

Ministry of Education Gets Results with ITIL Improvement Program

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– Sian Farr, Business Analyst, New Zealand’s Ministry of Education

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Customer

NZ Ministry of Education

Industry

Education

Challenges

- Continually improve IT service levels within the Ministry of Education.

Key Solutions

Undertake a Service Improvement Program based on ITIL best practice methodology and supported by VMware Service Manager technology.

Benefits

- Comprehensive reporting for management
- Improved service performance
- Greater resource efficiency
- Clear audit trail

NZ Ministry of Education

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New Zealand’s Ministry of Education aims to raise achievement and reduce disparity. It takes a facilitative rather than directive role in influencing education outcomes, working within the education sector to ensure that all New Zealanders can reach their potential through education.

The Ministry has approximately 3,000 staff based in more than 70 locations, supported by the Wellington-based Infrastructure Services Division. This includes eight members of the Help Desk team: six Help Desk Analysts, a Business Analyst and the Help Desk Manager. The Help Desk covers all Incident Management and Service Request processing functions for ICT services within the Ministry.

As part of an ongoing Service Improvement Program, the team continually looks for ways to improve Help Desk services and systems. In an effort to keep service levels high, the team aims to resolve 70% of received calls at the first point of contact. On average, the team receives about 225 incoming calls every day.

Following a review which identified a number of areas for improvement, including a need to reconfigure the existing support tool, VMware Service Manager, a Service Improvement Program based on best practice IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) methodology was undertaken. Program objectives included providing a faster, more effective and easier-to-use service request process, improving service support satisfaction amongst the Ministry employees and facilitating the provision of feedback reports to the business.

Delta Software, A VMware Service Manager partner, worked with the Ministry across the implementation and provided enhancements to automate the user access request system. This was done with a front-end to VMware Service Manager Change Management tool and has been a key success factor for the project.

“We decided to upgrade our existing VMware Service Manager system to Version 7.0.3 to facilitate our ITIL-based improvement program,” said Sian Farr, Business Analyst. “Being pragmatic about what we could achieve, we initially decided to go for our main ‘pain points’ - the areas of service that were most time-consuming, difficult to manage and hard to monitor.”

Active Directory Integration

One of these pain points involved managing two separate stores containing customer data. The upgrade enabled the Ministry to integrate VMware Service Manager customer base with its Microsoft Active Directory store. This led to improved customer management and facilitated the online service request project.

“We wanted to use Active Directory to create a single customer database and single version of the truth. Before the upgrade, we had three different versions of our databases but since integrating VMware Service Manager with Active Directory we are now down to two” said Farr.

Getting Service Request Forms Online

The service desk deals with more than 40 enquiries a week to set up new users and make amendments to accounts. Following the upgrade, Web-based forms were made available to automate service requests. The forms save time by enabling staff to set-up new users and modify user access to IT services and facilities. This includes access and authorization requests for applications or services such as user accounts, mailbox accounts and applications.

“We identified this as an area where we could make very real and meaningful changes by providing a simple Web form for staff to use. Previously customers manually completed a four page paper-based form before obtaining manager sign-off. This was then submitted by fax, post or emailed via the Manager to the Help Desk. The details were then logged by the Help Desk Analyst. It was slow, hard to track and often required follow-up due to omissions and errors” explained Farr.

A pilot Web page was trialed which captures information provided by the customer and automatically loads it as a Request within VMware Service Manager. The online form is a front-end enhancement built on top of the standard VMware Service Manager Change Request model and uses its core Change Management workflow tools. It includes look-up fields, mandatory fields and validation to minimize input errors and omissions.

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Improved Quality of Service

The upgrade to VMware Service Manager has also enabled the Ministry to review its process for handling Incidents and Problems at Level Two. The new system enables the team to log caller information more effectively, improving the quality of call details and allowing them to quickly validate information.

“Initially our Level Two staff felt that they were too busy taking calls to log data as well but we have been able to demonstrate the benefits of tracking all Problems in order to complete the audit trail. All in all, this method makes everyone’s job easier and provides more complete information for management about resource requirements.”

“VMware Service Manager also has a really useful ‘deferred hold’ option which allows the team to keep call details live while they move on to handle other queries. They can then go back and complete the call at a later time. Another key function was the introduction of automatic escalation and breach notices for Incidents and tasks. Overall there has been a noticeable improvement in call management.”

Improved Reporting

Another area of focus is the provision of reports to customers and the internal support team. VMware Service Manager reporting capability has allowed the team to effectively demonstrate improved service performance throughout the organization.

Monthly reports are run to describe what has occurred since the last report was run. The reports include downtime, problem types and requests for change by service areas. Simple and quick to generate, the reports are perceived by management as a valuable extra service.

The Help Desk also generates reports on Incidents by business unit. Delta worked with the Ministry to widen the breadth of its reporting to break down the information and show results for an individual or support group. They can also show the duration of calls and which business units they originate from.

Looking to the Future

The benefits to the Ministry from the service desk upgrade and review of its core support processes and success measures have been numerous. The automated online forms are convenient and make processes easier to track. Overall, the service desk has greater visibility and transparency, which makes managing their tasks easier.

“The team from Delta Software was involved throughout the project and provided an excellent service. Their professional attitude and focus on the big picture drove the success of this implementation” said Farr.

The Ministry has deployed VMware Service Manager across the fifty-strong Infrastructure Service Division and plans to integrate it with other systems such as Finance, where it will monitor leased PC assets and generate monthly reports for management teams. The team also plans to fully populate and manage its VMware Service Manager Configuration Management Database (CMDB) which is the glue that will bring all its applications together.

