

Shared IT Service Desk - Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council

Summary

DeskSuccess was appointed to lead an eight-month project to create a shared IT service desk for the IT teams at the two adjacent borough councils of Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby. The councils had worked closely together for many years, but a three-year business plan formalised this collaborative working across three service areas of infrastructure – single ‘virtual’ service desk, technical infrastructure support, and business continuity. The ultimate objective was to integrate into a single management structure.

From the outset, the primary objective of the plan was to establish a shared service desk. Each borough council had its own service desk, but incorporating the two separate entities into a high quality, single point of contact for users within both authorities would bring many advantages. The service desk teams would be able to deliver more consistent, efficient and cost-effective technical support to the 1,200 employees of both councils.

The project took eight months to complete and the new shared IT service desk went live in March 2010.

The concept of a shared service desk across two separate councils is one which many other authorities could consider. Says Aziz Zuberi, of DeskSuccess, “In terms of approach, use of technology and the plan itself, this project is fully transferable and could be put into operation without difficulty by other authorities. The whole principal of resilience, adoption of professional standards, joint efficiency and co-operation is transferable, as is the outsourcing to a company such as DeskSuccess for the project direction.”

George Szymczak, Assistant Director - IT & Communications, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, “Hiring Aziz - a dedicated, experienced programme manager - has allowed us to implement a joint service desk across two separate borough councils. The project ran smoothly and has resulted in cost savings, greater operational efficiency and improved professional standards.”

The challenge

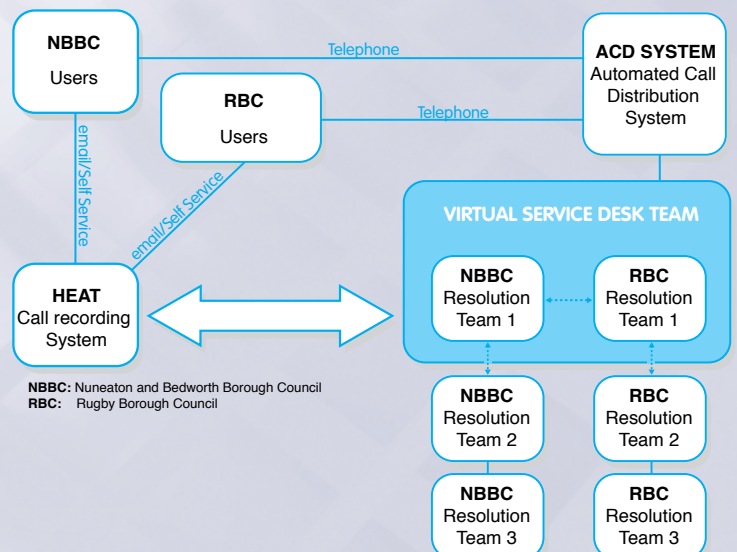
By integrating the separate support functions into one, virtual service desk, the project aimed to:

- Increase employee resilience and staffing efficiencies;
- Provide a more efficient, effective and professional service;
- Implement ITIL best practice standards and quality processes;
- Increase the competencies of employees through a training improvement plan based on standards set by The British Computer Society’s Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA);
- Create greater cost efficiency by minimising operational and resource expenditure;
- Harmonise the service management tools used at each site; and
- Create a set of balanced strategic and operational key performance indicators (KPIs).

The project needed to be rapidly implemented and also bring together staff from offices some twenty miles apart. The new service desk system posed some initial transition problems and introducing a single ACD system across two sites appeared challenging, but by partnering with a quality supplier the problems were lessened.

The main challenge was to create the following single virtual service desk.

SINGLE VIRTUAL SERVICE DESK



The solution

The project scoping began in February 2009, after which the councils applied for and received grant funding from Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands (IEWM). The funding allowed for the appointment of a dedicated, full-time programme manager from DeskSuccess, who was able to give the project strategic direction, impetus and focus. Moreover, it meant the adoption of a professional approach, by implementing the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) practices and standards.

Once in place, DeskSuccess prepared a comprehensive project plan, detailing the implementation of the shared IT service desk over four phases which began in August 2009:

Phase One (August 2009– October 2009)

- Installation of telephone systems and configuration of automatic call distribution (ACD) at both sites.
- Connection of the voice and data network between Rugby and Nuneaton.
- Implementation of the chosen software, HEAT, and configuration of the call logging system.
- Development of a service catalogue.

Phase Two (September 2009 – December 2009)

- Service desk process review and development.
- Assessment and development of KPIs.
- Review and development of reporting requirements.

Phase Three (October 2009 – February 2010)

- Resource cost analysis.
- Skills identification and gap analysis.
- Planning of training and development requirements.

Phase Four (December 2009 – March 2010)

- Design and implementation of service level agreements (SLAs).
- Design and implementation of operational level agreements.
- Staff training programme on the new phone system, the HEAT service desk system, and a familiarisation with the new ways of working.
- Provision of documentation for IT staff at both council locations.

DeskSuccess also devised a key communications plan, which ran alongside the implementation of the joint service desk. An important aspect of this was the formation of a focus group. The members of the group acted as a communications channel, cascading information downwards and delivering feedback upwards. A quarterly newsletter called 'TICTAC' was also introduced, which allowed the IT team to communicate in a professional manner, informing users about its activities, successes and performance.

The success

The new joint service desk deals with an average of 1,700 calls per month. Feedback from employees of the two councils has been really positive and users are pleased to be receiving greater information and communication in the form of service desk monthly statistics and quarterly newsletter. The benefits and successes of the shared service desk project are:

- The project was co-ordinated and implemented without taking the service desk managers and staff away from their day-to-day roles.
- The shared IT service desk operates to recognised, ITIL best practice service management standards.
- The new phone system manages the calls more efficiently, providing real time guidance to users.
- The new self-service portal gives users far greater control over the lifecycle of their service call.
- Communication between the service desk and its users is improved by way of greater contact, the use of ticket reference numbers, and track and trace capabilities.
- Service desk staff members have benefitted from knowledge and resource sharing, and the resulting skills transfer has allowed them to more easily interchange and interoperate.
- Service calls are now tracked, giving in-depth data on call volumes, response times and the productivity of individual service desk staff.
- Service performance is benchmarked using a balanced set of The Society of IT Management (SOCITM) KPIs.
- By analysing the nature of the service desk calls, their underlying causes can be determined, which in turn allows problem-solving to be improved.
- Improvement planning and progress can be checked against initial baseline measurements.
- The implementation of the project has helped align the working methods of the two councils, despite them being separate bodies.
- The department head has been able to bring greater financial efficiency by renegotiating IT contracts for both councils and making them co-terminus.

Return on investment

The financial return over the next four years, according to IEWM criteria, is expected to be in excess of £184,000.



Phil Alves, Support Group Team Leader for Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council,

"The ACD system is fantastic. The enhanced console functionality means that we can manage things much better, and the system itself ensures that the service desk operative can complete what they need to do before they go on to answer another call."



Michelle Walker, Acting Operations Manager for Rugby Borough Council,

"We now have targets to work towards and can measure our achievements using proper criteria. We can report more accurately on what we're doing and can demonstrate improvements."