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ITIL® 2015 and
Beyond: Six Trends
Driving the
Increased
Importance of the
Service Desk

ITIL® 2015 and Beyond: Six Trends Driving the Increased Importance of the Service Desk

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Six Challenging Trends in 2015 and Beyond for IT Service and Support

The landscape in IT service provision is again shifting as we move into 2015. Customers and users are demanding a higher level of customer service, and across many industries, the level of customer service you provide is becoming a competitive advantage. As their organizations enter a more competitive global environment, where choice is merely a click away, IT service providers are realizing that customer service and support must now be an integral part of the release package to compete effectively and retain customers.

In addition to the increasing emphasis on customer service and the user experience, other major trends that compel IT service managers to rethink the way they deliver and support services include the tremendous growth of cloud-based services; the growth in use of mobile devices (tablets, smart phones) in contrast to PCs; the explosive growth of apps in contrast to traditional applications; the increasing adoption of rapid application development methods; and the increasing adoption of agile development methods, resulting in the frequent deployment of updates to the user environment.

What follows is snapshot of each of these disruptive challenges and what they mean for IT service and support. Following this discussion, we will look at how IT must—in light of these challenges—recognize that the Service Desk is now more critical than ever. In fact, IT service managers should consider taking steps we outline to transform the Service Desk from merely the first line of support, to a more formidable support center that is able to effectively empower the IT organization to meet these challenges head on.

The Increasing Emphasis on Customer Service

To win and retain customers, CIOs are putting more emphasis on developing their front line service and support capabilities. A recent IBM study (March 13, 2014) confirms that:

“Over 60 percent of CIOs seek to improve customer experience and change the way they engage customers. More than 80 percent of CIOs surveyed are mining data for customer insights and shifting their focus to marketing, sales and customer service managers who work on finding, winning, and retaining customers.”

For an IT organization, the face of IT is the Service Desk. This is the function that interacts with the users more than any other resource within IT. As the ITIL framework maintains, a good Service Desk can more than make up for deficiencies elsewhere in IT. Given increased globalization and competition for IT services, how your Service Desk analysts handle customers makes a difference now more than ever. On the one hand, your Service Desk can turn users into loyal customers who keep coming back, and help promote your image and grow your service base. On the other hand, they can damage your reputation across your customer environment and your ability to thrive and compete.

The Need to Deliver and Measure the End-User Experience

Although customers may agree to the service levels proposed by IT, end users are ultimately the consumers of IT services. Studies show that increasing emphasis is being placed on the end-user experience. According to a 2014 study by Axios Systems, "Although conversations around needs, demands and service levels usually happen between IT managers and business unit heads, employees in the end user community are the day-to-day consumers of IT services." The Axios study recommends that it is "essential to measure the quality of the end-user experience as an IT metric." Where better to measure and collect this data than the Service Desk?

This is especially important, in light of the fact that "in 74% of reported cases, IT first learns about performance and availability issues when an end user calls the service desk." (Source: Gartner)

The Shift to Cloud-Based Services and Apps

The shift to cloud-based technology and service provision is causing IT services to be less platform-centric, available on a variety of platforms, and capable of more frequent updates by cloud service providers.

Cloud supporting services are growing the fastest, followed by customer facing services. According to Gartner, infrastructure as a service (IaaS) will achieve a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 41.3 percent through 2016, the fastest growing area of public cloud computing. Platform as a service (PaaS) is projected to achieve a 27.7 percent CAGR through 2016. And the software as a service (SaaS) market will grow steadily at a CAGR of 19.5 percent through 2016.

What does all of this mean for the Service Desk, the front line of support for IT? According to a recent article from Global Knowledge, "foundational help desk and service support skills and methods are shifting as well" in order to meet this new challenge. Support staff must learn new skills, based on an understanding of virtualization and cloud essential knowledge and skills. Support staff must be able to support many more apps, operating on multiple platforms, across multiple locations.

