

Common sense approach to ITIL significantly improves service delivery at Comet and enhances credibility of IT within the business



“We don’t call it ITIL - it’s just good ‘common sense’ customer service, and we have cut call volumes by 40%!”

Comet is a leading specialist electrical retailer with more than 250 stores throughout the UK, offering a wide range of electrical products. The company offers a unique all-round shopping experience with a range of services including home delivery, full installation of products such as televisions and computers, take back and recycling facilities for large products and comprehensive after sales service.

IS department invests in service management solution to support users

Comet employs 10,000 staff across its locations in the UK, many of whom use the IT systems that underpin the retailer’s successful sales and after sales service, for which the company is renowned. To ensure that the business systems operate to maximum efficiency, the IS department has invested in Hornbill’s Supportworks ITSM for its service desk.

Hornbill’s solution was selected for its ability to be used across several areas of the business, its ease of use and ergonomic design following an evaluation of competitive solutions. According to Rob Gwatkin, Service Desk Manager at Comet Group Plc: “During evaluation, Supportworks ITSM was by far the most popular choice with end-users. We were looking for a solution that would give all round visibility of the service we were offering, so that we could see where improvements could be made. Since implementation, Supportworks has given us that visibility and by concentrating on the top 10 most common calls, and applying root cause analysis, we have been able to reduce weekly call volumes by 40%, through more effective incident and problem management”.

Rob Gwatkin continues, “Getting an early quick win, by implementing the vanilla version of Supportworks ITSM to give us maximum benefit for least effort has enabled us to show the business that we deliver what we say we can deliver. This has put the department in a strong position when we are in discussions with the business about service delivery. Instead of being dictated to by the business, we are able to take a more proactive and creative approach, whereby we go to the business with ideas for better service provision and more efficient use of our resources.”

Business Benefits:

- SLA rates consistently reach 94%; 80% of fixes are faster than the published SLA target
- Automating processes through Supportworks ITSM has enabled good practice and efficiency gains enhancing credibility of the IT department within the business
- Use of Supportworks ITSM has been extended to HR with other departments to follow, enabling them to benefit from a best-practice approach to good customer service
- Notional cross departmental charging provides visibility of service costs and encourages users to be more proactive in helping themselves before contacting the service desk
- Root cause analysis and Problem Management identified Top Ten most common calls and led to 40% reduction in call volumes
- Introduction of Customer SelfService is forecast to reduce calls by a further 50% giving an overall reduction of 70% in calls to the service desk since installation.

“The project was delivered within three months and within budget... The dramatic improvement in service provision due to Supportworks and more efficient and proactive working has secured our reputation as a department that supports the business and delivers on its promises.”

Rob Gwatkin,
Service Desk Manager,
Comet Group Plc

Common sense approach to ITIL supports business requirements

The IS department uses Supportworks ITSM for Incident Management, Problem Management, and is about to go live on Change Management. Supportworks is also used to manage IT assets through integration with Comet's Altiris asset management and SAP enterprise solutions. Incidents with usage histories can be tracked back to particular business units or individuals. This helps the IS team to identify potential training requirements.

Call statistics have identified that 20% of the calls received by the service desk relate to password resets. Gwatkin has introduced a nominal departmental cross charging system that could be adopted. By providing visibility of the cost of service provision, IT aims to encourage callers to initially look for answers on the company intranet before contacting the service desk.

Rob Gwatkin explains, “ITIL provides a best practice framework for service delivery, which we have used as a guide for our service improvement programme at Comet. However, we don't refer to ITIL when we talk to the business. We prefer to use terms like ‘common sense’, and ‘good practice’: underneath it is still ITIL, but business managers don't need to know. We find that we get greater buy-in from the business when we take this approach.”

80% of calls now resolved ahead of SLA targets

One of the major benefits that Supportworks ITSM has brought is the ability to demonstrate the value of the services that the IT department provides to the business. The introduction of Service Level Agreements has provided clarity on the service delivered by IT and its performance. It has also enabled the team to measure the performance of third party suppliers.

“Our SLA rates consistently reach 94%,” said Gwatkin. “We are also able to demonstrate that of the fixes that we carry out, 80% of the time we are faster than the published SLA target. This published information has helped to boost the credibility of the department. Now we receive many ‘thank yous’ from the business.”

The Major Incident Management records enable business managers to get an update on an incident within 15 minutes, which reduces the number of calls the service desk receives to enquire about progress. “Communication routes are a lot clearer now and everyone has visibility of what is happening, which is particularly helpful during a major incident as it enables us to concentrate on solving the issue in hand,” said Gwatkin.

Other departments benefit from ITIL approach

Following the successful adoption of Supportworks ITSM by the IS team, the HR department is also using the system for common HR queries relating to cost centre, employee service information and payroll. There is now a single corporate service desk, whereby users call a central service desk number, with queries handled by the respective teams.

It is not only the HR department which has seen the benefits of Supportworks - the facilities and property departments are now also interested in using the system. “It was always in our original plan to roll out Supportworks ITSM to other departments. We can use the platform and technology to facilitate a single consolidated service desk, which provides economies of scale and ensures that our customers get a consistent, quality service,” said Gwatkin.

Introduction of customer SelfService increases efficiencies further

A particular focus for the IS department is on enabling its users to be more self-reliant, explains Gwatkin. “SelfService through Supportworks ITSM is the next big delivery for us. The benefits of this will be huge - our target is to reduce our current call volumes by 50%, giving us a total reduction of 70% since implementing the system.”

As well as the built in functionality, Gwatkin and his team have been pleased with the ease with which Supportworks ITSM can be configured, and the support from Hornbill and its customer community.

“The project was delivered within three months and within budget, giving us much more functionality than we at first needed,” said Gwatkin. “We were able to deliver a lot out of the box, so didn't have to spend a long time configuring the system to meet our needs. The dramatic improvement in service provision due to Supportworks and more efficient and proactive working has secured our reputation as a department that supports the business and delivers on its promises.”



Ares
Odyssey Business Park
West End Road
Ruislip
HA4 6QD
UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 8582 8282
Fax: +44 (0)20 8582 8288

300 East John Carpenter
Fwy
Suite 110
Irving
TX 75062
USA

Tel: +1 972 717 2300
Fax: +1 972 717 2331

Email: info@hornbill.com
Web: www.hornbill.com



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