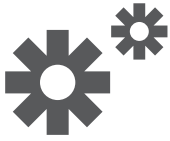




The people element seemed to be missing.
Tessa Troubridge, SDI



The service desk is dead. Long live the service desk.
Tony Probert, Cherwell Software



People expect instant and continuous feedback
Emma Dickson, Heineken



The real shift here is in customer power.
Barclay Rae, Independent Management Consultant



The Service Desk 2017 & Beyond

Produced by Howard Kendall & Daniel Wood, Service Desk Institute



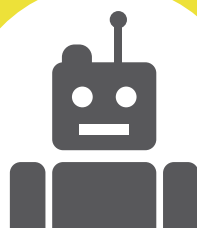
Forward thinking organisations are embracing BYOD.
Karen Ferris, Macanta Consulting



So what about Corporate IT?
Ian Aitchinson, LANDesk software



There are no technology luddites left in business.



IN 2017 THE SERVICE DESK IS TRANSFORMED INTO THE SERVICE EXPERIENCE. OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS PEOPLE, TOOLS AND SKILL WILL MERGE INTO A SINGLE EXPERIENCE AS AI, POST CARBON KNOWLEDGE WORK AND ROBOTICS DEFINE A UNIFIED EXPERIENCE FOR THE POST HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF 2050 AND BEYOND.

CHRIS DANCY, SERVICESPHERE



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INTRODUCTION



The service desk has 'come of age' and is now generally accepted as the primary customer interface and 'touch point' where the business or individual will receive help and guidance on IT Service issues, problems and requests. It will also be the point where they, and IT Services managers and directors, will judge the success of the service they are providing, whether to internal or external customers.

At SDI we provide support and advice for service desks to help them succeed, generally based around historical or current best practice standards, usually limited to shorter term tactical and strategic development. This is invariably what is required, as few organisations see the service desk as an area that requires longer term strategic consideration. The developments of the last couple of years, with technology dependence and innovation embedded in every organisation, have changed that, and we believe that it has become essential for service desks to look beyond the coming 12-24 months and develop a longer term vision that will be based on the likely business, societal, customer and technological change that will continue to affect the way we deliver support.

To that end SDI would like to help service desks envisage what challenges and changes they are likely to be facing, starting with this white paper that highlights the vision of both SDI and industry experts, service desk practitioners and managers. It pulls together a complete vision of the service desk that we will potentially see in 2017, and identifies both the key areas of change and how service desks should develop in the coming years to meet the future challenge.

The contributors were asked to look at the whole spectrum of service desk strategy and functionality, and offer their view and vision of the future, no matter how radical or how conservative.

Our thanks go to our contributors:

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SDI INSIGHTS

Predicting the Future. Brave? Foolhardy? Impossible? You could be forgiven for taking any of those views of this paper, and to a certain extent each of the views would be correct. We cannot reliably predict the future in the service desk any more than weather forecasters can do so with the weather. However, as with the weather where we are prepared to accept the general predictions of 'the experts', it is certain that a fair percentage of the predictions made in this paper will be correct too.

Even with the ambitious timeframe of trying to predict five years forward, this will be the case.

For example, many of the experts contributing here have identified that there will be a growing demand for service desks to deliver and demonstrate a greater contribution and value to the operation of the business they serve. At SDI we have long highlighted that this will be essential and few could disagree with the fact that this must happen, and by 2017 we would expect to see service desks that do NOT deliver significant value, closing or having been outsourced.

Another prediction is the role of the service desk as a policeman or facilitator of cost savings in the way technology and associated services are delivered. At SDI we have long held the view that the ultimate vision of a service desk should be to put itself out of business, through ensuring that technology and service run so efficiently no errors ever occur, or are prevented before they impact service or productivity. Several service desks, such as Heineken, have already built in targets to reduce incident numbers year on year. In Heineken's case by 25% per annum.

The pragmatic view adopted by most contributors does, however, recognise that in most cases service desks will evolve (as in fact they always have) to reflect the changes in both society and the organisation that they support. The pace of this will accelerate. In addition to extending the 'quality improvement brief that they have now, they will be responsible for ensuring that:

- The service desk becomes a highly skilled business technology services community hub, advising on best use of services to maximise productivity and innovation
- Self-help and self-healing options with

sophisticated knowledge bases are used to drive down the need for an expensive premium 'human support service', while recognising that in some sectors like legal and finance a rapid human intervention is MORE cost-effective and should be retained

- The organisation they serve knows the best way to operate, and minimise risk and threats to data integrity, with the customer led choices of BYOD mobile or fixed device, cloud based or central data sources
- It measures the performance of technology services and acts as the 'dashboard' for assessing the success of the services operation
- service desks are increasingly seen as the most professional communicators in the organisation, setting standards to which others aspire
- The use of managed or shared service providers is integrated successfully into their organisation and the performance of the third parties is seamless and optimal
- ITSM processes are used selectively and in a balanced way so that inappropriate effort is not invested in processes that don't offer any significant return on investment

These are just some of the predictions and observations made by our contributors. But their view is not the only one that is important. YOUR view, based on your current experience, added to the view of the experts and industry figures contained herein, will be the one that REALLY matters.