The Increasing Rate of Deploying New and Changed Services

Rapid application development and deployment practices (Agile, Scrum) are being increasingly adopted, resulting in more frequent changes delivered to the customer environment. To meet this challenge, the Service Desk of the future must equip itself to effectively support the continuous deployment of new and improved releases of services and supporting technology.

This means that in addition to the Service Desk becoming an integral function supporting ITIL Change Management and Release and Deployment, front line support staff must continually learn from IT technical and application management groups. To keep pace with rapid change, support staff must be equipped with a supporting knowledge management process that can ensure the effective sharing of knowledge across service operations staff.

The Increasing Demand for and Shift to Omnichannel Support

Users want access to IT support services around the clock, in a manner of their choosing. IT is striving to raise the level of customer service while holding the line on, or reducing, costs. These are a few of the factors driving the shift to Omnichannel support. The old phone-centric support model is fading fast. Users are demanding choice and flexibility—to submit a request or log an incident through the channel that is most convenient to them rather than the service provider. Given that we are moving into a more competitive service provider environment, it's no surprise that more and more IT service organizations are shifting to multi-channel support—giving users the ability to receive support via their choice of channel: the web, email, chat, walk-up, and of course phone.

According an HDI 2013 industry survey, “many support centers offer multiple channels of support, with new options being added to meet customer expectations and demands.” Phone, email, web, auto-logged tickets (by a monitoring tool), walk-up, and chat make up the major channels of support. But where does one start? And what ought to be the approach to evolve to this new support model? We will present some strategies for transitioning to multi-channel support later in this white paper.

The Transition from PCs to Mobile Devices and Apps

The increasing adoption of mobile devices as the primary instrument for work in contrast to traditional PCs is becoming a reality. The IT support center of the future must be capable of effectively and efficiently support an increasing percentage of remote and mobile workers, using BYOD devices, operating cloud-based applications.

“Through 2018, the growing variety of devices, computing styles, user contexts and interaction paradigms will make “everything everywhere” strategies unachievable. The unexpected consequence of bring your own device (BYOD) programs is a doubling or even tripling of the size of the mobile workforce.” (Source: Gartner)

“By 2015, there will be more people accessing the web via a mobile device than through a PC.”
(Source: IDC)

The Explosion of Apps Taking the Place of Desktop Applications

Gartner predicts that “through 2014, improved JavaScript performance will begin to push HTML5 and the browser as a mainstream enterprise application development environment. Gartner recommends that developers focus on creating expanded user interface models including richer voice and video that can connect people in new and different ways. Apps will continue to grow while applications will begin to shrink. Apps are smaller, and more targeted, while a larger application is more comprehensive.”

This means that IT support will have to be positioned to support many more apps on mobile platforms of all types.

The ITIL Framework is a Great Start but Not Sufficient to Help Meet These Challenges

To gain general guidance in meeting these challenges, tens of thousands of IT support organizations have chosen the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). And recent surveys have shown that the move toward implementing IT Service Management best-practices is showing no signs of slowing down:

“Best practices continue to be important for service desk operations, as 47 percent believed that the IT Infrastructure Library® (ITIL®) was very important or critical, and only 14 percent thought that ITIL was slightly important or unimportant. And 40 percent see ITIL as becoming more important versus only 6 percent who view it as becoming less important in the future. ”

ITIL, now in its 2011 Edition, is the most widely accepted global framework for implementing IT Service Management.

