

## Getting More ITSM Value Out of Your Service Desk

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**H**as your support organization evolved to meet today's Service Desk requirements or are you stuck in help desk mode recording trouble-tickets and not much beyond that? Time has come for change! Not only will your team be in a better position to support "real" company needs, but can achieve financial savings by meeting more than one service need with its investments.

The help desk has been part of the IT landscape for nearly 20 years. While the help desk's rudimentary beginnings had the simple objective of tracking and responding to user issues in a timely fashion, the discipline has matured considerably.

Today, its requirements have clearly evolved and for many, the help desk has been transformed into the Service Desk—a discipline that reaches out to most ITIL domains and more often than not serves as the starting point for best practice initiatives. The Service Desk now looks much more like a "hub" of service management activity, touching on asset management, Configuration Management Systems, Change Management, Knowledge Management and more.

IT managers and support personnel put it in more direct terms as did this recent EMA research participant:

*The service desk has a greater view/responsibility/control of the operations of an IT organization, and more greatly ... the company (business entity) as a whole. Help desks are predominately responsible for responding to incident/problem management, and serves as a function of a service desk.*

In part because of this diversification, the Service Desk has become an increasingly smart place for IT to invest. Even in 2009's tenuous financial times, many enterprises are continuing to make that investment, as confirmed by recent EMA research.

The objectives can take many different forms. In some cases, it makes sense to replace aging help desk deployments with more complete Service Desk solutions. In other situations, it makes sense to retain the existing tool and investment in it, but to use it more effectively.

Some of the ways that this plays out are:

- **Consolidation**

Many organizations have merged over the past five-to-seven years and yet they maintain existing operations for the help/Service Desk. Consolidating some of these support teams can save staffing dollars, reduce maintenance contracts and potentially improve workflows.

- **Expanding on ITIL functionality**

Organizations fortunate enough to have purchased a strong, ITIL-focused Service Desk solution may not be taking advantage of its breadth of capabilities. Implementing even one or two additional ITIL disciplines can expand the Service Desk's reach and demonstrate additional value to the organization for the same investment.

- **Automation and workflow**

Improvements in streamlining processes and implementing automation can help reduce the number of staff "touch-points" and hence lower operational expenses. The IT Service Lifecycle (aka ITIL) provides excellent guidance in this area.

- **Better use of self-service and Knowledge Management**

Most service desk organizations have yet to deploy self-service and knowledge management in any significant way. Toolsets have these capabilities and so IT support managers can wisely take advantage of these existing capabilities to put some of its workload at the source of the problem. This often results in happier users who feel in control of

their issues.

Cost reduction and more effective use of the Service Desk does not by any means equate to abandoning the traditional Service Desk. At the top of the list of management goals for the enterprise is improving customer satisfaction (82%), followed by process deployment (72%), and then cost reduction (70%). Research also shows that there is a need for multi-language support and a smaller, but growing interest in financial metrics for the Service Desk (44%).

## Multiple Service Desks

One significant approach to reducing costs in the Service Desk is to consolidate the operations and solutions used by multiple Service Desks.

In our recent research, more than half of the respondents were currently supporting multiple Service Desks or planning to do so. Uprooting one or more of these operations would achieve the greatest cost savings. Yet, adopting a multi-tenant solution for the operation so that the data can remain independent would also be of value.

Achieving economies through reduced maintenance costs and training is another approach being used by a select group of organizations. Lastly, cost savings can be achieved while continuing to maintain multiple service desks. The savings in this case can be achieved through process standardization, utilization of the same service desk solution and training geared to improve the skill sets of support personnel.

## Solution Replacement

For those that are choosing to replace their solution, beware of considerations in choosing a solution. Many times buyers choose a vendor or product simply based on cost factors at the time of purchase. In the long run, these choices may prove to be short-sighted. An evaluation of how extensible the product is a must—not only from a customization standpoint—but also for looking at how much of the application can be used to fulfill the many IT Service Management (ITSM) needs of the organization.

On-going training costs play a role as well especially for companies that are continuing to maintain multiple service desk operations. The best way to approach this is by looking at the value equation as well as the capital and operational expenses. One of EMA's survey respondents said, when asked about best practices for replacing a help desk deployment:

*You must have the appetite and management support to not only deploy a new service desk, but the appetite to resource it over the long haul in terms of on-going development and maintenance in order to meet your strategic goals.*

## SUMMARY

With this in mind, it is important to consider all the ways in which cost savings and organizational value can be achieved with the Service Desk. There is no need to stifle the evolution of the help or Service Desk even in times of economic distress.

Continuing to move forward today with streamlining workflow, consolidation of operations, incremental implementation of additional best practice components and even planning for consolidating customer service with the IT help desk are all potential actions that can be taken, in addition to product replacements. Any and all of them will position IT for greater growth when budget dollars are easier to come by. The groundwork will be in place to take advantage of it.

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