To that end please do take the time to read each of the papers contributed. We have added some public domain papers from the Slashdot.org to whet your appetite for some of the possible societal and service desk changes that might just happen. For example, for those of you that saw the film Minority Report and Tom Cruise using a gloved hand to move images around a vast single screen, you could have been witnessing the community service desk of the Future...



01

THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE FUTURE?

Any discussion of the future of the service desk would be incomplete without a look at the technology that we might be using and what it will enable us to achieve. Here are some thoughts from Techworld* on what we might expect to see in the future.



Augmented reality

You park your electric hover-car in the garage, head down to the office, and pop open a server that needs a memory upgrade. The mass of miniature guts staring back at you gives you a bit of vertigo - just where is that memory hiding? But instead of heading online to hunt up a schematic for this particular machine, you instead grab your smartphone. You launch an augmented reality app on your smartphone, scan the bar codes on both the computer and the new part, and point the camera at the slithery mess in front of you. Gazing at it all through your smartphone brings everything into focus. Each tiny chip and connector is now labeled - and a big arrow points to the old part you are replacing. You click a link to launch a video that demonstrates exactly what to do next. Voilà! You've installed the upgrade in a few minutes rather than a few hours.

Add bar-code scanning to the augmented reality display - making it quick and easy to locate the object you want to work with - and this concept could become a viable method of delivering targeted information in an easy-to-digest format. Making technical specs on a large number of machines a scan or two away is perfect for technical support. This is still in the idea stage, though, so it is a few years away. But a geek can hope.

Support Systems that know you

You are a smart geek. So before you ever find yourself tossing paper clips in the wastebasket while on hold with a vendor, you have already attempted peer-to-peer support, checked the forums and knowledge base, and tried a few fixes. But when you pick up the phone with the vendor, you usually have to start at the beginning with its technician - just like every noob out there. In fact, you might have to go through this routine several times on your way to Tier 3 support.

Wouldn't it be great if you were greeted instead with "Hello, Mr. IT Pro. I see you have already accessed our online diagnostics. It looks like that system needs a new hard drive. Let's confirm your mailing address and get that part to you as soon as possible."

It turns out that the technology to do this exists today and is available in product form. "Let's say I typically do a lot of self-help support on the systems I support. But today I went to the company's site several times and eventually picked up the phone. By the time I've identified myself to the automated voice system, it should know where I've been on the Web site. It should also know that I am technical enough to self-serve most of the time. So it should automatically assume that if I called at all, I need to go directly to Tier 3 support," says Anna Convery, the chief marketer at ClickFox, a company that builds tools to help companies understand their customers.

So why aren't you experiencing it? Because of slow adoption, Convery says. Large hardware manufacturers already have enormous phone and support tracking systems in place. Replacing them with something smart enough to know what you've done online and who you are - or integrating them with that information - is an enormous, slow task. But there's a good chance they are on it, so being able to take advantage of this fix is just a matter of time. And so is the ability for your company to implement something similar for your own users.

Self-healing and self-aware machines

As machines become increasingly connected to the Internet, they can take on the task of solving their own problems - or alerting their owners that they have a problem. Today, antivirus software is already doing that. But printers, networks, the fridge, and desktop computers? Not so much. Most hardware still depends on a person noticing a problem and finding a fix.

But that is likely to change. According to Brent Potts, vice president of Hewlett-Packard's Web support operation, a printer that can do a little self-care is not far away - now that Internet-connected printers are common: "A printer could easily look for updates and BIOS drivers on its own, asking only permission to install them." PCs and many applications already can do this. "And long before something goes wrong with the hardware, a conversation could be going on between the device and a service center," Potts adds.

Such a conversation would also go on between you and your device. Maybe your printer could alert you that it needs supplies, so users don't ever trek down the hall to their local printer and find their print job is in queue awaiting a toner replacement. "Your printer could text you an alert that it is running low on toner," says Potts. That way you can pick it up while you are out instead of returning to your office to find you can't print.

