

Southampton City Council streamlines the procurement process and meets service level agreements with VMware Service Manager



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– Steve Dalton, IT Business Consultant, Southampton City Council

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Customer

Southampton City Council

Industry

Local Government

Challenges

- Inefficient IT procurement processes

Key Solutions

VMware Service Manager solution to automate procurement workflows.

Benefits

- Improved service levels consistently within SLA's
- Transparent procurement system with capability to track and monitor progress of orders

Southampton City Council

VMware Service Manager to automate procurement workflows.

Southampton City Council has more than 9,000 staff providing services to the community of the City and its district. The services range from leisure and tourism to education, housing and social services as well as transport and environmental issues, such as refuse collection and local park maintenance.

The council relies upon its IT infrastructure to support staff as they deal with enquiries and supply services to the community. With over 3,500 PCs across its organization, the VMware software has for some years been invaluable for the IT help desk to log and track calls from internal users. Monitoring incoming requests and logging them enables the department to work more efficiently and meet service level agreements. As well as the IT help desk, VMware Service Manager is also used by two business support desks and a finance help desk.

Streamlining procurement processes

More recently, the Council has implemented a Change Management system from VMware Service Manager. The Change Management solution is used for all computer procurement, to enable staff to place orders for new equipment and track the delivery process through to installation.

Steve Dalton, IT Business Consultant at Southampton City Council: “Since we have implemented VMware Service Manager, we now have an efficient process that enables anybody in the procurement chain to track and monitor the purchase, delivery and installation of a wide variety of computer equipment. We split the process into a fast track delivery and a non-standard delivery process, and can now deliver a machine, configured and ready within just five working days.”

The fast track delivery picks equipment from a buffer stock, enabling the request to be fulfilled quickly. Where the request may include non-fast track items for the desktop, such as digital cameras, PDAs, laptops, non-standard PC builds, copiers and scanners, the delivery is termed non-standard and takes slightly longer.

Implementing the Change Management solution has enabled the key roles and people involved in procurement - in stores, ordering, scheduling and technical installation - to be scheduled in a routine process, with identified tasks and approvals.

VMware Service Manager is used to request the order, and to track and monitor progress as it goes through the various departments. At the end of the procurement cycle for that particular item, customers have access to the document that tracks the progress of the delivery and installation, and the process is visible to all those interested parties.

Previously a procurement request was put through and then the customer had to wait for delivery, without knowing the status.

“One of our issues with the procurement process was that it was an opaque set of transactions of which the customers were unaware,” explained Dalton.

“This was causing a degree of frustration as customers didn't know the status of their

order. The implementation of VMware Service Manager has meant that the system has become far more transparent - we now have far fewer calls from frustrated users about the progress of their order.”

Improving efficiency

Implementing Change Management processes ensures that standardized methods and procedures are used for all changes. The tasks required are set in a workflow with approval dependencies. Automating tasks in this way enables the changes to be handled with less disruption and more efficiency.

Setting out the tasks needed for the procurement process required careful planning, since the tasks had to be identified first and the logical dependencies worked out. These were then put into a defined workflow process that could be followed routinely.

According to Dalton, “The simplified methodology belies an underlying complexity in the system. We have now automated our entire procurement around VMware Service Manager, having first worked out the tasks, people and processes involved.

“There was quite a lot of work involved initially as we had to get buy in at all levels, but the benefits involved far outweigh the initial time invested.”

The implementation of the Change Management software took just two months, and the fast track delivery service has been in place since September 2003.

“The main result is that people get the equipment they request in the timescales that we said it would be delivered in. It turns up on time, it’s the right equipment and in the right place,” said Dalton.

In the fast track process the customer calls the Customer Services representative to request an order of a standard machine. The request is logged in VMware Service Manager, tracked until delivery and then automatically sent to a technician’s group.

Once delivery has been organized from the procurement team, the stock is picked up and driven to one of the many sites in the Southampton City Council’s remit and installed.

Meeting Service Level Agreements

At the end of the installation period, VMware Service Manager tracks the quality of the service provided. In the event that this is successful, it is flagged within VMware Service Manager as an approved installation. If it is rejected then it is flagged as such and the team can implement remedial action as part of the Quality Assurance process. Another task flags the Stores people to collect the old equipment. As part of the process, the Customer Services representative is also tasked to speak with the customer to get a customer satisfaction report.

Using VMware Service Manager has provided Customer Service staff and customers with visibility of the order process, reducing duplicated effort and enabling the team to process requests much faster.

The council now has 130 users of VMware Service Manager - 50 at any one time - based at 95 different locations across the city. “Having visibility of requests has enabled us to manage our equipment stocks better, as well as using the historical information to help with continual improvement. We can also report against our published SLAs. In fact, using VMware Service Manager has significantly improved service - we have consistently delivered within the SLA period,” said Dalton.

End-to-End Service Delivery improvements

Since the success of the VMware Service Manager Change Management solution, the Southampton IT team is looking at using the software for other projects as part of their ongoing service delivery refinement.

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“We see the potential for a lot of growth and assistance with VMware Service Manager software,” said Dalton. “Our next improvement projects will revolve around integrating Help Desk, Change Management and Asset Management using VMware Service Manager projects,” he added.

“We are very excited with the idea of moving it all into a cohesive whole system, and our longer term strategy is to develop this framework to support our determination to provide quality services to our customers in a cost efficient and timely environment,” he concluded.

