Introduction

In today’s world, business and technology move and evolve at warp speed. In order to sustain and maximize a competitive advantage in this fast-paced world, IT is continually challenged to move at a faster pace to meet the varied needs of its internal customers. Supporting more users, more devices, and a more diverse set of services—while increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and keeping up with constant technology changes—makes running a corporate IT function one of the most challenging roles in the business. The ever-growing demand for services forces IT leaders to rethink the way they do business, especially in the service management arena. This eBook covers three areas—modernizing your self-service portal, collecting and using value-added metrics, and implementing data integration for actionable IT intelligence—that will help you keep up with the business and deliver results that contribute to the bottom line.

IT service desks face increasing volumes of service requests. Let’s look at the statistics:

- According to a recent HDI Support Center Best Practices and Salary Report, the number one reason for the increased ticket volume has been the advent of new applications and systems.
- Ticket volumes have increased in 57 percent of HDI-reported support organizations.
- Gartner’s 11 Key Metrics Data Report confirms that first contact resolution averages just 64 percent.

IT departments are expected to support a myriad of new technologies while maintaining or, in some instances, improving existing service levels.

Here’s a scenario many of us recognize: Users evaluate and purchase their own devices and technologies, often relying on outside resources and vendors to achieve their goals and in some cases, bypassing the IT department entirely.

What does this mean?

If maintaining service levels can’t be achieved at the speed the business demands, IT’s very relevance can be brought into question.

IT must equip itself to more rapidly meet the current and future needs of the business. But how can IT organizations keep pace—or better yet, get out in front of the business—in light of these growing demands without a greater share of resources? How do you get your IT service desk to move faster, deliver higher-quality results, and in the process, earn the lasting trust of the business?
Apply Modern Self-Service

Let’s examine the factors that often lead business users to go around IT to get things done:

According to the same HDI Support Center Best Practices and Salary report previously noted, 76 percent of support centers are not staffed 24x7. While some of these centers may rely upon on call staff and answering services to handle tickets during unstaffed hours, 58 percent of support centers only handle tickets during business hours.

So, what happens when users encounter an after-hour program glitch or device malfunction? Isn’t this all the more reason to focus resources on self-service?
Absolutely, but we should strive for more than simply moving to a self-service paradigm. We must develop a modern self-service portal that is accessible, engaging, and genuinely helpful—so your business customers actually use it. And, most importantly, the self-service portal must enable both its business and IT users to move more quickly.

It’s time to apply modern approaches to traditional measures to reduce contact volume and make IT users more self-sufficient.
How do you shift toward a modern self-service paradigm? It’s nothing more than applying the same principles of today’s consumer-oriented online experiences to those repetitive support issues. You have nothing to gain but success. When you enable your business users to work more productively, you’ll transform your department’s critics into some of your strongest supporters.

For starters, use your employees’ technological independence to your advantage. Social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube are fixtures of your employees’ daily lives, both personal and professional. Why not harness these same concepts to create a user-friendly IT self-service portal that is relevant to your employees’ needs, expectations, and established work habits?

Think about the nationwide obsession with “do it yourself.” Do you want to flip it, flop it, or fix it? What is the number one YouTube subject? How to do anything, from restoring a table to tuning your sports car. Applying the same principle to IT support will empower end users to become more self-sufficient and allow your IT team to focus its resources on more critical issues and initiatives that deliver genuine value.

To engage your audience, build an easy-to-use video library of common product and process “how-to-dos” and “what-not-to-dos,” accessible through your customer portal, 24 hours a day. Embrace the technology – consider supplementing your knowledgebase articles with these videos. The short-term investment of time necessary to create your video repository will pay immeasurable dividends in the long term. Aesthetically pleasing self-service content that is available on any mobile device will do much to bridge the information gap.

In addition, you can:

- Let users chat with each other and with support agents.
- Provide FAQs along with concise, easy-to-understand answers.
- Solicit feedback and, most importantly, always respond, even if the suggestion isn’t feasible or applicable. You have an opportunity to help employees realize their input is valued, which will strengthen the relationship between IT and the business.
Focus on Metrics that Matter

Metrics are one of the most important factors in making an IT organization work more quickly and ensure the value being delivered is aligned with business goals. Most IT organizations have a collection of common key performance indicator (KPI) reports prescribed by industry best practice frameworks.