An easier way to replace parts

When problems are caused by faulty hardware, no amount of connecting to the Internet will fix it. A part replacement - today or tomorrow - is still a part replacement. Right now, high tech is made up of components. And when something breaks, it often requires a technician - or a user with above-average technical skills - to replace components. And that leads to an expensive, annoying process that demands a technician be dispatched to fix the problem.

"In the future, machines will be made up of four - or five or six - modules. So if something breaks, you will get a CRU [customer-replaceable unit] sent to you," predicts Brendan Keegan, president of Worldwide TechServices, a provider of outsourced service technicians to major high-tech companies. Replacing a CRU will be about as hard as playing with Legos, he says: "If your RAM goes bad, the company might send you Module No. 6 to replace the RAM and a couple of other things. You pop the old one out and pop the new one in.

Robots that do the hands-on support

Sometimes technical problems - especially if you are dealing with medical machinery or large network installations - require that an expert see the equipment in use in order to diagnose a problem or teach users how to use it. He or she might need to watch how hospital staff members use the equipment or coach an IT manager through a setup. To do this the expert needs to be in the room, silently following the techs around, offering instruction, and pointing out mistakes.

Soon that expert might arrive via FedEx. And the expert might be able to be at more than one site at a time, courtesy of robot surrogates. At AnyBots,

robots are helping people communicate remotely by providing videoconferencing that can walk around an installation site. These movements of these bots are controlled by the expert wherever he is or she is, while at the same time providing the expert eyes and a voice right on the working floor. "I think the possibility for technical support is one of the coolest applications we are working on," says Trevor Blackwell, the founder of Anybots. "We are looking at supporting medical equipment where technicians have to go to it and look at how it is being used and see that the patient is being loaded in it correctly." These robots will cost about \$15,000. That's a lot of money. "But not compared to medical equipment or a large server installation," Blackwell argues. And folding one up and shipping it to a site - while the live technician stays home, tending several of these bots - will be easy: They each weigh only about 35 pounds.

Smarter peer-to-peer support

Sometimes the best answer to your specific problem comes not from the manufacturer, but from someone who works in your industry and has a similar technical setup. Peer-to-peer support is not for every problem; it's not for account issues or issues that require part replacement, for example. But sometimes it is the best possible - and the fastest - support available. The problem today is that it can be difficult to locate the right answer.

But more and more companies are recognizing that peer-to-peer support is not only essential but also saves money, engages customers in the company's community, and delivers better support than any trained tech ever could. So, in the near term, companies will embrace peer-to-peer support - and not just by watching Twitter or setting up a Facebook page. "Companies have to host their own peer-to-peer 'party' and attend other people's parties," says David Vap, chief solutions officer at RightNow, a developer of customer experience products. And that's what they are hard at work doing. Tools that help companies harness peer-to-peer support and put it to work serving customers are available now.

And as companies adopt them, the Tier 1 support technician will increasingly be less about being in the front line of phone support and more about policing social networks to make sure the right information is easy to find and that evidence of technical problems make it to the right internal departments. "Technical support people need tools to curate and promote information into peer-to-peer content," says Vap.

Virtual worlds with avatar support

As Internet connections get faster and the Web gets more visual, you might find yourself wandering around in something like the next iteration of Second Life to check in with your social networks. Imagine

two guys are kvetching about their network hassles over a virtual beer in a virtual pub. A fellow patron joins the conversation, offering to buy both of them a virtual pint. He asks a few pertinent questions and solves the issue they were complaining about. It turns out that the guy is a lackey for the company the two were dissing. His job is to respond to alerts, seek out upset customers, and set things right before they bad-mouth the company too badly.

This vision may seem far-fetched, but with the convergence of keyword alerts and virtual worlds, it could happen. In fact, it already happens in gaming environments. Some of the people wandering around MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) are hired - or getting some sort of kickback - to help.

"The traditional manufacturer's website is likely to go through some major changes," says HP's Potts. That could include avatars. Now where we see only a chat window popup to offer help, we might get a very lifelike avatar with audio and facial expressions.

Support will become the product

Whatever the technical changes that hit technical support in the future, one thing is clear: The world of support itself is in the middle of a sea change. Today, technical support is offered on a product-by-product basis. But as products become more and more interconnected, support itself will break off from the current model and become a product of its own. "You are not just fixing a piece of hardware anymore," says Worldwide Tech Services' Keegan. "You are keeping a home or small business connected. And complexity is driving demand. The

big question is, who will pay for all this complex service?"

The computer manufacture doesn't want - and can't afford - to be held accountable for the problems that might happen when a router, fridge, energy management panel, toaster, or toilet is running off the network and managed by its computer. In the current model, when that network-attached toilet no longer communicates with the doctor's office, the consumer is left swinging in a void support between the computer manufacturer, the router maker, the toilet supplier, and the doctor's office. But a new product - new, anyway, to the mass-market consumer and small business - will emerge to fill that void: Support as a product. And then there will be an ecosystem to feed these innovations in support.