Start by Adopting ITIL as the Best-Practice Framework for Planning, Deploying, and Maintaining Services

To help meet these new challenges, the ITIL framework should be adopted as the set of best-practice guidelines for planning, implementing, and maintaining quality IT services that meet the needs of the business, and customers. It is vendor neutral, proven across a diverse set of environments, and just plain works. ITIL provides guidance in the following areas:

- A service life-cycle approach to planning, designing, building, maintaining, and supporting services—both customer-facing services (e.g., email), as well as IT supporting services (network services, storage services, database services, backup services, and so forth).
- ITIL provides best-practice processes across five stages for accomplishing this—planning the strategy for your service (service strategy); designing your service, including all aspects of it (service design); transitioning your service into the live environment, by building, integrating, testing, and deploying it (service transition); supporting your service while it is “live” (service operation); and continually improving your service (continual service improvement).
- Technology selection and integration—best-practice approaches to identifying, selecting, and implementing service management tools and systems.
- Guidance for the Service Desk as a critically important function, the first line of support for users of IT services.
- Planning and deploying a measurements framework, along with a continual improvement program.

But given these six disruptive challenges, ITIL comes up short and requires complementary guidance—it provides us with good, general guidance on “what” to do—but not the specific guidance needed on “how” IT ought to prepare to meet these challenges: the challenge of delivering great customer service while providing an excellent end-user experience; how best to support cloud-based services, and the increasing proliferation of apps; how to transform our Service Desk to support more rapid deployment of new and changed services; how to evolve from a single channel to an Omnichannel support provider; and how to effectively support customers and users in an open, mobile BYOD environment.

Complement ITIL with Support Center Best-Practices to Enable Transformation!

The ITIL books readily admit that ITIL should be complemented with other standards or frameworks to provide a more comprehensive set of guidance for an IT organization. Given that most of these challenges revolve around how IT supports the customer and user environment, the question is: which other industry standards and best-practices are available that can be integrated with ITIL, in order to better equip an IT organization to meet these challenges, and transform its Service Desk to a more formidable support center?

Complement ITIL by Integrating HDI Standards to Enable Support Center Transformation

HDI, the world's largest community of IT service and support professionals, has developed a complementary industry best-practice titled the Support Center Certification (SCC) Standard. This Standard has been in place since 2000, and is widely recognized and adopted as the set of best-practices for planning, maturing, and maintaining a support center (whether an internal Service Desk, or an externally facing customer support center).

The HDI Support Center Standard nicely integrates with the ITIL framework, enabling an IT organization to understand not only what is required for a best-practice support center, but how to put the necessary resources and capabilities in place to deliver quality support.

Individual Standards for Support Center Best-Practices

While ITIL lays out the key roles and responsibilities for the Service Desk, which sets the foundation for what is required for your support center people resources, HDI complementary standards provide specific guidance on the types of skills and capabilities each of these resources should have. Available to you are a set of individual Standards, along with certification training, that set the standards of excellent for support center performance:

- **Support Center Analyst:** A Standard of best-practices, and training, for first- and second-line support analysts, providing skills that enable customer service excellence
- **Desktop Support Technician:** A Standard and set of best-practices for second-line support staff
- **Support Center Team Lead:** A Standard for support center supervisors, focused on best-practices for leadership, coaching, and attaining high performance
- **Support Center Manager:** A Standard and training for support center managers, providing the skills in planning, organizing, staffing, and managing an effective support center

Like the best-practices that are a part of ITIL, the HDI support center and individual standards are proven across a diverse set of environments: both internal and external service providers have audited themselves against HDI's Support Center Standard, and trained their staff in Support Center Analyst, Desktop Support, Team Lead, and Management training. These standards have been in place and time tested for more than a decade, proven across thousands of IT service provider organizations. And like ITIL, the HDI standards are vendor-neutral, and are easily implemented by small-, medium- and large-scale providers.

Recommended Strategies for Meeting the Challenges

Deliver Excellent Customer Service through Optimized Interaction Skills

Transforming your Service Desk into a support center that is focused on customer service excellence involves starting at the top. Your executive management must set the strategy for your support center, establishing your perspective—your vision and mission—for delivering service and support. Just as ITIL recommend that IT craft a Strategy for IT Services, your support center must likewise craft its own vision and mission to effectively meet

these challenges. These statements form the cornerstone of your strategy to position customer service as a priority for your support center. For example, your support center mission statement might make it obvious that customer service and satisfaction are fundamental to the mission:

"Our mission is to provide world class customer service via the application of process, technology, and expertise enabling Ciba Vision Corporation to increase customer satisfaction in a cost-effective manner."

