

VMware Service Manager yields growing benefits for Central Garden & Pet



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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Customer

Central Garden and Pet

Industry

Retail

Challenges

- Improve the quality and visibility of IT services

Key Solutions

Implements Service Management best practice using ITIL

Benefits

- Faster call resolution
- More efficient use of resources
- Improved service delivery

Central Garden and Pet

Implements Service Management best practice using ITIL

Central Garden & Pet Company is a leading innovator, marketer and producer of quality branded products for the pet, lawn and garden supplies markets. Their pet products include food for pet birds and small animals, aquarium products, flea, tick, mosquito and other pest control products, edible bones, cages, carriers, pet books, and other dog, cat, reptile and small animal products. These products are sold under a number of brand names, including Kaytee, All-Glass Aquarium, Oceanic, Kent Marine, Zodiac, Pre-Strike, Altosid, Nylabone, TFH and Four Paws. Their lawn and garden products include grass seed, wild bird food, weed and insect control products, decorative outdoor patio products and ant control products. These products are sold under a number of brand names, including Pennington, Norcal Pottery, New England Pottery, GKI/Bethlehem Lighting, Lilly Miller, Matthews Four Seasons, AMDRO and Grant's. Founded in 1980 as a distribution company, through a combination of strategic acquisitions and internal investment, they have evolved the business into a portfolio of leading brands in the Lawn and Garden Supplies and the Pet Supplies industries.

In 2005 the Company Management made the decision to transform their Information Services and Information Technology model from one that was highly decentralized to one that was highly standardised and primarily centralised. The end result would enable more seamless transactions and communications across the enterprise as well as improve the capability to be one face to the customer base.

Among the challenges that this strategy created for the Information Services Organization was the need for a new design in the Service Management Model and specifically the IT support of end users. Central was comprised of a largely autonomous group of 20 business units with a total workforce of approximately 5,000 employees. Each of the 20 business units effectively had their own WAN, unique Messaging Services and Infrastructure, unique ERP applications, their own LAN designs, and in most cases their own IT Organizations. The landscape consisted of over 40 Active Directory Domains, 20 email systems, and an equally daunting number of mission critical applications running on a variety of platforms and operating systems. The security of the networks and the inability to introduce standards or leverage IT investments across businesses were immediate problems that needed to be resolved.

Implementing ITIL best practice with VMware Service Manager

At the launch of the transformation of the WAN, business applications and messaging infrastructure, there was a parallel effort in defining and implementing a roadmap for effective Service Management in the 'new Information Services Organization'. That effort included the adoption of ITIL Best Practices and the selection of VMware Service Manager as the scalable Service Desk software that would underpin a new enterprise-wide approach to IT Service Delivery.

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“Clearly in setting out to turn Central’s traditional approach to IT on its head, we were undertaking a huge cultural and operational challenge,” comments Pete Keenan, Service Desk and Governance Manager at Central. “However, committing to the common language and definitions of ITIL provided the foundation we required to move forward effectively.”

Central began the transition of the existing IT landscape – with its 11 stand-alone “help desk operations” – into one virtual Service Desk backed by three strategic IT Support Teams: Operations, Enterprise Systems and Business Intelligence. According to Pete Keenan, the company relied heavily on VMware to support the “culture shift” to ITIL. “We selected the web-based VMware Service Manager solution because it aligned fully with the ITIL Best Practice Framework. The system is scalable, allowing us to implement further disciplines as required. It has a powerful and flexible workflow engine that enabled us to model new processes and then implement them with fully featured automation within VMware Service Manager. The software application underpins our Incident and Problem Management processes and also ensures operator compliance.”

Reaping IT Service Management rewards

Since implementing VMware Service Manager, the number of customers supported by the new Service Desk team has increased from just over 80 to more than 1,800 employees located at 70 different business sites. As call volumes increased, and against the background of rapid organizational change, the Service Desk team of 6 Analysts grew increasingly confident in their ability to manage and resolve Incidents, delivering measurable improvements in service levels. Initially just 2% of calls were being closed on first contact in an average time of 13 minutes, but over a period of just 12 months this rose substantially to 55% of all calls being resolved on first contact in an average time of less than 4 minutes.

Introducing VMware Service Manager Incident and Problem Management software contributed significantly to the efficiency of the Service Desk team and Central’s ability to draw up internal Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for the first time. This resulted in continual improvement in service and substantial improvement in communication with customers. “Developing SLAs using VMware Service Manager has had the single greatest impact on Service Desk efficiency and customer satisfaction”, maintains Pete Keenan. “In the first month alone we saw a 36% increase in the number of calls closed at first contact, while our ability to meet agreed SLAs increased to over 50%”.

Automating SOX compliance with VMware Service Manager

Although Change Management was a core component of Central’s new Service Desk strategy, introducing this discipline proved challenging with the company quickly concluding that some of its early policies and procedures were simply too cumbersome. At this point, Central decided to take advantage of the powerful workflow design and automation functionality in VMware Service Manager to refine its workflows and streamline processes for greater efficiency.

At the same time, regulatory issues were prompting closer examination of ways in which Central’s IT management team could better support business requirements. As a result, the IT Service Management team expanded its remit to include developing processes, standards and disciplines for SOX compliance.

As Pete Keenan remarks, “Today 50% of the approvals we need from a SOX perspective are automatically captured by the VMware Service Manager tool; and we estimate that applying the ITIL framework to our SOX processes has halved internal auditing costs in the last two years.”

Having built firm foundations using VMware Service Manager software, Central is focusing on the further development of its current processes. There are also plans to roll out the Service Desk concept to additional business units in the coming year.

According to Pete Keenan, “Through the adoption of the ITIL best practice framework and our selection of VMware Service Manager software, Central Garden & Pet has made great strides in a relatively short time – and hit upon a solution to cost-effective regulatory compliance along the way”.

“VMware Service Manager has exceeded our expectations, and crucially the software has proved more than flexible enough to meet our rapidly evolving needs”, he concludes.