Few consumers or small businesses today have an IT pro on their cell-phone's speed dial -- though they might have the pool guy, a housekeeper, accountant, and yard worker there. That is very likely to change. "I see this as a real new opportunity where consumers will want someone to come to their house to keep everything connected," says Keegan.

02

THE EXPERTS-WHAT DO THEY THINK THE FUTURE HOLDS?

We asked industry experts from the Next Web for their insights into the future of the service desk. Their opinions reveal an industry that is forward-looking and with vastly different opinions about what the future might hold.



We recently talked about how startups can go about setting up a helpdesk to keep their customers well supported. Customer support is one of those areas of your business where it's surprisingly easy to differentiate yourself — you'd be surprised to find that very few startups are really putting much of an effort in here.

It got us thinking: what will the helpdesks of the future look like? Everyone loves a good spot of future conjecture, and even if these things never come to pass, it's fun to consider.

Minority Tickets

You remember Minority Report, of course. That awesome computer system where Tom Cruise was able to control everything with a pair of gloves that allowed his movement to be tracked had geeks around the world drooling. With Microsoft's Kinect, we're a step closer to this but not quite there yet.

Most helpdesk work isn't very well suited to the large-screen format upon which a system like this would thrive. However, having the ability to eliminate or move them into a different order would be welcome. Motion tracking such as what we have with the Kinect could allow this in the future.

Immersive Displays

This is where the idea of motion control and true immersion could come into play. Put yourself into a position where you walk into a room, sit down at a desk and then have a 120-degree display just slightly above your eye level. It would allow you keep track of everything that's going on, without having to address it directly. In front of you, you'd have a more traditional two-monitor setup (or perhaps a non-traditional version, something akin to virtual reality glasses).

This immersion, where you could nearly cause the

world around you to disappear, would allow for a more centralised workflow.

Intelligent Optimisation

This is another area where I think that the entire helpdesk system could benefit. We have already seen smart-learning algorithms for Web-based content. What about one that learns the importance of a ticket by reading the words and data inside of it, effectively turning the entire process into a semantic method instead of simply first-come, first-served.



03

LET'S NOT FORGET THE PEOPLE

Tessa Troubridge, Managing Director of the service desk Institute, offers her opinion that when we look towards the future, we should not forget that the people are the key to any successful service desk.



In Business Computing World's Top 5 IT Issues that the New Year Brings, Patrick Bolger writes that one of the top 5 issues for 2012 will be Passwords. Often the greatest bugbear of IT users, password related issues cause around 30% of all IT help desk calls.

Fast forward a few years from now and according to IBM because of the use of "multifactor biometrics", smart systems will be able to use retina scans and other personal information in real-time to make sure whenever someone is attempting to access your information, it matches your unique biometric profile. This technological advancement will bring its own set of unique challenges for IT support.

In Stephen Mann's blog entitled 'Top 10 IT Service Management Challenges For 2012: More Emphasis On The "Service" And The "Management"' Stephen lists nine key challenges from cloud to agility with the tenth challenge being "Survival". The Survival Challenge is making sure challenges 1-9 are addressed, and the failure to address the demands and issues across the full spectrum of challenges will put the internal I&O organization at risk of extinction. It is in many ways, a Darwinian "survival of the fittest" scenario, it's time to "adapt or die."

What struck me as I was reading these and the many other articles on what 2012 will bring for our industry, was that the 'people' element seemed to be missing. The very core that ensures the new technologies are integrated to meet the needs of the business or that rise to the challenge of 'survival' are the people. If the culture of your organisation encourages a positive attitude, energy, commitment, openness, teamwork and a constant appreciation of the need to improve and meet changing business needs, and are empowered to deliver a quality service, then you are on your way to tackling the challenges that 2012 will bring.

As only by ensuring you manage and lead as necessary, promote and advocate a consistent

approach to service excellence and focus on whatever is required of you to ensure your team are productive, motivated, engaged, knowledgeable and who choose to 'bring the right attitude' to work every day will you be able to not only "survive" but "thrive" in 2012 and beyond.

THE PEOPLE ELEMENT SEEMED TO BE MISSING

As I was writing this I was reminded of a recent trip through Gatwick airport, where a passenger was stuck in the retina scanner at passport control, with the automated message demanding the passenger move to your left, move to your right, move back, move forward – you get the picture. The passenger was stuck for well over five minutes (but for what must have seemed like an eternity), and I found myself wondering just how much that passenger would have given at that point in time to be able to talk to an empathetic customer service support person, who could instantly resolve their 'problem'.