Ciba Vision Help Desk (Source: HDI)

Build upon these cornerstone strategy statements by developing, documenting, and deploying operation policies, plans, and procedures which include best-practices for delivering a high-quality customer service experience. This includes implementing ITIL Incident Management and Request Fulfillment processes, and also providing for the skills to deliver:

- Policies and procedures for how to handle incidents and requests. It has often been said that it's not what you say that matters; it's how you say it. While ITIL provides guidance on the basic steps for Incident Management and Request Fulfillment, HDI Standards and training complement this with practical guidance on how to deliver a successful customer interaction. HDI Standards provide guidance on:
 - A best-practice script for a standard greeting and closing
 - Policies and scripts for managing "difficult customer behavior"
 - Guidance on using tone of voice, and expressing "empathy" when dealing with a frustrated customer
 - Guidance on aligning with a customer's style of speech, using questions and answers effectively, and managing the interaction
 - Best-practices for written interactions—email and chat support
- Best-practices for monitoring, measuring, and assessing the customer service experience so as to continually improve. The level of customer satisfaction you have achieved is in the mind of your customer or user, and is based on perception. ITIL discusses the necessity of planning and carrying out user and customer satisfaction surveys, but the HDI Standards provide specific, practical guidance on how to measure and assess both customer and user satisfaction:
 - Guidance for implementing a call and ticket quality monitoring process, which will ensure that the quality of customer interactions continually improve
 - Best-practices for planning, deploying, and administering ongoing as well as periodic customer and user satisfaction surveys, enabling the support center to assess the quality of interactions, as well as benefit from continuous feedback from customers and users
- Guidance for planning, implementing, and reporting performance based upon a support center balanced scorecard of metrics. While ITIL provides general guidance on metrics for the processes of Incident Management and Request Fulfillment, as well as the Service Desk function, the HDI Standards provide support-center specific guidance. A three-volume set of booklets is available for planning, deploying, and carrying out measurements and reporting based on a balanced scorecard of metrics for a support center.
 - Enabling support center management to implement a support center scorecard of performance metrics, and regular reporting to staff, other IT groups, and customers.
 - The result: Ongoing demonstration of value by showing how the support center is meeting support center performance goals and service-level targets
 - Also enabling support center management to detect gaps and opportunities for improvement in quality and performance to goals

Deliver, Measure, and Continually Improve the End-User Experience

The end-user experience is created every time a user interacts with your Service Desk—either through the phone, email, the web, a remote support session, a walk-up, or chat. This is the moment of truth that defines the end-user experience.

In face-to-face support, it's the first seven to ten seconds that the end user meets with and interacts with your Desktop Support Technician. It's how they look, what they say, and how they say it. It's how effective they are at listening, and the body gestures they use. In a remote support setting, it's how your support analyst greets the customer over the phone (with tone of voice playing a bigger role than the actual words being said). It's how they listen, how they verbalize and empathize with the customer, how well they manage the interaction, and how effective they are at delivering a solution. The result: either a "wow" end-user experience, or a big letdown in the user's mind.

What's important is to put the resources and capabilities in place to deliver a quality user experience, and then continually monitor, manage, and develop capabilities to deliver the goal: a "wow" experience each and every time. ITIL provides essential guidance for the Service Desk function in the areas of:

- An effective communication policy and plan that can help ensure that the Service Desk and other IT support groups (as well as customers, users and suppliers) are communicating effectively and efficiently
- The steps, process model, and activities for Incident Management, as well as Request Fulfillment steps, process model and activities

To meet this challenge, implement ITIL general guidance to set the foundation for creating a "wow" end-user experience—policies for how effective communications across service operations ought to take place; and implement ITIL best-practices for Incident Management and Request Fulfillment. Automate the processes with an effective Service Management System, monitoring systems, and remote support tools. But in addition, pay attention to developing support center people capabilities:

