



LANDesk Helps Northern Ireland Civil Service Lead the UK in Shared ICT Service Delivery

Delivering Service Excellence

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is responsible for the delivery of core public sector services to 1.6 million people, including health, social services, economic development and regional investment, agriculture, transport, and education. It employs 18,000 administrative staff and is spread across 11 departments.

Following a review of its former ICT service provision model—and inspired by the UK Government's Gershon and Transformational Strategies recommendations—NICS made the decision in 2006 to move to a shared services model for the provision of IT support, with services being centralized and standardized across all 11 departments.

To enable NICS to deliver on its shared services vision, NICS created an ICT Shared Service Centre known as 'IT Assist'. The shared service was to provide common infrastructure and desktop services to NICS staff in the office, at home, or when working while mobile. Common services are considered to be those that underpin all departmental business activity, with the IT help desk at the frontline of service delivery.

Services supported include standard business applications such as Microsoft Windows XP/Office, plus systems handling HR, accounting, records, and document management. The center also supports a BlackBerry service for mobile workers and a third-party access system.

Key objectives of providing shared ICT services to all departments within NICS included increased cost efficiencies, improved levels of service availability, greater resilience within the IT systems, and better sharing of knowledge and expertise across departments. The ultimate aim of these objectives was to improve overall end-user satisfaction.

Central to the success of the shared services infrastructure was the implementation of a standardized service management tool to support the new processes. After a rigorous evaluation of available products, the former Touchpaper IT Business Management Suite (newly branded as the LANDesk® IT Business Management Suite) was selected to deliver a best-practice IT service delivery framework based around the core Touchpaper Service Desk solution (now branded LANDesk® Service Desk)*.

Prior to implementing Touchpaper, NICS had six separate information system units supporting 11 separate departments, each with its own service management toolset. Paul Gillen, ITSM Project Manager at NICS, indicated that this led to inconsistent services across departments and a lack of transparency in general.

“A big issue with every department previously looking after its own IT support requirements was that there was little insight into how efficient these services were, as there was no way to benchmark them against each other,” Gillen says. “By embracing the shared services philosophy and creating IT Assist, we've now been able to not only offer consistent service level agreements to all departments, but also monitor how well we are doing in meeting these targets. This means that a more egalitarian service is now being delivered, with IT talent shared across NICS rather than remaining hidden in individual offices.”

Business Needs

Create a central and standardized shared services model based on ITIL principles to provision IT support across 11 different government departments

Solution

LANDesk® ITBM Suite

Business Benefits

- Improved end user experience with 90% of all calls answered within 15 seconds and three-day turnaround on all complaint handling
- Improved confidence in service delivery, with SLA targets being met nearly every month and 90% of all incidents dealt with within priority time scales
- Greater assurance in business continuity based on 99% network and email availability
- Increased efficiency and cost savings

* Spanning 20 years' experience across Europe, the USA and Asia Pacific, Touchpaper has a rich heritage as one of the most established and respected international providers of IT business management (ITBM) solutions, encompassing IT service management (ITSM), customer service solutions, and network and systems management. On July 1, 2008, Touchpaper was acquired by Avocent Corporation and has been integrated within Avocent's LANDesk division. Touchpaper solutions now carry the LANDesk® brand name and are offered either directly or through an extensive international network of solutions providers serving commercial and public sector markets that include education, financial services, government, healthcare, IT, law, manufacturing, professional services, retail, transportation and utilities.

Another advantage of moving to a shared services environment was that NICS was able to redefine the way in which it delivered IT services by adopting a new set of industry best practice processes based on the ITIL framework. NICS worked closely with the management consultancy business of Atkins—Europe’s largest multidisciplinary consultancy—to establish and implement the new ITIL processes.

Dave Claridge, Managing Consultant at Atkins, comments, “Given the challenge of integrating service processes across 11 distinct departments, this was a hugely ambitious project. We ensured, however, that the definition of the new processes and procedures was an entirely collaborative effort between ourselves and NICS, with knowledge sharing and vigorous discussion being key principles of the implementation.”

Leading the Way in Shared Services

Claridge continues, “It was important that the new processes weren’t a complete break from the past, but at the same time we had to reduce pre-existing bureaucracy and standardize around ITIL best practice guidelines. In tandem with these activities, we also assisted NICS with the European Union procurement process to select an appropriate ITIL-compliant service management tool.”

