



“ServiceNow has given us back control of our service desk. ServiceWatch takes that even further – by the time our users notice a service issue, we’ve already told them about it and we’re working on a fix.”

– Jamie Duncalf, IT Operations Manager at TransAlta

TransAlta

Customer

Canada’s largest publicly traded power generator and wholesale marketer of electricity and renewable energy

Company Size

2,300 employees

Industry

Energy Production

Challenges

- Systems and processes unable able to support company growth
- Service inconsistencies across the firm’s global presence
- Inability to provide self-service and self-help

Results

- Streamlined and standardized global processes across the enterprise
- Consumerized self-service model
- Gained visibility and measurability into workload, resources, and effectiveness
- Establish, monitor, and report on metrics and enforce Service Level Agreements
- Empowered IT to become a greater partner to the business

TransAlta Powers IT Service Management and IT Operations with ServiceNow

IT Team Enhances Service Quality and Responds More Effectively to Business Needs

TransAlta is Canada’s largest publicly traded power generator and wholesale marketer of electricity and renewable energy. Headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, TransAlta operates power plants in Canada, the United States and Australia. With more than \$9 billion in assets and annual revenues of \$3 billion, TransAlta is committed to ensuring that its industrial, commercial and utility customers get the power they need, where and when they need it.

As a major electricity supplier, TransAlta relies heavily on its IT capabilities. Many of its IT systems are mission-critical – for example, their energy traders need a highly reliable platform so that electricity continues to flow to TransAlta’s customers. With more than 2,300 employees, TransAlta also needs to ensure that its business services and desktop infrastructure effectively supports its ongoing operations.

End-Users Bypassed Legacy Ticketing Tool

To serve their internal users, TransAlta used a legacy IT ticketing tool. While this tool gave them an extensive set of metrics and reports, end users found it incredibly difficult to use. Because of this, they regularly bypassed the tool, going directly to TransAlta’s IT service desk team when they had an issue – rather than raising incidents online. The tool also lacked capabilities – such as a service catalog – that TransAlta’s IT team needed as they evolved into a strategic partner delivering shared services across TransAlta’s business.

According to Jamie Duncalf, IT Operations Manager at TransAlta, “There was no room to grow. Our ticketing tool was just a statistical analysis engine, and it was a beast for our business users. When end users bypassed the system, we couldn’t keep track of the work we did for them – and we ended up fixing the same types of incidents again and again because we weren’t collecting the data we needed for effective problem management.”

ServiceNow Transforms TransAlta’s Service Desk

TransAlta decided they needed a better solution, and chose ServiceNow to replace their legacy ticketing system. Their first focus was a like-for-like replacement of existing functionality, but they also saw a major opportunity to extend ServiceNow beyond IT Service Management (ITSM) into IT Operations.

In just seven months, TransAlta rolled out eight key ServiceNow modules, including incident, problem, configuration, change and knowledge management, as well as

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reporting, SLAs and orchestration. While TransAlta already had mature processes that were broadly aligned with ITIL, they also decided to replace many of these with ServiceNow’s optimized ITIL workflows.

The results were dramatic. Duncalf says that, “We saw an immediate increase in recorded incidents. While this may seem counterintuitive, it was exactly what we wanted. It meant that our end users were comfortable reporting incidents online, rather than doing an end run around our processes. We had already been handling all of those extra incidents, but now we finally had a platform where we could measure that work. We could really start to understand what the issues were, where we could optimize, and how we could make the most of our service desk resources. And, despite getting more incidents, we actually needed less staff to keep our service desk running smoothly, freeing up resources for other initiatives.”

Proactive Service Health Visibility

Having transformed their service desk, TransAlta then turned focused their attention onto IT operations. They turned to ServiceNow’s ServiceWatch to map and monitor the health of their key business services, giving them real-time visibility of how these services were delivered and how they were performing. According to Duncalf, “Previously, we had to rely on a lot of tribal knowledge to maintain our CMDB – and it was still only about 80% accurate. Now, we know how our infrastructure is connected, and how that delivers the critical services our business depends on.”

Duncalf continues, saying that, “ServiceWatch has given us back control. When there is a major issue with a

business service, IT is the first to know. Previously, we often only found out when someone complained – and then it took us three or four hours just to figure out what going on. Now, we’re already working on the issue before we hear from our users. There are no more surprises.”

More Effective Change Management

ServiceWatch has also dramatically enhanced the way that TransAlta manages changes. Because TransAlta’s IT team now knows exactly which business services are affected by any given change, they can accurately assess the associated business risk. This has allowed TransAlta to radically streamline their change approval processes. Rather than having everyone show up at change advisory board (CAB) meetings, they know in advance the exact people who are needed to review each change.

Equally important, they can now have an effective discussion with the business about changes. Duncalf says that, “Now that we have accurate service maps, we can easily explain to our business partners how changes will affect the services they use. For example, when we tell our traders that a change is going to affect their ability to place outbound calls during key trading hours, they become opinionated very quickly because they understand what the change means. They may not know anything about the server that is involved, but they understand how the change affects their business.”

Aligning IT Investment with Business Needs

These real business discussions extend beyond point changes. For instance, TransAlta’s IT team uses ServiceWatch’s service maps to identify single points of

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failure and level of redundancy. According to Duncalf, “Now, we can have fact-based cost/benefit discussions with our business colleagues. For example, are they willing to spend more to eliminate single points of failure in a business service, or could we actually remove unneeded redundancy and save money? When we have this type of discussion, IT is no longer seen as a tax on the business. Instead, people understand what they’re paying for and are part of the decision-making process.”

Accelerating the Transition to Cloud

Duncalf also highlights the benefits of ServiceWatch as TransAlta transitions to a hybrid cloud infrastructure. Using ServiceWatch’ service maps, TransAlta can identify and ring fence specific sections of business services, understanding all of the applications and IT components within that ring fence. Armed with this information, they can then go to a cloud provider and ask what it would cost to replicate this functionality. According to Duncalf, “There’s no more arm waving or generalities. We have an

actual shopping list of the infrastructure we need to replace. We know how much it costs to run that infrastructure ourselves, and we can get a precise comparison of how much our cloud provider will charge us.”

An Engine for Future Growth

Looking forward, Duncalf sees further enormous potential for ServiceNow. For example, TransAlta wants to give its departmental executives direct access to ServiceWatch dashboards. By letting executives see all of the business services, complete with cost and usage information, TransAlta’s IT team can provide total transparency and give executives the information they need to make better business decisions. TransAlta also plans to roll out ServiceNow beyond IT, streamlining the delivery of legal, human resources, facilities and other services.

According to Duncalf, “ServiceNow is our growth engine in IT. While we’re cutting back in other areas, ServiceNow is at the top of our investment priorities.”