So I'll end at the beginning, let's not forget the people ...

04 SERVICE DESKS IN 2017 WON'T BE FIXING COMPUTERS

James West, editor ServiceDesk360, writes that although service desks won't be fixing computers anymore, they will evolve and make the business work better.



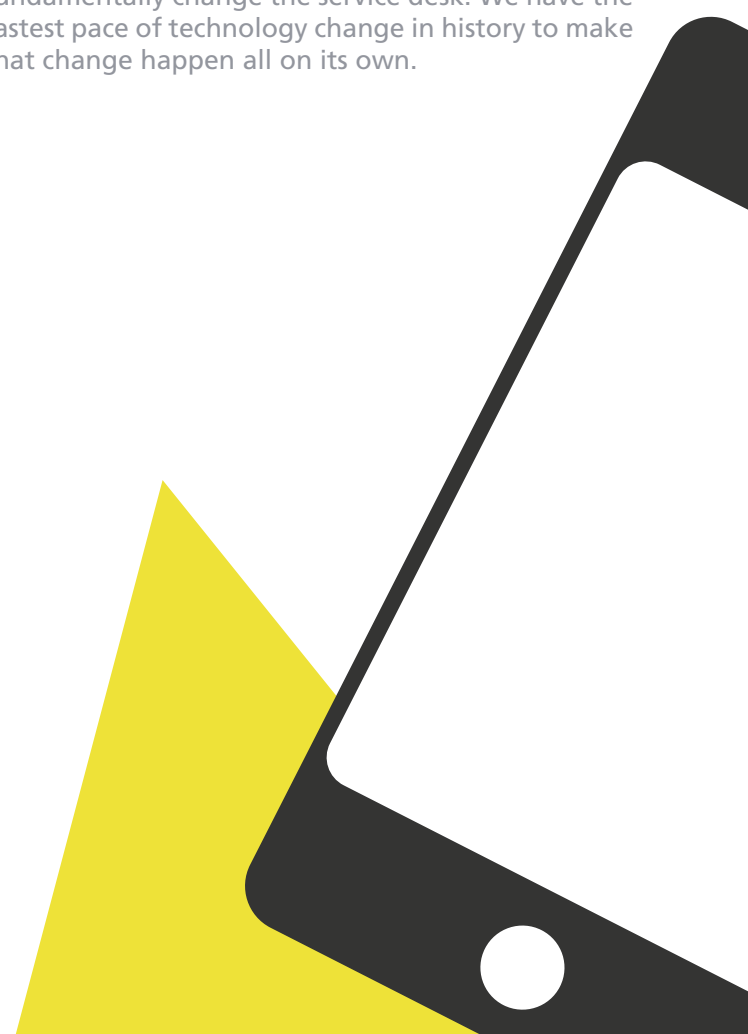
There's no point sitting on the fence about this, so here goes: the service desk of 2017 won't fix computers. As radical as that seems, it is a movement that began to irresistibly gather momentum when people began posting YouTube tutorials for installing software/troubleshooting a networking issue, etc. Powerful, user-friendly technology is now cheap and readily available, there are no technology luddites left in business and it is far quicker to search Google for tech support than go through the process of logging a call. The increasing influence and collective knowledge of web-based communities will simply accelerate these conditions and no service desk can compete or halt this transformation.

THERE ARE NO TECHNOLOGY LUDDITES LEFT IN BUSINESS

This doesn't spell the end for service desks, it just forces them to evolve. We are often so consumed with the minutiae of IT service management we forget the reason it exists in the first place: to make the business work better. Today, this doesn't mean being on standby to fix a laptop, it means monitoring systems, preempting and communicating service outages. It means service desks need to become innovation centres, rekindling their curiosity with the latest technology and teaching the business how to harness cutting-edge equipment. The need for the service desk to support the business will not diminish

by 2017; it will - in all likelihood - grow. Business professionals will continue to seek the edge over the competitors that smart technology can provide, they will value a quick fix to an annoying feature on their phone which is slowing their productivity and they will appreciate the friendly service and guiding hand that a service desk, which is designed to facilitate and enhance, rather than block the latest technology, will deliver.

ITIL, cloud, SaaS, the next 'big thing'; delivery mechanisms and frameworks will continue to be debated, but they are tools only of interest to the IT department itself. These elements will not fundamentally change the service desk. We have the fastest pace of technology change in history to make that change happen all on its own.