But, it isn’t enough to have an arbitrary list of metrics. By paying attention to the right indicators, we reduce the tendency to rely on gut decisions, which can be costly and a waste of time. Instead of basing reports on historical, “inwardly-focused” metrics such as first call resolution rate, abandon rates, and closed tickets, reports should show how the IT service desk has added value and made the business more productive over time.

Utilize an IT service management (ITSM) solution that affords you the flexibility to develop dashboards that incorporate real-time, validated data that the IT team can not only act upon, but also use to gauge and optimize its true business impact.

Properly implemented, your service desk technicians can monitor these dashboards and immediately course correct, instantly impacting IT productivity and, more importantly, business outcomes.
The ability to monitor the data in real time and provide instantaneous recognition for improvement encourages technicians to modify their actions in an effort to exceed their current performance levels, obtain higher rankings, and receive increased positive attention from peers and management.

According to a recent Gallup poll, nearly 70 percent of U.S. workers are not engaged in their jobs. In the endless effort to motivate employees, many innovative, forward-thinking corporations have realized the value of “play” to improve performance, encourage creativity, and support overall productivity in today’s workplace.

Consider the process of gamification, which is the incorporation of non-traditional game features into work activities to reward desired behaviors, create and track group progress, and establish feedback loops that both reinforce and accelerate targeted outcomes.

IT service desks can incorporate game-like activities into their processes to make technical support not only more engaging and fun, but also more effective by creating a forum of recognition using badges and points.

Get creative with special reports and congratulatory dashboards that recognize and motivate technicians with the “points” they earn when solving issues. Making it fun will inspire technicians to perform at a higher level, resulting in improved service delivery, and more productive, engaged end users.
With today’s relative ease of data integration, the complex, tiered structure of the traditional organization has become more equalized, creating the opportunity to build better partnerships between historically siloed business units and leading to greater trust between IT and those it serves. Additionally, when data is truly integrated and unified, more time can be spent adding value and less time spent troubleshooting problems or chasing down information.

Useful data exists across your organization. Turn those silos of data into actionable IT intelligence by integrating your ITSM solution with other data-rich solutions, such as asset inventory, business intelligence, remote control, and endpoint management systems. Integrating solutions that contain such data eliminates the time-consuming activity of requesting information from other teams or departments. And, instant access to this information can often be the key to promptly solving a user’s problem.

Business intelligence tools, for example, provide a single viewpoint into data from a variety of systems, enabling your team to make decisions more quickly without the headache that comes from an overload of unmanageable information. Asset inventory solutions provide visibility into the assets you have in production, where they are located, how they are configured, and who uses them.
Remote control and endpoint management solutions also contain information that will not only help solve issues on a user’s PC or mobile device, but also provide powerful collaboration capabilities for your team. The traditional IT hierarchy is multi-tiered, with each tier responsible for a different level of support and complexity of problems. While IT best practice models generally encourage multi-level support tiers, the speed of support can be adversely affected by virtue of this complexity. The use of remote and endpoint management tools can help open up real-time lines of communication and enable knowledge sharing between tiers.

For example, a highly complex support call and remote management session can be recorded and shared with junior team members providing them a firsthand account of how to solve a problem that would otherwise be outside their area of expertise. They will be armed with new knowledge and able to resolve similar problems in the future, blurring support lines, and enhancing both speed and efficiency.
Conclusion

We live in ever-changing, increasingly challenging times for the IT department as a function of business.

By supporting user engagement, mobility, and modern service demands, your IT team adds significant value to the business. And when your team can move quickly, you build a reputation of prompt and effective service.

It’s unlikely that the pace at which business is accelerating will ebb any time soon. IT teams that recognize and seize opportunities to deliver value more quickly—and ensure their internal customers can stay focused on moving the business forward—will not only succeed in elevating IT’s role within the business, but also play a key role in the overall success of the business itself.

Additional Resources

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