- Transform your Service Desk people resources into capabilities that can truly deliver a "wow" end-user experience.
 - Develop Service Desk level 1 analysts to have not just good but *great* communication skills—engage support center training and role-playing to develop listening skills, verbal skills, the ability to demonstrate empathy
 - Develop your desktop support technician skills to create that "wow" experience every time they are on site, with effective interpersonal skills
- Take steps to continually measure and report on the level of end-user satisfaction as a key metric in your support center scorecard..
- Implement an ongoing user satisfaction survey, triggered at the end of each end user interaction, to measure and report on the level of satisfaction. Select a target or goal (for example, 4/5, with 5 being best), and reporting on this Key Performance Indicator (KPI) as an integral component of your daily, weekly and monthly support center scorecard. You can plan your survey using HDI's Focus book on this topic, available through their Resource library. Or check out their "Customer Satisfaction Index" survey for an example of how easy it is to make this a part of your support center scorecard.

Develop Skills, Knowledge, and Remote Tools to Support Cloud-Based Services

Cloud-based services are becoming increasingly popular, especially with small- to medium-sized businesses. An example of a public cloud service most are familiar with is Google Apps, which provides cloud-based services for handling email, managing documents, using spreadsheets, and calendaring. Other examples of cloud services are private cloud-based services and hybrid cloud services.

Given the increasing shift to cloud-based service provision, support staff must learn to more effectively “support remote workers, BYOD devices in use at a variety of locations, and cloud-based applications with limited control and visibility. This means support staff must have additional skills that enable them to effectively support multiple technologies in multiple configurations in multiple environments.” (Source: Global Knowledge).

This challenge calls for an ongoing program of best-practice support training and skill development, including enhanced communication skills, troubleshooting skills, and relationship management skills. Start by implementing best-practices for deploying Incident Management and Request Fulfillment processes, along with guidance for planning, deploying, and operating an effective Service Desk function. But in addition, realize that support staff knowledge and skills need to shift and expand to effectively support services in a cloud environment:

- Review your support center job descriptions, along with defined roles, responsibilities, and needed skills. What updates do you need to implement in order to bring these current with the new support environment?
- Provide your first-line and second-line support staff with “cloud essentials” training so that they have the basic knowledge and skill set to provide effective support for services delivered in a cloud environment
- Equip your first-line support analysts with effective communication, relationship management, and problem solving skills so that they can quickly identify the issue, manage expectations while gathering the necessary information, and troubleshoot reported problems
- Don’t ignore developing your staff’s writing skills if email and chat support are major channels of delivery for your support center
- Implement remote support tools to enable your support analysts to interact with the user, while remotely logged in to speed diagnosis and resolution

Leverage Continual Learning and Knowledge Management to Support Rapid Deployment of New and Changed Services

Limited, reactive training conducted when funds are available is no longer an option. Meeting these challenges requires a continual learning approach, embedded into the very fabric of the support center. Service and support training must be integrated with the Release and Deployment process, so that technical and skills training happens in concert with the pilot and deployment of a release package of new/changed services. ITIL dictates that training users and the Service Desk is part of the release package. Given the more frequent development and delivery of new and changed functionality, what’s needed is a continuous training and knowledge transfer process, driving the development of needed technical skills, soft skills, and best-practices through multifaceted mechanisms (face-to-face training, live online training, self-paced training, web-based training, and OTJ training).

Implement a Continual Learning Approach

With IT being the life-blood of most businesses today, and in light of the increasing pace of enhanced functionality deployment, it is imperative that IT managers evolve to adopt a culture of continuous learning. According to ITIL, successful IT Service Operation execution requires process, technology and people. Too often IT puts a priority on developing its processes and supporting technology. While these are necessary, it’s often the people that make the difference—especially in customer and user satisfaction. A *continual learning program for people* that becomes an integral part of the IT organization’s culture can help ensure that people resources are continuously transformed into capabilities that can effectively support continuous deployments optimally.