05

SERVICE TRANSFORMATION - IT SERVICE DESK TO BUSINESS SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Tony Probert, Cherwell Software, believes that for service desks of the future end user self-service portals and seamless integration with mobile devices are the key directions for IT.



With the advent of advanced web portals, the continued growth and adoption of mobile smart devices, social media technology and the growth of platform based technologies, the opportunities for and the expectations of the IT service desk are changing beyond all recognition. Long gone are the days where a help desk predominately received calls concerning “something has broken, can you fix it?” Increasingly the demands from end users involve requests based on “I want, I need, can you do?” In addition, organisations are demanding more agile, flexible, innovative solutions to meet their rapidly changing business needs. Hence, the desire for platform based development technologies that deliver enhanced business value, more quickly, at lower costs. The current economic climate is making all organisations re-evaluate existing systems with a clear drive towards increased service delivery, at lower costs, whilst maximising existing resources.

Moving forward, end user self-service portals and seamless integration with mobile devices are the key directions for IT service technology. People want to access services and support when they want, where they want, through whatever technology and media interface they want. This can create management problems for IT professionals trying to manage such a diverse technology infrastructure but ultimately, if the business benefit can be justified, the end user will win out.

The future IT Service technology solution must be capable of provisioning services via web portals, using any browser technology, enabling end users to access the business services they need and empowering them to manage their daily working lives. An organisation’s workforce is becoming increasingly mobile and if you are dealing with large communities of people (i.e. a student campus, local Government), the need to allow access to services and to communicate with users has to be enabled via smart devices and social media tools. For example, the younger generation is more likely to use Twitter

than email, so the need to provide a seamless integration using such technology becomes a given.

In addition, the desire to reduce expensive and time consuming solution development resources and/or external specialist consultancy services for product enhancement is a high priority and the demand for “Platform” based technology is rapidly increasing. The capability to develop integrated business applications or to significantly enhance solution features and functionality, without the need for modifying source code, bespoke programming or scripting services, enables IT departments to create and modify service based applications more easily and quickly. Wizard driven development platform technology empowers IT to be more agile and flexible, significantly enhancing the services delivered to the business.

Some people might say the future of IT service technology is in the Cloud, but this is just a deployment mechanism, it does not deliver the interface technologies or product development capabilities that businesses will demand. Ultimately people will want access to services quicker, easier and on their terms.

THE SERVICE DESK IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE SERVICE DESK!

06

SERVICE DESK 2.0

Aale Roos, Pohjoisviitta Oy, writes that the service desk of the future will seek support from a variety of sources as it evolves into service desk 2.0



The whole concept of service desk will change. The current help/service desk model was born in the 80s to support the introduction of new and immature office technology to a large group of users. The model worked very well but now the environment is changing and service desk will need to react because:

1. New technology is easier to use and more stable.
2. New technology is more complicated.

The outcome of these changes is the same we can see when we visit a service station on the road. Garages have gone, they could not do anything to the modern car but the need for frequent repairs has gone too.

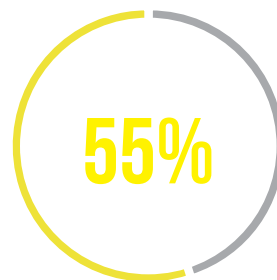
The new service desk 2.0 provides new solutions to the users, helps to integrate these to existing technology. It looks more like an Apple store than an incident garage. There is no SPOC for support, (actually there never has been). The service desk facilitates support from different sources.

ITIL has served its purpose. It is now time to admit that the customer service concepts of ITIL are immature and old fashioned. It is important to collect information about service contacts on various channels including social media. The key contact types are

- an order for new services or products
- feedback
- customer problems

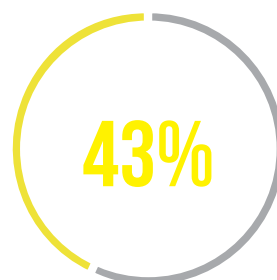
These contacts need to be registered and processed. If there are actual faults in the service or products, the service operation will handle these. The service desk 2.0 is for the customer.

THE FUTURE WILL BE MOBILE?



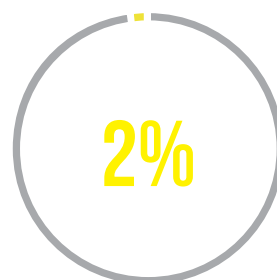
55%

AGREE



43%

STRONGLY AGREE



2%

DISAGREE

07

THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Matthew Burrows, BSMimpact, believes that if service desks don't transform quickly the service desk may become extinct.



The service desk model of today has some issues, including a negative perception of value from customers/users and business colleagues. If we don't transform, quickly adapting to the changing needs and trends, demonstrating that value, the service desk may become extinct.

