Centralized IT Service Management Enhances Student Experience and Promotes IT to Strategic Service Provider

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Profile:

The University of Surrey is a leading public research university

Location:

Guildford, England

Industry:

Education

Website:

https://www.surrey.ac.uk/

Solutions:

Ivanti® Service Manager, powered by Heat

Benefits:

- Service management tool with reporting and ITIL processes to enhance the student experience and enhance service levels, especially during enrollment months
- Dashboards and analytics to measure performance and identify areas for ongoing improvement
- Easy-to-use workflows and out-of-the-box, ITIL-based processes and change management make it easy for IT to be self-sufficient in adding new capabilities
- More than a six-fold improvement in response times for service requests
- Internal service providers of ITIL excellence with similar departmental rollouts at the university
- Automated many previously manual processes, freeing up IT time and resources for more critical initiatives

When the centralized IT team at the University of Surrey (UoS) began unravelling issues facing its own customer helpdesk in 2014, it was unaware that its resultant success would become the reference cornerstone into a journey of customer focused service delivery across multiple UoS departments.

Based in Guildford, England, the university specializes in science, engineering, medicine, arts, social sciences and business disciplines to over 14,500 students and staff. The school's centralized IT department strives to offer users a fully managed, highly available, digitally enabled experience.

Sonja Browning-Page, Deputy IT Director, Centralized Services, UoS, details more: "Back then, we were really struggling with effective service management and the negative impact that it was having on life as student, especially in those critical enrolment weeks. Detailed stats were lacking from the existing service management tool, but we knew through manual counts and negative feedback that we faced a myriad of issues with lost tickets between departments; duplicate requests; no tracking, issue classification, or automation; and a zero-utilized self-serve module."

As with all Higher Education (HE) institutions, problems peaked at the beginning of each academic year with a third of the UoS user base in transition. With each intake of new students came a three-fold increase in helpdesk requests, with 8,000 inbound queries arriving in six weeks—70% of which came into the helpdesk mailbox. A frantic race ensued to clear the backlog. Without tracking in place, different analysts would try to resolve the same query and frustrated users would log multiple status requests. Faced with such volumes of IT requests, IT recognized that in order to establish response and resolution targets, it needed to invest in a new platform.

Browning-Page noted, "If you want to improve customer-service performance, you need to deploy a decent service management tool. This becomes the lifeblood for improving service delivery and empowers further advances using detailed analytics to highlight where challenges need addressing."

Enter CTMS, specialist advisors who the university had used previously for a laptop-discovery project delivered using Ivanti. The university considered CTMS as one potential supplier to provide an affordable replacement for the existing UoS service desk system. A pre-requisite was that the service management solution be largely out-of-the-box, with a

minimal consultancy overhead required for easy deployment and ongoing change. Another pre-requisite was that it be delivered prior to the start of the next academic intake.

Essential features included UoS-customizable User Interfaces, Self Service, and Service Catalog options. In response, CTMS white-boarded the entire environment, validating likely UoS scenarios with detailed demos of the Ivanti helpdesk, self-service, service request, and change management modules. With the demos and plan from CTMS, combined with Browning-Page's familiarity with previous versions of Ivanti's Service Manager ITSM solution, the university selected Ivanti.

An Essential Pre-requisite from Day 1: Ivanti Service Manager Delivers Self-sufficiency

Training of the 120 analysts within Centralized IT commenced with CTMS issuing guidance on configuration of the out-of-the-box solution to avoid future consultation costs and to keep the system streamlined. Within three days, UoS was able to offer an agile self-sufficient approach to ITSM that analysts could expand as needed, customizing data loads, application control, and configurations, and prioritizing service levels.

Browning-Page reflects: "Most service management solutions start out as fit for purpose and serving requirements, but they are often so customized that they become inflexible to change. A familiar pattern emerges that within two years the system becomes less fit for purpose, requiring a heavy amount of external consultation skills to bring it up to speed. Given we were starting from scratch with Ivanti ITSM, we were determined that we could manage and evolve the system in-house, with our own administrators developing and coping with releases each month."

Ivanti Shines a Spotlight on Service Desk Inefficiencies

This empowerment and the knowledge transfer from CTMS left the university so confident it could cope with outcomes, it pressed ahead with the go-live of the Incident Management module in November 2015, right in the middle of their busiest servicing time. Immediately, the platform delivered clarity on the actual number of service requests, establishing that more than 50% of requests weren't from UoS users seeking help. Instead, the service desk had become a collective

mailbox, attracting everything from newsletters to service alerts, which were forwarded manually. With the volume of email forwards numbering in the thousands each month, IT established that the repetitive manual forwarding process was taking 33 hours—or nearly an analyst's full working week each month—which could be better used elsewhere.

Common incidents and tasks were flagged and detailed. Instances, such as international students using international date conventions, were noted and simply resolved. Browning-Page explains: "Part of the expectation for students joining UoS is that systems should just work. If they have to contact a helpdesk for an avoidable or common re-occurring instance, then we have failed to seamlessly on board them. Until we had Incident Management in place, there was no way to accurately pinpoint issues and how many students were affected. Ivanti provided real-time data points, so the problems became obvious and often the resolution was simple to execute and automate, avoiding the same issue in the next intake."

Success of onboarding of the 2016 intake was crucial. Using the analytics started 11 months prior, UOS was able to prove that service requests were down 60% year over year. Time to respond was, at worst, five days, down considerably from the previous mark of six weeks before Ivanti Service Manager was deployed. So highly noted was the platform's success that the university's COO recommended immediate rollout to other departments using Centralized IT as the internal service provider, leveraging Ivanti for managing service requests.

Ivanti Service Manager Empowers IT Service Provider Delivery across Departments

Browning-Page says, "When we started the project, we were looking to fix and empower the IT service desk but given that we had demonstrable success in delivering an ITIL-empowered solution that we could configure ourselves, the Ivanti platform was set for delivery across multiple UOS departments."

Student Administration, E-Learning , Information Compliance, and Quality Enhancement departments were the first to benefit from the internal rollout of ITIL-based incident and service management processes, with Library Support, Students' Union, and Estates scheduled in the next phase. Providing Ivanti ISM internally across the various faculties means UoS has a

shared system, departmentally branded with data ring-fenced appropriately to protect each department's data. Library Support is worth special mention because UoS was in the process of buying a separate library-software administration package costing tens of thousands. It was convinced through the centralized IT experience that Ivanti's Service Manager solution could deliver everything from requesting assistance in sourcing publications and research, to high volume face to face enquiry tracking—and could be customized for their needs and branded with the now familiar UoS user interface. Rollout commences in October 2018.

The Central IT install continues to progress, shortly going live with Change Management for end-to-end change process workflow, including approvals, for all Change Managers.

"We have been so impressed with the platform capabilities. It has been the catalyst to realign internal perceptions of IT Centralized Services as a strategic service provider. Our experience is that it is an agile, easy-to-use tool that allows process change, customization, workflow changes, and dramatic user fluctuations.

Note: University of Surrey's results are specific to its total customer environment / experience, of which Ivanti is a part. Individual results may vary based on each customer's unique environment.

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