Take these steps to move toward a continual learning approach:

- Integrate the Service Desk into Change Management by ensuring that it is represented within the Change Management process, providing visibility to first-line support for upcoming changes
- Make the Service Desk, and other Service Operation level 2 teams, an integral part of Release and Deployment activities

- Plan a comprehensive and budgeted training program for each function within Service Operations—the Service Desk, as well as other IT support groups
- Lay out a training roadmap for each support team member, based upon assigned role, that lists a sequence of courses and certifications appropriate to the role
- Ensure the training is delivered continuously and is multi-faceted—delivered through a combination of channels, including classroom training, distanced learning, self-paced training, and On the Job (OTJ) training (mentoring)

Deploy an Optimized Model for Knowledge Management: Knowledge Centered Support (KCS)

ITIL provides general guidance for planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining a Knowledge Management (KM) process. The ITIL framework also acknowledges that key benefits from an effective KM process include providing the right information, to the right person, at the right time; and minimizing the need to rediscover knowledge.

Although KM has a payoff in Service Strategy, Service Design, and in Service Transition, where it really adds value is providing the ability to more effectively and efficiently support the rapid deployment of new and changed services and technology. A knowledge-powered support center will complement ITIL with a proven model for Knowledge Management within a support center: Knowledge Centered Support (KCS). Since the early 1990s, hundreds of internal and external service providers have adopted KCS as the best-practices for implementing an optimized knowledge management process within their support center. As a best-practice, KCS enables a support center to:

- Speed incident resolution by providing analysts with quick and easy access to reusable solutions
- Reduce costs and raise staff productivity by minimizing the need to rediscover knowledge
- Empower front-line support with continuous learning, providing quick access to high-quality knowledge and solutions created by other front line teams, or back-line technical and application support groups
- Promote teamwork across groups by making it easy to contribute and share knowledge
- Enable the transfer of some knowledge to end users through a web self-service portal, thus empowering users, and reducing incoming calls for status, common workarounds and solutions

By applying the support center specific model of Knowledge Management (Knowledge Centered Support [KCS]), IT management can transform their Service Desk and other support teams into a responsive, high performing, cost-effective, agile, knowledge-driven support center. And the evidence supports this. A 2013 study by HDI of member IT support organizations showed that for the organizations that showed a decrease in ticket volume, the leading factors were improved “knowledge management (35 percent), customer competency (32 percent), and self-service(32 percent).”

Meet the Demand for Omnichannel Support by Moving to a Multichannel Support Model

The customer and user landscape is changing. Generational factors are playing an increasing role. No longer are users content to receive their support via the phone. In fact their preference may be quite the opposite—to receive support entirely in electronic form, without having to speak with a person.

To meet this challenge, IT must transform its Service Desk, along with its resources and capabilities, to a multi-channel support center that provides a choice of access—delivering support through a variety of channels, based upon their demographics of their target customers, and their preferences for how they wish to receive support. Plan your transition to multi-channel support by using the ITIL Continual Service Improvement (CSI) approach:

