

ANSTO adopts scientific approach to IT services with VMware Service Manager



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– Allison Medhurst, Client Services Manager, ANSTO

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Customer

ANSTO

Industry

Scientific Research

Challenges

- Align IT to the business
- Implement ITIL processes to deliver an improved customer experience

Key Solutions

VMware Service Manager solution for Incident, Problem and Change Management; CMDB, Release Management, Configuration Management, Continuity Management, Customer Portal, online forms, Knowledge Base, automated workflows.

Benefits

- Dramatically improved customer satisfaction
- 33% improvement in first line resolution rates with associated cost savings
- Comprehensive reporting to support continuous improvement

ANSTO

VMware's Infra solution (now known as VMware Service Manager) for Incident, Problem and Change Management; CMDB, Release Management, Configuration Management, Continuity Management, Customer Portal, online forms, Knowledge Base, automated workflows.

Being labelled as the 'No Help' IT Help Desk by your own business is an unenviable position for any support team to find itself in. Yet this was the starting point for improvement at the Australia Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO).

ANSTO is the center for Australia's nuclear science capabilities, offering a range of scientific and technical services to governments and organizations locally and around the world. Clearly, an ineffective support function was not in keeping with the organization's prestigious standing within the scientific community, and the time had come to overhaul the provision of IT Services.

When a new IT Services (ITS) management team took the reins, several key business problems were identified. Of primary concern was the lack of a strategic plan linking IT with ANSTO's business priorities, a problem exacerbated by poor communication between teams and business units. On the positive side, staff were highly technically skilled and were all ITIL certified.

The new management team quickly realised the importance of bringing IT closer to the business, with ITIL providing the framework for ongoing improvement. Tellingly, one of the basic recommendations within ITIL is to log all calls; ensuring that problems don't slip through unnoticed and allows support teams to understand where and why problems are occurring. ANSTO soon identified that 70% of its support calls were not even logged and so the process to embed ITIL best practice began.

The goals were clear: keep IT working and rapidly restore systems if something goes down; improve customer satisfaction and value to the business; introduce metrics and reporting to measure success; remove the silo mentality where staff in different physical locations were working autonomously, and create transparency so that customers can see that problems are being fixed. And above all, upgrade the overall customer experience to become the Service Provider of choice.

Business-aligned IT support

The ITS team were using several outdated systems with expired maintenance contracts, with the prevalent break/fix culture leaving little time for projects or proactive service. The ITS team had an existing Service Desk tool, however the tool was proving to be inflexible and support was difficult to access. They decided to stop and conduct a review to assess if the existing tool would meet the needs of

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ANSTO’s newly designed ITIL-based processes. This led to the development of an in-depth selection criteria designed to obtain a tool to meet the requirements for a Service Desk solution that would facilitate an ITIL oriented ANSTO approach.

Having reviewed four products in detail, the decision was made to select VMware’s Infra solution (now known as VMware Service Manager) – a powerful out-of-the-box solution for rapid implementation of ITIL-aligned processes, which would keep costs down while helping ANSTO forge ahead with improvements. In all, it took just six weeks for the organization to implement Incident, Problem and Change Management, Customer Portal, Online forms and Knowledge Base, underpinned by automated online forms and Service Workflows.

Prior to implementation, ANSTO had taken the prescient step of benchmarking its current levels of ITIL maturity, providing a springboard for service improvement and development. Allison Medhurst, Client Services Manager at ANSTO maintains that this was time well spent, “Having an external and unbiased audit of ITIL maturity has really given us a true view of performance levels and a baseline to work against, and with our new Service Desk we can continually measure and report against all our key performance metrics, making it much easier to demonstrate value to the business.”

Impressive results and strong ROI

Since implementing Infra, the results have been impressive. For example, recent customer surveys ranked the Service Desk as performing above average on key customer satisfaction measures including speed of service, quality of incident resolution and the overall service experience. Furthermore core service availability consistently exceeds ANSTO’s target of 99% availability.

Dramatically improved first line resolution rates underline how far ITS has come since the Infra implementation. Prior to the project, just 22% of calls were being closed at first contact. Now, 55% of calls on average, are resolved at first level - consistently exceeding the Service Desk’s Service Level Agreement of 45% first line resolution.

Allison Medhurst cites industry research showing that as the complexity of IT increases, the demand for IT support is rising sharply year-on-year with a knock-on effect on hard-pressed budgets. Yet in ANSTO’s case, despite having consciously increased the volume of calls logged and hiring additional staff; on-going efficiencies have offset the trend towards rising costs as well as the risk of being outdone by outsourced services.

“Improving first line resolution rates is a highly effective way of achieving ROI on your Service Desk investment as escalating a call effectively doubles the cost of processing it. In our case, after implementing VMware Service Manager, we are now resolving 33% more calls at the first line, which equates to substantial savings,” explains Medhurst.

“My advice would be to always take advantage of industry benchmarks to review how your organisation is performing. And if improvements are required, this provides clear justification of why the business needs to invest in these improvements – whether that be through tools such as VMware Service Manager, or in areas where processes can be improved.”

Medhurst says that now, after implementing ITIL and Infra, the Service Desk consistently receives compliments from customers. Furthermore, the business has recognised this success by handing ownership of the newly centralised ANSTO Service Desk, covering functions such as HR, Finance and Campus Services, to the ITS team. And most importantly, the ‘No Help’ Help Desk tag has long since fallen into disuse.

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Ongoing, the ITS team has defined a customer experience program, and has completed the next phase of its IT Service Management roadmap in June 2009, which focused on Release, Configuration and Continuity Management, while later this year an ITIL maturity assessment will test capabilities against the latest version of ITIL, Version 3. The Infra scheduling tool will also be used to oversee all future service improvement programs.

“At ANSTO, even with budget pressures, we have found that by improving processes, supported by VMware Service Manager’s sophisticated solution to automate these processes, it is possible to deliver better, more robust IT services to the business. And we are confident there is much, much more to come,” anticipates Medhurst.

End Note: VMware’s Infra ITSM Solution is now known as VMware Service Manager.

