

Service Corporation International Takes Ivanti to the Cloud

**Profile:**

SCI is North America's leading provider of funeral and cemetery services.

Website:

www.sci-corp.com

Solution:

Ivanti® Service Manager, cloud deployment

Benefits to SCI:

- Improved efficiency with consolidated ticketing and tracking for IT services and business processes
- Leveraged a single solution with concurrent licenses to reduce costs
- Improved business insight with enhanced analytics of centralized data
- Increased user satisfaction by letting users and vendors interact easily with SCI services



Service Corporation International (SCI) cares for more than 300,000 families each year. Its network encompasses over 2,000 funeral service locations and more than 450 cemeteries located across 45 states and the District of Columbia in the U.S., eight Canadian provinces, and Puerto Rico. In 2016, SCI was recognized for its dedication to service excellence, receiving the J.D. Power President's Award.

Growing Use by Leaps and Bounds

SCI entered the 21st century with a mission to refine its network of funeral, memorial, and interment services providers and expand its geographic footprint in North America.

As the company reduced its use of offshore IT operations, it took its onshore business to the next level, acquiring competitors that include the Alderwoods Group, Keystone North America, and Stewart Enterprises, and also acquired a majority stake in The Neptune Society.

As SCI further solidified its reputation as the continent's finest death-care provider, the need for a centralized enterprise ticketing, tracking, and reporting system for both business and IT service processes became increasingly clear. That was the path to gaining better control and insight

into all its expansive operations. Ultimately, it also became apparent that SCI needed to move its service management capabilities to the cloud to better support mobile and remote users, including vendors and outsourcing partners.

It's been an amazing journey for SCI from when it started using Ivanti Help Desk "Classic" software in 2000 as an on-premise deployment for handling IT help desk and support center tickets. Today, it relies on Ivanti Service Manager deployed in the cloud to function as its incident management and reporting system for finance and accounting, human resources, sales, and procurement service management processes and workflows, as well as for IT.

For another perspective on how critical the service management solution is to SCI, consider this: Last year the company handled 328,000 tickets, up from just a couple of thousand tickets when Ivanti was first deployed. "In 2000, we started with 3,000 computers. We now have about 18,000 computers in our network," explains Thomas Smith, director of Information Technology Support at SCI.

The number of IT tickets has increased as a result, but so too has the company's need to implement a consolidated means of ticketing and tracking for the many other business processes that depend on its technology infrastructure.

At SCI, Ivanti supports requests for everything from name changes in HR systems to banking institution switches in payroll procedures, all via email, phone, walk-in, or self-service ticket requests. It also makes it possible to track and analyze the company's gamut of data – from employees' accrued-leave balances to the type of computing equipment that's been bought – in its Ivanti database.

"Insight into what's going on with the business and specific divisions is our biggest benefit from Ivanti Service Manager."

Thomas Smith, SCI Director, Information Technology Support

When we started working with other departments, they wanted centralized tracking of their incidents and requests," Smith says. Four hundred Ivanti analysts use the solution today – more than 10 times as many as were involved with SCI's help desk system at launch.

Ivanti's BI reporting tool is the force behind pulling service management information to help the company understand its IT position and performance. For example, a VP can pull all tickets related to anyone of the company's 2,000 locations for an overall status update – that's not something that could be done easily when multiple spreadsheets for various business divisions' items resided on individuals' personal computers.

BI reporting also comes into play so that users across all its locations can gain insight into their own particular issues in an ad hoc fashion. "We couldn't do it in the past because it was very structured reporting," Smith says. "Insight into what's going on with the business and specific divisions is our biggest benefit from Ivanti Service Manager."

For Smith personally, Ivanti opens a doorway into better understanding IT workloads that may be handled by internal staff or outsourcing providers – how many tickets are logged, first-call resolution and escalation metrics, and whether staffing is in balance to meet demand. "Having one centralized spot to research is a big factor in how you integrate a team, be it an outsourced vendor or in-house," he says.

Cloud Migration Merits

When SCI originally brought Ivanti onboard, users had to VPN into the system and be on-premise to use it. But as more of SCI's applications such as payroll, time entry, and intranet moved to the cloud, SCI saw the need to migrate its Ivanti help desk there, too. It did so in 2013, becoming one of the first Ivanti customers to do so.

The move made smart business sense. The cloud provided a more seamless connection between the company's widespread funeral operators and other providers and key business workflows than they'd experienced in the past. Also, "being in the cloud enabled people to go from any device anywhere to open a ticket," Smith says. "If someone is away from the office and their payroll is not right, they can open a ticket from anywhere."

The cloud environment also provided a more modern look and feel for a new generation coming into the business. Younger people are looking for an Amazon-, PayPal- or eBay-like interface, Smith says. Ivanti in the cloud "doesn't look like your grandfather's IT, which appeals to the younger workers and users," he says.

For the IT department, another important point is that its telecom and networking services vendors and outsourcers are able to access Ivanti through the cloud to update tickets for the tasks they accomplish. “Telecom, networking, and computer installs get tasked from our system to their Ivanti instance and run there,” Smith says.

In fact, Smith can leverage the cloud environment to add an internal or external IT team to a project in a matter of hours, when in the past it took a lot of programming to get everything set up where needed. “We’re able to put something in play and run it in a test environment, which we couldn’t do as easily in the on-premise version, where it’s more painful to add and test,” he adds.

Cloud Eases Path to Onshore IT Ops

Currently Smith has teams handling IT work in Houston, New Orleans, and Orlando, as well as in India. But the cloud has been a force in helping SCI reduce offshore IT operations, something that Smith was keen on because of issues concerning high staff attrition and lower service performance with offshore workers. While onshore personnel command a slightly higher per-hour rate, in the end they are more efficient so the cost is ultimately less, Smith contends.

SCI has moved its entire IT service desk operation from India to Orlando—and it did it quickly and with no interruption of service. “Moving our service desk from offshore to onshore was seamless because it was in the cloud,” Smith says. “There was no loss of any data. It was our biggest success with Ivanti Service Manager in the last three years.”

Another success it experienced was moving the on-premise Ivanti help desk instance of Stewart Enterprises to the Ivanti cloud easily without disruption after SCI had acquired that company.

What’s Up Next

Ivanti Service Manager has served the SCI environment well in many ways, including enabling IT’s internal business clients to better service their own customers – the families planning their loved ones’ funeral services and memorials. For instance, if a family member wants to change something in an obituary, the funeral director can simply create an Ivanti ticket on a customer-facing web portal.

And while Ivanti isn’t the direct reason that SCI recently won the J.D. Power President’s Award in recognition of its dedication to service excellence, Smith says that “it helped us to be more customer-oriented.”

Smith is continually on the lookout to increase the use of Ivanti in other areas. It could be a further customer service asset, for instance, with its ticketing system being leveraged to help alert funeral operators after-hours about a client’s need for their services. “Eventually I’d like to have all that in Ivanti,” he notes. “When someone passes away, the first call is to the funeral director.”

Smith is also excited about the opportunity to further leverage Ivanti in conjunction with an increasingly mobile workforce, as well as to exploit its chat, remote-control, and knowledge-management integration features that can ease analysts’ jobs and further improve customer satisfaction. Integrating different cloud-based software solutions into one streamlined Ivanti solution is also on his agenda, as is using it to help SCI dive deeper into incorporating more ITIL best practices.

Smith knows he can continue to rely on the strong relationship SCI has had with Ivanti for 16 years and the “outstanding service” the company has provided in order to see success with the next steps the company may take.

“Every day I come into work there’s a success in Ivanti,” he says. “Why should tomorrow be any different?”



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