- Start your plan with a new vision and mission for your IT support center. Then create a high-level strategic plan that will lay out the phases to transform your current help/service desk into a proactive, multi-channel “support center.”
- Do a base-line assessment, documenting where you are today—including people resources and capability, current technology and tools, and the level of process maturity. Capture the level of customer and user satisfaction, and the costs of providing support (average cost per incident, and per request). Assess the cost-effectiveness of support through current channels. For example, face-to-face support has shown to be the most expensive channel (\$18 per ticket), followed by phone, and email. Web self-service has shown to be the least expensive support channel, and is increasing in popularity (a Forrester study indicated that “67 percent of consumers use web self-service knowledge to find answers to their questions.”). How does your support provision compare? Also consider your target customer’s preferences for receiving support—some industries are highly phone-centric, while others are more amenable to electronic support. What are your user preferences?
- Then detail the improvement plan project to move from your current state to a multi-channel support model, defining the channels you will provide, and how you will deliver, track and manage the delivery of support services through these channels. Ensure your strategy guides users about when and how to use each channel (example: don’t use email to report a critical outage!)
- Implement the improvement plan over a period of months, using a project management approach and a supporting cross-functional team. For example:
 - Upgrade your website to a fully functional web “self-service” portal that enable users to assess the status of an incident or request; query a service catalog for a list of standard services; search the knowledge base for an answer or workaround; or enter an incident or request ticket online.
 - If interruptions by users to your Service Desk area are challenge, implement a plan to deploy a Walk-Up Window (WUW) adjacent to your Service Desk area. Staff this on a rotating basis, and provide users with convenient and easy access. This WUW will relieve your Service Desk of interruptions, decrease the need for Desktop Support to visit remote desktop locations, and boost your cost-effectiveness.
 - For Desktop Support Technicians that continually visit sites, equip them with mobile devices to collaborate more effectively, enabling them to also enter and update tickets while on the go.
 - Ensure that the phone channel is effective and efficient. Use a Workforce Management tool to optimize staffing and scheduling for the phone channel, and ensure that phone support analysts receive proper training in communication, call management and soft skills.
 - As a channel, email can be problematic, since it is fundamentally unstructured. It is not uncommon to find several people a day assigned to process emails into acceptable ticket format. This can delay the processing of medium priority incidents and requests, and is a costly way to operate. Once web support is fully underway, consider repositioning email for low-priority requests only, and as a status update and reporting channel.
- Once you have implemented your transition plan (after a period of months), and having captured an earlier baseline, check to assess the results. Incidents, requests, and communication should be processed through multiple channels. Overall support should be more efficient and cost-effective. User satisfaction should improve. Continue to monitor and report on the metrics associated with these channels, to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Your strategy over time should be to move from using more costly channels of support (on-site), to the use of less costly channels (web support).

Plan to Support the Transition of Work to Mobile Devices and Apps from PCs

There is no question that increasingly, customers are moving to laptops, tablets, and smartphones to conduct the bulk of their business. According to Gartner:

“In 2014, the worldwide tablet market is forecast to grow 47 percent with lower average selling prices attracting new users. Worldwide shipments of traditional PCs are forecast to total 278 million units in 2014, a 7 percent decline from 2013. Driven by an uptake in Windows ultra mobiles, the PC market is estimated to remain flat in 2014 (0.2 percent), after a decline of 9.9 percent in 2013.”

In addition, there is an explosive growth in the adoption of smaller, more portable and easier to maintain apps (in contrast to traditional desktop applications) to conduct business activity.

To meet this challenge of effectively supporting an environment of mobile devices, and apps, often running in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) environment, Service Desks will have to transform to a more capable support center that can provide for:

- Developing and communicating clear policies and procedures that set clear guidelines for which devices are or are not supported; the acceptable use of mobile devices; how corporate applications and information is to be secured and protected; and guidelines allowing for personal information and use
- Allowing users to assume a larger role in service and support, while defining the extent and role of the support center in supporting the user on their mobile device
- Ensuring your Service Desk is an integral part of planning, testing, and deploying capabilities for mobile device support, along with supported apps
- A comprehensive training program will need to be developed and deployed to inform the support staff and users about the impact of mobility, and support for mobile devices. Improved communication and diagnostics skills will need to be developed for first-line support, equipped with new remote access and MDM support tools
- Optimizing processes (such as Event Management, Incident Management, Request Fulfillment, and Access Management) that can effectively support a mobile environment. Other processes such as new employee provisioning and de-provisioning will also need to be revised, tested and validated.
- A Mobile Device Management (MDM) supporting tool or system that enables the support center to track, monitor, and provide support for mobile devices

