

West Sussex County Council enables better service to citizens through improvements in its IT service

Overview

■ **Business challenge**

To enhance front line services to citizens by improving the quality of the IT service provided to council staff. To achieve this through better oversight and control of the IT environment.

■ **Solution**

Adopt best practice IT processes for a unified management system, as embodied in the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). IBM Global Technology Services provided IT Transformation and Optimisation Consulting Services to assess, plan, design and deploy five key system management processes within the council's IT services department.

■ **Key benefits**

- *Improved service levels for users that are reviewed regularly against service level agreements*
- *Improved resilience of the IT environment*
- *Improved processes for calls to the helpdesk*
- *More robust and transparent IT asset management.*

West Sussex County Council provides crucial services, such as education, waste management and social services, to over 750,000 residents and aims to provide high quality at best value. As part of this objective, it embarked on a business improvement initiative to enhance the back-office processes that support the delivery of services to citizens.

The council's IT service was an important component of the improvement programme, as Trevor Partridge, Technical, Operational and Production Services Manager at West Sussex County Council, explains: "IT is a key enabler of service to citizens, so we wanted to improve the way we delivered cost-effective and quality services to our staff and hence the wider community."

User dissatisfaction

Council staff often received varying levels of service from the 200-strong IT department. This was partly because the processes the IT department had in place weren't well defined, integrated or consistently applied.

Partridge cites the following example: "If a customer had a problem on their desktop, they would call the service desk, which might respond itself or refer the request to the desktop team. The team dealing with the problem may or may not have kept the customer up to date with progress and, if the customer chased progress, the service

desk may or may not have logged the initial request." It was difficult for council staff to provide flexible, timely service to citizens without consistent and reliable IT back up.

Introducing ITIL

The council decided that to improve front line services it needed to increase the responsiveness, quality and efficiency of its IT service by implementing best practice IT processes. It looked for a partner to help it implement IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), a widely recognised set of best practice processes for IT service management.

After conducting vendor research, the council asked five potential suppliers to propose how they would introduce ITIL. From these it selected IBM to assess, plan, design and deploy the processes.

"IBM provided a great deal of experience and rigor plus highly valuable intellectual capital which, combined with the council's own judgement of just how much change could be absorbed at once, was very powerful."

– Trevor Partridge, Technical, Operational and Production Services Manager at West Sussex County Council

“We were looking for proven expertise and a partner that could fast-track our implementation,” says Partridge. “IBM ticked both boxes, because it has deep knowledge of ITIL, as well as well-defined models to deploy it, which helped speed up implementation.”

In a six month project, IBM Global Technology Services and the council first identified five key processes that needed improvement: incident management; problem management; service level management; change management; and configuration management.

Secondly, IBM evaluated each process against its ITIL maturity matrix to assess the existing capability. Thirdly, its pre-defined model for ITIL implementation was adapted to suit the council's needs, and finally, the processes were tested and implemented.

“IBM provided a great deal of experience and rigor plus highly valuable intellectual capital which, combined with the council's own judgement of just how much change could be absorbed at once, was very powerful,” explains Partridge. “This blend of the proven approaches of IBM and the council's knowledge of their own resources helped scale the solution to create an ideal fit.”

The cultural challenge

The project constituted a major change to the way the IT department worked so the council sought to address change management issues.

“You have to win people's hearts and minds by encouraging them to buy into the change,” explains Partridge. “This means giving them an understanding of the rationale and

the benefits. We sent all our IT staff on an ITIL awareness course and ran regular briefings, workshops and presentations throughout the project.”

The council appointed dedicated process owners for each of the five areas, who were responsible for that process, its implementation and performance.

Service level improvement and ongoing measurement

Indications are that the customer experience has improved as a result of the ITIL project and service levels are now being measured on an ongoing basis. Users have regular meetings to review IT service against pre-defined service level agreements, while the IT department holds supplier reviews to assess the performance of in-house and third party service providers.

The process for handling calls to the service desk has been standardised and improved, as has the way IT assets are managed, and users are much better informed about changes that may affect them, for example upgrades or the implementation of new applications.

“Council employees are enthusiastic about the changes, frequently commenting on our increased responsiveness. We want to reach the point where excellent service levels are taken for granted and we've made a very positive step in that direction,” concludes Partridge.

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