



# Ventura Expands Service Management with HEAT

**Organisation**

Ventura Ltd

**Industry**

Contact Centre

**Business Benefits**

- Faster change request submission
- Automated change control system
- Improved reporting
- Long term trend analysis
- Integration of change control with problem resolution
- Higher visibility of high-risk change requests
- Improved information gathering regarding potential changes

**Quick Stats**

No. employees	4,000
IT professionals	250
Company sites	5
Change requests per week	50

**BACKGROUND**

If there is one place where robust IT service management is important, it is in the support and service management industry itself. Ventura provides outsourced customer contact centre services, and has been using FrontRange's HEAT Service & Support suite for nearly a decade. As Ventura has matured the software has grown with it, and it is providing a solid foundation as the company moves towards ITIL compliance.

With 4,000 employees over four sites, and a client list that includes British Gas, O2 and the RSPCA, service management is particularly important to Ventura. In the interests of delivering customer support, CRM and call centres on behalf of its clients, the company needs a flexible and reliable IT infrastructure.

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

With IT Service Management in mind Ventura redesigned its implementation of HEAT from the ground up in late 2001. Originally, the product was used only for help desk facilities, but as the company's confidence in the software grew, so did its need for extra functionality. Lee Madden, Service Desk Manager, Ventura explains that previously, IT change control processes consisted of some basic entries in an Access database, carried out manually using e-mail.

Some of these changes can be complex, involving server upgrades, alterations to databases, and configuration of the automated call distribution equipment that lies at the heart of Ventura's contact centre operation. Its mission critical nature means that service interruption is unacceptable, so all proposed changes must be carefully examined for wide reaching effects and approved before they are deployed.

With 50 change requests coming in each week from a base of 250 IT employees within the organisation, the company was beginning to outgrow its Access based system. Madden recognised it was in need of automation to keep up with both its own change requests, and the frequently changing IT needs of its growing customer base.

**IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT**

"Service management provides a structure and a set of standards," says Madden. We now have a large IT team working with the same processes and procedures. When new clients are signed we have a set of processes and procedures to follow which means their services are available quicker."

Although HEAT comes with modules to support different business processes, Ventura did not need to purchase any extra software to modify the product for change control processes. Instead, Madden and his team used the auto-ticket generator feature at the heart of HEAT, creating a new call type and Lotus Notes-based electronic form for the entry of change control requests. Members of the IT team use the form to answer questions about back-up points and risk of failure. The changes are then distributed via the appropriate channels.

**ITIL**

The redesigned system proved invaluable in helping Ventura move towards compliance with the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), a set of best practice guidelines for IT service management. "In just 18 months, Ventura has bought itself almost entirely in line with the best practice documents," says



Madden, who adds "and we continue to refine our service management with the help of HEAT."

#### **RAPID REDESIGN**

Given HEAT's impact on Ventura's service management, the time spent on the redesign was relatively short at just five days. Although Madden's team had grown to know the system well, having FrontRange on hand to help was reassuring. "We went through exactly what we wanted and the FrontRange consultant gave us quite a bit of advice," Madden says. One useful aspect of working with the vendor was that everything was documented, making any future updates easier. FrontRange's experience with its own software also informed Ventura's decisions during the design phase, saving time on the implementation.

Once the implementation was complete, the benefits were almost instant, Madden says. Previously, change control requests could only be formally raised by the three change control team members. Once change control was designed into the system, members of the IT team could raise change requests themselves, therefore removing a bottleneck in the workflow.

#### **MANAGED PROCESSES**

The improvement in speed has been mirrored by enhanced accuracy. Because change control processes are built into the workflow of the system, more information is available to the whole team. For example, changes can be assigned to various teams, and times for the changes can also be scheduled. This stops IT teams from making changes prematurely and causing potential system problems.

The increased accuracy and record keeping is complemented by consistency and frequency of information. Team members receive an update at the end of every day, reminding them of scheduled changes before they happen. This helps the first line with issue resolution, Madden explains.

Although changes are assigned to particular teams, everyone can view and comment on the changes requested. This brings additional relevant information to light that could affect the final decision on a particular change request. A full record of approvals and

rejections are stored, and anyone who has rejected a change can list their reasons, which is useful for future auditing purposes.

#### **REPORTING**

Keeping the changes in a central database has assisted the change control team with reporting. The team can quickly spot which changes carry a high risk, making it easier to discuss them during the weekly meetings. In the longer term, it makes it possible to analyse trends, which can have a direct impact on costs. It came to light that although departments are supposed to allow certain notice periods with their change requests, one particular department was making a high number of emergency requests. Thanks to the reporting capabilities within HEAT, the change control team was able to address the issue, which would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Trend analysis can also help to circumvent potential problems. For example, during bank holidays when hours of operation change, the automatic call distribution system has to be reconfigured. Any problems caused by previous configurations (normally a result of human error) are easier to identify, says Madden.

#### **SELF SERVICE**

Madden's team has been so happy with HEAT's service management capabilities that it now plans to implement HEAT Self Service. End users outside the IT department will be able to view their incident records and change control records directly on the system. Going forward, Madden hopes to let them raise change control requests themselves instead of submitting them via a member of the IT team.

"We continue to ensure that our processes and procedures are ITIL compliant," Madden adds, explaining that he wants to enhance the company's problem resolution capabilities: "Change control has a direct impact where changes are linked to instances." He plans to insert additional HEAT fields so that when a help desk incident causes a change control request to be generated, they can be tied together in the system. As the company continues to enhance its internal service management capabilities, its customers will reap the benefits too.