Conclusion

Meeting these challenges means adopting the ITIL framework, but going beyond ITIL to integrate proven complementary standards and practices that provide the needed how- to guidance to meet these challenges. Overcoming such challenges means that the Service Desk must evolve beyond a Service Desk to a more highly skilled, cost-effective, well-integrated and higher-performing Support Center. As outlined in the previous sections, the Service Desk must become an IT Support Center that can:

- Deliver the “wow” customer service experience end users are now seeking. Customer service is becoming a differentiator in a more open and competitive service environment and the winning IT service providers will recognize this and develop their support staff capabilities in this area.
- Be well integrated with other IT support teams so that all support groups function together as a unified customer support center with common policies, procedures, and supporting internal agreements. The first-line Service Desk will continue to handle and resolve a significant percentage of incidents and requests, but those that it can’t resolve or fulfill, other IT support groups must resolve as part of an integrated, IT support center.

- Provide effective Omnichannel support: a higher level of proactive service and support, interacting with users through multiple channels—through the web, chat, remote access tools, social media, phone and face-to-face. Customers want choice and flexibility, and the support center of the future must integrate with customer and users to form a “support community” that is responsive, interactive, and effective.
- Be an integral part of a support center that provides for continuous training and knowledge transfer from back-line groups to the front line support team. Due to more continuous deployment of new and changed services, and the more rapid pace of technology change, the Service Desk must be the recipient of continuous knowledge transfer from other IT technical and application management groups to be effective.
- Leverage the power of Knowledge Management, enabling the effective sharing of knowledge between and across support teams to reduce the need to rediscover knowledge, as well as enabling and empowering customers and users with quick access to answers and re-usable solutions
- Transform its first-line support analysts to “cloud and app support consultants,” with an increased understanding of how to support business service apps operating in an open, multi-platform environment. Higher levels of trouble-shooting skills, relationship management skills, and communication skills will be essential.

Appendix

- Axelos: IT Service Management: <http://www.axelos.com/IT-Service-Management-ITIL/>
- Gartner: Top IT Trends for 2014. <http://www.itbusinessedge.com/slideshows/top-10-strategic-technology-trends-for-2014.html>
- How Cloud is Redefining IT Job Roles, by Hank Marquis. 17 Jan 2014. Global Knowledge. <http://blog.globalknowledge.com/technology/cloud-computing/how-cloud-is-redefining-it-job-roles>
- Axios Systems: Top 7 ITSM Trends for 2014 and Beyond. White Paper.
- HDI Support Center Management Standards and Training. Visit www.thinkhdi.com, and www.globalknowledge.com
- Consortium for Service Innovation, and Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS): <http://www.serviceinnovation.org/kcs>

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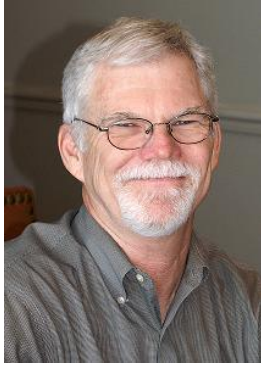
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About the Author



Paul is the president and principal consultant of Optimal Connections LLC. With over 30 years of experience in planning and managing technology services, Paul has held numerous positions in both support and management. Corporate experience includes working for such companies as Motorola, FileNet, and QAD. He is also experienced in service desk infrastructure development, support center consolidation, deployment of web portals and Knowledge Management Systems, as well as service marketing strategy and activities. Currently Paul delivers a variety of services to IT organizations, including Support Center Analyst and Manager training, ITIL Foundation and Intermediate Level training, Best-practice Assessments, Support Center Audits, and general IT Consulting.

His degrees include a BA and MBA. Paul is certified in most ITIL Intermediate levels and is a certified ITIL Expert. He is also on the HDI Faculty, and trains for ITpreneurs, Global Knowledge, Quickstart Intelligence, Phoenix TS, and other IT training organizations. For more on Paul, visit www.optimalconnections.com.