exact moment a staffing decision is made. Always current, never stale.
2. **Dual Work-Mode Calendar**: Some roles work in flexible, spread-out hours (like a Project Manager juggling multiple projects); others need dedicated, continuous time blocks (like an engineer performing an installation). Merlin is the first system to manage both styles on a single calendar, even intelligently reshuffling flexible work around fixed appointments to maximize availability.
3. **Smart Schedule Management**: When a high-priority job needs to be placed but a calendar looks full, Merlin can shift flexible assignments within defined limits to create space without disrupting the overall schedule.
4. **Transparent, Policy-Driven Decisions**: Every staffing decision follows a configurable funnel of filters, scoring, and tie-breakers making outcomes reproducible, auditable, and explainable. This manifests as a Customer Policy as well as Dell Policy update without code changes.

Market Differentiation: No major competitor (Oracle, Certinia, Accenture, Deloitte, or IBM) has publicly demonstrated autonomous staffing at this depth. Certinia's first AI staffing agent launched over a year after Merlin went live. Oracle's module still requires manual manager intervention. This pioneering position is why Dell filed a patent.

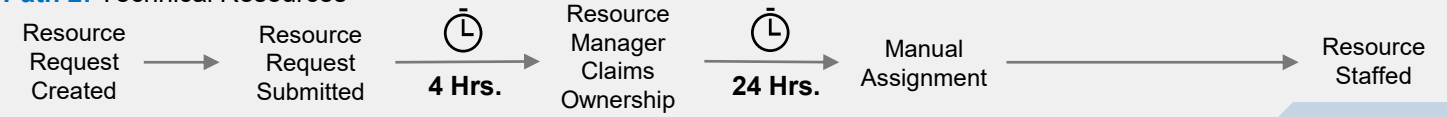
Customer Focus: Merlin Staffing delivers a proven time-to-value that is 23% faster than manually staffed engagements, with even greater acceleration across service tiers such as ProDeploy (42% faster) and ProDeploy Plus (28% faster). This ensures customers realize the full value of their Dell investments weeks sooner. By prioritizing resource continuity and minimizing mid-project reassignments, Merlin helps Dell Professional Services sustain 98%+ CSAT while absorbing a 60% growth in resource request volume.

Before

Path 1: Project Manager

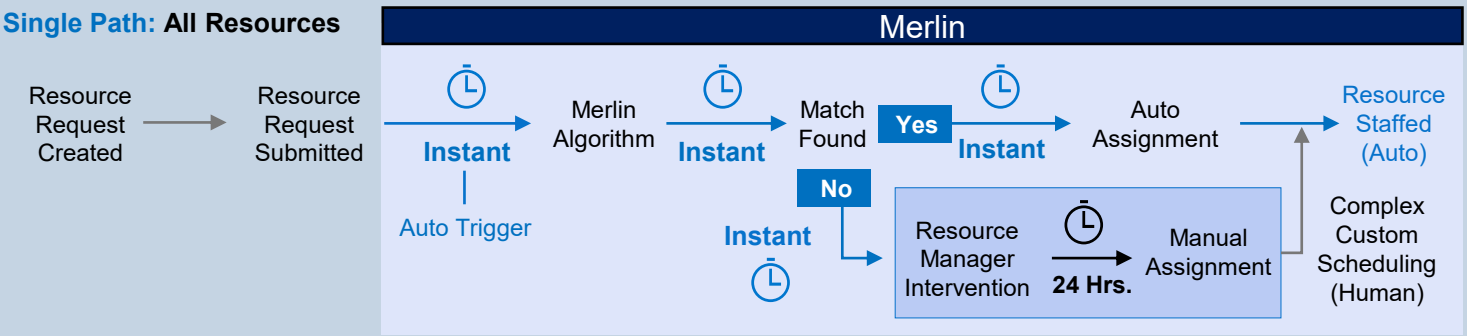


Path 2: Technical Resources



After

Single Path: All Resources



Business Impact

Scale: Rolled out in May 2024 for Project Managers and expanded in January 2025 for Solution Architects & Service Delivery Engineers, achieving 100% adoption across 2,500+ global users. Two legacy third-party tools were eliminated.
Resource Benefit: Resources historically responsible for staffing all work have utilized Merlin Staffing to focus on highly complex staffing exceptions, such as large AI server facilities, while also becoming managers of the staffing logic itself.

Performance Growth (FY26Q2 → FY27Q1):

- Resource requests processed grew (total volume of requests) **60% (16,878 → 27,019)**
- Project Manager autonomous staffing accuracy (zero manual intervention): **43% → 61% (+4% Q/Q)**
- Solution Architect autonomous staffing accuracy (zero manual intervention): **49% → 68% (+7% Q/Q)**

Operational Savings:

- **92%** effort reduction for PM resourcing; 85% for technical resourcing
- **~200** minutes saved per project across several roles
  - Staffing resources were shifted to lower-volume, more complex custom scheduling tasks, improving SLA performance.
- **~300** resource managers redirected to higher-value strategic work
  - Staffing resources were able to upskill and become automation overseers rather than staffing executors.

Dell Testimonial

"Merlin is a gamechanger. The intelligent, calendar-style interface gives us unprecedented clarity into our delivery pipeline — transforming hours of administrative work into real-time, agile decision-making."

— Dell Enablement Leader

Dell Testimonial

"*Scheduling that previously consumed hours now takes minutes. Our teams are freed from administrative bottlenecks to focus entirely on delivering strategic value to our customers."*

— Dell Enablement Leader

Customer Impact

- **Faster Time to Value (TTV):** Merlin-staffed projects deliver services 22 days faster than manually staffed projects (73 vs. 95 days — a 23% reduction).
- **By Service Tier: ProDeploy:** 42 days faster (42% reduction). ProDeploy Plus: 30 days faster (28% reduction).
- **Across Product Lines:** PowerScale: 35 days faster. Data Domain: 27 days faster. PowerEdge: 11 days faster.
- **Global Consistency:** Merlin delivers the fastest TTV in every region — Americas, APJ, and EMEA — ensuring customers receive accelerated service regardless of geography. Dell Professional Services maintains 98%+ CSAT, with Merlin's consistent, intelligent staffing as a key contributor.

Customer Testimonials

"Right resources were aligned to accomplish all the tasks."
"Project Resources were available on time, every time with a plan to execute the project."
"All resources aligned have been extremely knowledgeable, supportive and exceeded expectations."

— Customer CSAT Survey Results

Next Steps

Partner Routing Automation:
Extending intelligent staffing to partner resource pools — scaling capacity without sacrificing quality

Customer Self-Scheduling:
Enabling customers to select resource availability windows directly, turning staffing into a customer-facing capability

Agentic AI Workflows:
Expanding from staffing into end-to-end project lifecycle orchestration with autonomous agents under policy guardrails and human oversight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