

Sydney sets an Olympic first for security management

“VMware Service Manager slotted straight into how we operated. Because it is built around a strong workflow logic, it could be easily adapted to Olympic security requirements.”

– Mark Watson, Manager of the OPRO, Sydney 2000 Olympics

Sydney 2000 Olympics

Sydney had an ambitious plan for managing the security of the 2000 Olympic Games, more so because no host city had done it quite the same way before.

In the Sydney plan, representatives from all public security agencies, from police, fire and ambulance to intelligence and bomb management, would be drawn together into a coordinated team known as the OPRO—Olympic Precinct and Regional Operations.

The team would have real-time visibility of all security incidents as they were occurring in scores of different locations.

From the Police Commissioner to guards on patrol, anyone involved in the security of the Games would be able to log Incidents and track their progress, in a system that ran to all Olympic venues and principle command nodes.

As the first command centre of its size to have been brought together for security purposes within Australia, the OPRO was trailblazing, not just in an operational sense, but in terms of finding the software that would bring the operation together in a practical sense.

The various agencies involved each had their own internal databases and dispatch systems, but none was suitable for creating a central database into which incidents occurring at scores of different locations, from bomb threats to petty theft and lost children at venues, could be logged and monitored.

A critical factor for the OPRO was finding a system that its user group of security personnel, many of whom had limited experience with computers, would be able to easily learn and use.

The success of the OPRO network relied on everyone having immediate hands-on access to the system, rather than being dependent on reports passed on from specialist computer operators.

VMware Service Manager slotted straight into how the OPRO operated

Mark Watson, Manager of the OPRO, became aware of VMware Service Manager after seeing it used in the IT Help Desk of the NSW Police Service. He says there was initially some concern that a support and services system could meet the requirements of an extensive security operation.

However, after looking at a number of information management products in the search for a system that met the OPRO's stringent user and support requirements, it was VMware Service Manager's ease of use, and the fact that it didn't "over-manage" these requirements, that helped it win the OPRO's backing.

With the OPRO structure already long established, Watson knew exactly what he needed the system to do, and found that VMware Service Manager "slotted straight into how we operated", rather than security planners needing to modify their procedures to suit the software.

It would have been far more difficult without VMware Service Manager

Watson believes that without VMware Service Manager, much of the liaison between the different agencies of the OPRO would have been done manually, via countless phone or radio calls, increasing the propensity for information to “slip through the cracks.”

The ability to provide a high level of situational awareness across the entire security operation would have been far more difficult.”

VMware Service Manager additionally provided consulting services to Watson and his team to create advanced configurations, which ensured that notification was automatically disseminated to all relevant parties whenever an Incident was logged.

A very good, quick and simple search capability throughout the database

According to Watson, training exercises conducted early into the deployment of VMware Service Manager gave personnel confidence in their ability to obtain the details of Incidents quickly and easily, by performing a simple search through the database.

Most personnel needed only one or two training sessions before moving to full operational use of the system.

Watson says that anyone can get any information at any time. “VMware Service Manager provides a very good, quick and simple search capability throughout the database.”

He reports that senior commanders at both the operational and strategic levels of the operation were very pleased with the performance and functionality provided by VMware Service Manager.

Providing comprehensive operational data

Having created the Olympic’s first centralised security database, Mark Watson believes the resulting reports and auditing will provide accurate and comprehensive operational data for others to use in their planning processes for similar events, both in Australia and internationally.

