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# Service Corporation International Takes HEAT to the Cloud

Service Corporation International (SCI) is North America's leading provider of funeral and cemetery services. Its network encompasses over 2,000 funeral service locations and more than 450 cemeteries located across 45 states, eight Canadian provinces, and the District of Columbia, as well as Puerto Rico.

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## COMPANY

**Name:** Service Corporation International  
**Location:** U.S.  
**Industry:** Funeral and cemetery services  
**Website:** [www.sci-corp.com](http://www.sci-corp.com)

## SOLUTION

HEAT Service Management, cloud deployment

## BENEFITS

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

Under its Dignity Memorial brand, its funeral, creation and cemetery service providers care for more than 300,000 families each year. In 2016, SCI was recognized for its dedication to service excellence by becoming the recipient of 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 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 gaining a majority stake in The Neptune Society.

As SCI further cemented 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.

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Thomas Smith, SCI Director, Information Technology Support

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It's been an amazing journey for SCI from its start in 2000 using HEAT Help Desk “Classic” software as an on-premise deployment for handling IT helpdesk and support center tickets. Today, it relies on HEAT Service Management 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 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 HEAT 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 have increased as a result, but so too has the business’ need to implement a consolidated means of ticketing and tracking for the many other business processes that depend on its technology infrastructure.

At SCI, HEAT supports requests for everything from name changes in HR systems to banking institution switches in payroll procedures, 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 balance to the type of computing equipment that’s been bought, in its HEAT database.

“When we started working with other departments, they wanted centralized tracking of their incidents and requests,” Smith says. Four hundred HEAT analysts use the solution today – more than ten times as many as were involved with SCI’s HEAT system at launch.

HEAT’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 any one of the company’s 2,000 locations for an overall status update – 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 to what’s going on with the business and specific divisions is our biggest benefit from HEAT Service Management.”

For Smith personally, HEAT 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 HEAT onboard, users had to VPN into the system and had to 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 HEAT help desk there, too. It did so in 2013, becoming one of the first HEAT Software customers to do so.

It 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 gave people the ability 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. HEAT 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 HEAT through the cloud to update tickets for the tasks they accomplish. “Telecom, networking and computer installs get tasked from our system to their HEAT 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 used to take 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 on premise, where it’s 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 decrease offshore IT operations, something that Smith was keen to do because of issues with 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 HEAT Service Management in the last three years.”

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

### What's Up Next

HEAT Service Management has served SCI 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, all the funeral director needs to do is create a HEAT ticket on a customer-facing web portal.

And while HEAT 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 HEAT 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-

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hours about a client's need for their services. “Eventually I'd like to have all that in HEAT,” he notes. “When someone passes away, the first call is to the funeral director.”

He's also excited about the opportunity to further leverage HEAT 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 HEAT solution also is 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 HEAT for 16 years and the “outstanding service” the company has provided to see success with whatever next steps the company takes.

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

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