Relationship: service desk should be recognised as having a significant relationship role.

During a recent keynote at an SDI event, I asked the audience of 80+ service desk people, which processes they were, or should be, involved in. They identified the predictable Incident, Problem, Change and Service Request Management processes, but only 3 people thought the service desk should be involved in the Business Relationship Management (BRM) process. I believe that all service desks are currently part of the Business Relationship Management process, and the fact that the service desk people don't see themselves in this way could be responsible for much of the negativity, and indicates that we need some significant culture and attitude change.

Expectations: Everything works when I need it.

As a customer I expect everything to work as it should whenever I want to use it. On the rare occasion that things go wrong, anyone providing support must understand my (the customer) perspective: - why I use their services or products; what outcome I want to achieve; How the service/product helps me do that.

They also need to demonstrate experience, knowledge, skills and professionalism at all times. Maybe this should feel more like a concierge service: - Trusted advisor; Available when needed; High skill, relevant knowledge and experience; Professional, courteous, and ethical – even when being expected to achieve the impossible; Takes ownership; sets and meets expectations; Makes helpful suggestions

on rare occasion of not being directly able to help.

Design: Should feel less reactive, and more stable.

The service desk should feel like it has actually been designed to be fit-for-purpose, suiting the unique needs of the organisation and customers, rather than just adopting the exact model used elsewhere. The service desk needs to feel like part of the hub, almost a Service Control Centre, which can see the full end-to-end. Metrics should drive desired behaviours in a balanced way.

Value is a subjective judgement of the customer – it is not our opinion that counts. We must understand what our customers want to do with the service/product. They're using it because it helps them achieve an objective or outcome. We stand a better chance of success if we keep the desired outcome in our mind, consider how our actions impact this, and demonstrate (in words and deeds) that everything we do is focussed on helping them achieve the outcomes.

08

A SERVICE DESK PERSPECTIVE

Emma Dickson, Support Manager, Heineken, writes that cloud computing, mobile technology, and self service will all have an appreciable impact on the future of the service desk, but the service desk's role as a single point of contact will remain.



I suspect that the desk based users will become more self sufficient in terms of using self service. IM and chat will be a growing channel of communication for this community. For the field based users, I suspect that they will continue to prefer to call but IM and chat will be a growing channel for them too. I suspect that the brewery "factory floor" community will still prefer a human contact, either by phone or face to face.

The rise of cloud computing and mobile technologies will impact support due to the increased use of smart devices using thin client apps. Network and sysadmin problems will be more urgent, with 1L desktop support dropping away to be replaced by a rise in connectivity issues. The ability to blank and redeploy standard device images on request will become very important, as will efficient replacement of hardware in the case of faults. We may see the adoption of "personas" for devices - e.g. your Pad has a Work persona kept in the cloud that is toggled at the start of the day, or In Office, in the Field, and Personal, with swapping between modes.

Cloud Computing

Cloud computing may be less fashionable in five years' time once it is realised that the savings are not as extensive as predicted. However the move away from desktop iron will continue, as will a move away from laptops towards smart pads. There will be a choice to be made for 1L support in particular - either to skill up for connectivity, sysadmin and apps support or to invest in 2L/3L/Outsourcing and real time data storage in the cloud with devices simply being reset for most issues as a self service task. Not to forget that it's likely that geographical boundaries will be less and less meaningful for support - it's likely that global support will appear seamless to users across boundaries and there will be more and more sharing of customers/users/systems/support across borders. It is also likely that there may be a partial move to flexible working patterns with more on-call

and working from home for support personnel.

Social media has taught many people to IM and to expect instant and continuous feedback, this will be expected in five years' time. Also, scheduling systems will have got much better with micro timeslots expected for engineer visits, along with updating to the end user on delays or early availability. I suspect most staff will expect to use a contacts hub with IM to communicate. Email might get a lot thinner with links replacing attachments, however a much more textured graphics and sound experience will be expected. There may be security issues as the line between work and social life blurs.

PEOPLE EXPECT INSTANT AND CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

As service providers in the retail world seek to differentiate themselves by better or more effective service and predictions using customer preference data (e.g. google and Amazon at the moment), this will engender an expectation amongst our user communities that IT can provide more than a break fix service. Call analysis could provide recommendations for training plans or feed into bespoke workshop sessions that truly address the needs of users - this analysis can be done at a number of levels, from community to team to individual. If data is in the cloud, data type, frequency of use and

volume can be analysed to produce best practices for work styles and roles. It is possible that IT will provide virtual drop in workshops for specific skills or problems. An option for the field force in On Trade may be to offer a virtual customer review instead of driving there every time, also to facilitate customer workshops for specific issues e.g. health and safety, bar management, leveraging space to provide non-traditional activities such as soft play, cafe, retail space etc. If an on-line hosting tool is quick and easy our sales force will be able to leverage experts on the staff to provide real time advice to Heineken customers.

