

St Helens delivers new standards with VMware Service Manager



St.Helens Council

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Customer

St Helens Council

Industry

Government

Challenges

- Introduce automated and auditable Service Management processes to support ITIL best practice and ISO/20000 compliance.

Key Solutions

VMware Service Manager with Federated CMDB, Incident Management, Problem Management, Service Level Management, integrated Customer Portal and Knowledge Base.

Benefits

- VMware Service Manager process automation and reporting underpins ISO compliance
- More incidents resolved at first line level
- 98.5% of Incidents resolved within SLA
- Easy integration with existing IT infrastructure
- Scalable solution

St Helens Council

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Designated a top performer by the independent Audit Commission, the body that ensures sound financial management and best use of public sector resources, St Helens Council is committed to providing both quality and value-for-money in local services. Serving 180,000 residents and catering for more than 7 million visitors to the Borough annually, the ‘4 Star’ rated Council pursues a policy of rigorous performance measurement and continuous improvement compliant with industry standards.

Recent years have seen an ever-growing focus on e-governance and readily accessible services, and at St Helens the IT department is now responsible for underpinning all services required by users of IT within the Council; from the Chief Executive’s office, children’s services and social care right through to urban regeneration and the environment. With the onus on service excellence, the department has whole-heartedly embraced ITIL best practice, recently becoming the first Council to gain full accreditation under ISO/IEC 20000 - the quality standard which verifies that key IT Service Management processes are aligned both with the needs of the business and with international best practice.

As ICT Business Manager at St Helens, Ste Sharples, explains, “Previously St Helen’s IT department operated a typical Help Desk, mainly focused on supporting back office applications. But responding to the changing landscape in local government, we had to find a way to provide much greater value to the business.

VMware Service Manager eases path to best practice

“Using ITIL as the framework and VMware Service Manager as the solution, we have transformed the way in which we deliver IT services. Today we have visibility of the IT infrastructure, effective and auditable Service Management processes, and are fully geared to supporting Council operations across the board.”

VMware Service Manager solution was selected by the Council for its scalability and ease-of-customization. St Helens was also quick to realise the potential of the solution’s fully integrated customer portal as a cost-effective means of delivering 24 x 7 service to the 3,000 Council employees, including shiftworkers and roaming staff, that use laptops and pcs.

Following a short series of training courses provided by VMware, implementation of the new Service Desk went smoothly, and integration with the Council’s existing Zenworks asset discovery tool proved straightforward thanks to the snap-in connector provided with the CMDB.

According to Sharples, “The VMware Service Manager is specifically designed to assist Incident and Problem Management processes, allowing us to focus less on how to implement ITIL principles and more on developing a closer relationship with the business.”

“Implementing the VMware Service Manager has been pivotal for us in terms of delivering tangible business benefits to the wider organization.”

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Automation underpins increased efficiency

The new Service Desk has enabled St Helens to proactively manage the Incident, Problem, Known Error lifecycle, and as a result, nearly 6 out of 10 calls are now resolved by the first line team of 5 analysts. With 2,200 logged each month, the system’s knowledge base with its bank of call histories and workarounds has played an important role. The team also relies on the bulletin board to proactively advise users of known errors and planned outages, which in turn has reduced the number of related calls and increased customer satisfaction.

The introduction of the integrated VMware Service Manager Customer Portal has also been a significant win for the IT department given that the Council is committed to delivering services 24 x 7. The Service Desk is manned between 8am and 5.30pm, but those working out-of-hours can now use web-self-service to solve issues, as well as log Incidents and service requests.

Service Desk Team Leader at St Helens, Matt Cambell, confirms that the VMware Service Manager solution has had a noticeable impact on performance, “Now we have much greater visibility, not just of the current state of our IT real estate, but of how individuals are performing and how we as a group are delivering against SLAs.”

“The fact that 98.5% of all Incidents are being resolved within SLA gives the organization confidence in our ability to deliver high-quality service. And ICT team members have embraced the concept of continuous improvement, because they know they are building on a firm foundation.”

Already 80% ISO compliant using VMware Service Manager

In line with the Council’s commitment to best practice and continuous improvement, a key goal for the ICT team was to achieve ISO/IEC 20000 certification. The standard looks for compliance in areas such as planning and implementing service management; introducing new or changed services; service delivery process; relationship processes; resolution processes; control processes; and release processes - and demands that these are rigorously adopted.

Sharples comments, “When we decided to go down the ISO/IEC 20000 route, we were both surprised and delighted to find that we were already 80% compliant with the standard thanks to our implementation of best practice procedures and processes, and of course, VMware Service Manager.”

The VMware Service Manager solution can automate process design as well as the reporting and audit trails required to prove process compliance. Using VMware Service Manager has allowed St Helens to provide standard SLAs for all supported systems, and to adopt tighter budgeting and accounting procedures, undertaking cost benefit analyses to establish, whether, for example, an upgrade to improve network performance should be a priority.

According to Sharples, “St Helens is the first authority in the UK to be awarded certification against the ISO/IEC 20000 standard, and the fact that we were able to achieve compliance relatively easily is clearly down to VMware Service Manager. Even where improvement was still needed, for example with document management, we were able to use the VMware Service Manager CMDB to log and track the required documents.”

Service Desk platform for continuous improvement

The department has also been able to address Availability and Capacity management issues, and formalise Change and Release practices. The next stage will be to integrate Change Management processes fully into the VMware Service Manager system.

“Implementing VMware Service Manager has been pivotal for us in terms of delivering tangible business benefits to the wider organization. We can now talk to our users in terms of delivering service and prove that we are meeting our service delivery targets,” comments Sharples.

“Working with the VMware team has been a very positive experience. At the end of the day, without VMware Service Manager at the heart of our service delivery, we simply wouldn't be ISO certified and ready to meet the challenge of continuous improvement that lies ahead with our planned introduction of ITIL v3,” he concludes.

