

Remote Support and Service Management

By [Lisa Erickson-Harris](#)



A thankless job! That's what some would call the role of the service desk analyst, even though service desk staff are perhaps *the most* customer-facing function in the company right alongside call center personnel - both in a position to positively impact customer satisfaction. Still, the service desk is more often than not seen by executive management as a cost sink: labor-intensive, no contribution to revenue, and challenging to measure its performance.

Service desk managers can help themselves by demonstrating value. Solutions that support the service desk have come a long way in the past fifteen years. The help desk itself too, has come a long way as it has moved from a very reactive group to one that is involved in many aspects of service delivery. As the market has matured and moved to adopt best practices and a service management paradigm, the service has become a critical link for the service desk, the hub for change management, asset deployment, service requests, increasingly sophisticated knowledge management and of course its traditional problem and incident management.

Service desk executives are paying close attention to the service level agreements (SLAs) and their related service quality commitments. It used to be that service management and the service desk simply meant how quickly an issue was resolved. Now, however, the service desk can receive alarms, alerts, and notifications for all types of services including business services, resource-centric services, and those that are related to the change management processes. The service desk has become more visible and has moved into a position of mitigating potential service failures as one of the key teams aware of issues before they reach the stage of a service failure.

Remote support technology - a critical tool in the service desk analyst's tool box - can be pivotal in avoiding service breaches. This, in essence, saves the enterprise real dollars in penalties, negative customer perception, and potential lost business that may occur when services are not operating up to par. Wise service desk executives can reduce their support costs and at the same time improve service quality by:

- Reducing the repair time of resources that are at risk of causing a service breach
- Standardize on a single tool that can handle all remote environments i.e. blackberry's, desktops, wireless networks, etc.
- Averting service failure by first knowing about them early and second, avoiding the time required to send a technician on-site using remote technologies

Remote control technology today has evolved. Quality systems provide the service desk with sophisticated security mechanisms, strong audit trails to assist with compliance, and flexible licensing mechanisms that can be better matched to the actual usage and needs of the enterprise. In the end, the result of using remote control in conjunction with an early warning system will improve service quality - placing the service desk in the good graces of the customer who is happy with the experience and similarly with executives who can see the value of the service desk in meeting real business needs.

Summary:

In summary, staffing costs and the service desk are very expensive and the CFO's view of this cost may well be right on the money. One way for the service desk management team to win is to deploy technologies that enable service desk staff to work more efficiently and contribute more directly to the success of business goals. Working smarter to ensure service levels can bring lots of benefits. It saves costs, but at the same time can improve service quality simply because of its efficiency.

Using Remote Control to Improve Service Levels

- Create a linkage between all SLAs and their provisions and the service desk
- Utilize existing management notification capabilities to “early warn” the service desk through alerts and alarms
- Proactively deploy a remote control system that is regularly used so that service desk analysts are proficient
- Establish a workflow that uses remote support technology at the time of the “early warning” to correct the issue and/or reallocate resources to avoid the breach
- Provide feedback to executives-IT executives, but more importantly business executives-these individuals need to see the service quality metrics, the potential breach reports, etc to understand how proactive action taken

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