Having received bids from 11 suppliers, Atkins helped NICS to evaluate the candidates, with Touchpaper ultimately being chosen for having best met the criteria in the pitch document, offering all ‘key desirables’, and being competitively priced. Atkins then went on to oversee the testing of the Touchpaper solution, ensuring that the defined ITIL processes could be effectively automated within it.

The implementation was remarkably pain-free, particularly given the tight timeframes involved to meet the go-live date for the new system. In talking about Touchpaper (which is now part of Avocent’s LANDesk division), Paul Gillen notes, “We were particularly impressed with the way that Touchpaper demonstrated outstanding flexibility in working closely with NICS and Atkins to achieve the aggressive timescales imposed on us by the conditions of the Open European Tender process.

“It is also a great credit to the user-friendly nature of the Touchpaper system that it was operated by a new grade of IT technicians who only joined IT Assist three weeks prior to Service Desk going live. These technicians are an integral part of the IT Assist vision to cost-effectively provide a high level of incident resolution to customers at first point of contact. Having an intuitive, automated service management solution clearly makes a huge difference in enabling them to deliver this.”

Having gone live only nine weeks after signing the contract, the former Touchpaper ITBM Suite and Touchpaper Service Desk offerings, which are ITIL verified, provided IT Assist with incident, problem and change management functionality, as well as a fully populated and functioning Configuration Management Database (CMDB) that can take data from a variety of existing systems. A service portal has also been developed to allow authorized end-users to log requests directly into the system.

The former Touchpaper ITBM Suite provides NICS with centralized control of all IT-related calls with a single consolidated view of the IT infrastructure. It also means that the format of all requests is standardized and establishes a single process for logging and managing these requests across all departments. This ensures that application or network changes can be properly controlled and approved before being implemented, enabling the impact on the overall infrastructure to be more easily understood. With about 2,000 incident calls, 1,000 service requests, and 100 change requests being logged and dealt with each month, the level of standardization provided by the former Touchpaper branded solutions has been vital.

The former Touchpaper ITBM Suite has also played an essential role in establishing effective service level reporting where previously it had not been feasible to offer users service level agreements (SLAs). Now, IT Assist is able to deliver regular reports to a single operations committee—made up of senior departmental representatives—on the performance of the service desk and infrastructure based on agreed SLA targets.



“Touchpaper has proved to be an invaluable partner in making our shared services vision a reality.”

Paul Gillen
TSM Project Manager
Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS)

“Understandably, there was some initial skepticism about how well a shared service desk would work, particularly from those departments that had previously had their own dedicated IT support team,” Gillen says. “This meant that, at the very least, we had to guarantee that people wouldn’t see a drop in service quality. The service level reporting we’ve been able to provide following the Touchpaper implementation has given us all the evidence we need to demonstrate that not only has the service continued to be effective, but that this is now reflected across all departments rather than just the larger ones. Being able to point to hard figures and statistics has really empowered us to sell the shared services concept to everybody.”

The evidence is impressive, with SLA targets being met nearly every month, even during busy periods:

- 90% of all calls are answered within 15 seconds
- 90% of all incidents are dealt with within priority time scales
- Three-day turnaround on all complaint handling
- 99% network and email availability

IT Assist is also using Touchpaper as part of a ‘benefits realization process’ by helping to deliver and measure new tangible capabilities directly attributable to the investment in the shared services project. These end benefits include:

- Improved end user experience
- Greater assurance in business continuity
- Improved level of assurance to support future business and corporate applications
- Efficiency and cost savings
- Improved confidence in ICT service delivery
- Flexible working and organizational change enabled

The formerly branded Touchpaper ITBM Suite is still being rolled out across departments, but NICS has already been recognized as one of the fastest moving UK Government offices to successfully deploy shared IT services. The former Touchpaper Service Desk is currently being used by 250 analysts. The full implementation will encompass over 400 analysts and 18,000 end-users, which is due to be completed by April 2009.

Further planned enhancements to this installation include:

- Implementation of the newly branded LANDesk® Active Knowledge module to enable better sharing of knowledge, expertise and solutions to common problems
- Implementation of the LANDesk® Management Information module to present a real-time graphical dashboard-based view of service performance against KPIs
- Integration with the Systems Management Server (SMS) to provide a federated view of the CMDB
- Introduction of online self-service for all end users, empowering them to solve simple problems for themselves

Paul Gillen concludes, “We have achieved an incredible amount in a short space of time, and I believe that IT Assist is a great example of how shared services can work within the public sector. Having a support desk that provides a single point of contact for all incidents and is tightly aligned with best practice ITIL principles has been integral to our success. Touchpaper has proved to be an invaluable partner in making our shared services vision a reality.”

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