A single point of human contact is still a good idea as there are significant user communities within Heineken who require the reassurance that something is being done or to talk a very non-technical person through a task. I doubt that self-healing networks will be sufficiently mature to remove the need for a service desk, however much of the initial questioning can be done by an intelligent Q and A. There is much that can be automated or standardised but there will continue to be a need for an "I'm stuck please let me talk to someone" option as well as an intelligent agent to deal with badly documented and non-standard issues.

A SINGLE POINT OF HUMAN CONTACT IS STILL A GOOD IDEA

My opinion is that there will be three philosophies in provide service in five years' time; outsource as much as possible, skill up and commit to supporting most things in house or a mixture of the first two.

Outsourcing would require strong process and quality management with partners providing the face of IT Service, also a very strong element of cost control along with commercial understanding. Technical ability and knowledge would not be strong requirements if this was the direction taken.

The second option would require sharp, professional,

empowered and committed people with good customer skills. With a user expectation of a one-stop shop the 1L agents would need to be very able to own and manage issues to completion. I would anticipate a move away from repetitive and low skilled work to more in the way of skilled technical investigation, trend analysis and provision of user training on technical matters. I would expect more in the way of personal accountability and call management. This type of skilled professional requires different management with more emphasis on resolution quality, personal management and communication. Stats have their place but should be analysed for information, to find behavioural and call patterns, rather than a pass/fail how many calls did you take today carrot and stick. Management would need to be more focussed on team metrics for performance and much more analysis on demand patterns. If this is done, flexible working / working from home can be implemented as this reduces the amount of sick leave and appointments taken. Staff retention will become a more pressing issue with the increased investment in the analysts.

The third approach is in a way more difficult to manage as a mixture of both sets of skills is required - the service delivery manager will need to be very effective with the third parties and process hand-offs will need to be seamless. As the standardised work is more likely to be automated or outsourced, the skill set in house will need to increase and be managed accordingly. In house SLAs will probably need to be reasonably long as these will be complex and non-standard calls but third party performance management will need to be pretty sharp to keep the overall metrics up. As above, a more professional attitude will be needed to manage analysts effectively and also less rigid working conditions.

I suspect that there will be little interest in ITIL v4 when it comes along as there is such a big overhead in staffing it. I think this will be a growing field for ITIL outsourcing specialists but many large organisations will just not update from V3.

It's been the experience of many large organisations that to have all your service eggs in one basket can mean a very costly bill. Managed services are at their best when used to address very specific areas of support or provision where an area of expertise can be used to reduce the overhead for the commissioning company. However there will always be gaps and unexpected issues to address that do not fall into contract so a value judgement is needed as to whether to retain skill in house and partner, or to go the whole hog and have a large contingency budget. Many outsourcers promise much and deliver only a very large bill. Also users hate dealing with large contact centres who don't know their business.

09

SERVICE DESK NOW AND THEN

Maff Rigby, IT Smartdesk, provides us with a comparison of the service desk now and what it will look like in the future with the customer remaining central to everything that we do.



To think about how the service desk will look in 2017, it is important to set the context of how it looks today. The current situation is that the service desk is perceived as a bottleneck, and often a blocking factor within the business. For example, a software developer who requires a new development server would much prefer to use an external cloud provider and be up and running within minutes, rather than raise their request through the service desk where it would be given a priority of “low” and could take several weeks. For general IT users who expect instant responses to support requests, the service desk doesn’t react quickly enough and often lacks the knowledge to resolve their issue anyway. As a result, these IT users often bypass the service desk and seek support through other channels.

Factors to consider

- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) has been around for a long time already in Universities, and is finally gaining traction in the workplace. Over the next few years we will see this become common practise in most workplaces. The wide variety of devices that the service desk will be required to support will create massive problems with the current setup.
- Cloud computing services are quicker to implement, easier to run, and cheaper
- Customers demand faster or immediate response to support requests, and they expect to be able to engage support through the channel that they like most.
- IT Managers face on-going challenges to reduce operational costs. Finding ways to improve the efficiency/value of the services they run is still a focus for them.
- Businesses are becoming much more social in the way they work and interact, both externally and internally. Not only is this to engage with their customers in a much more holistic manner, but it’s also to engage with their employees in the ways they are quickly becoming accustomed to.

Future service desk – SD2017

Here are a few aspects of the SD2017 I believe will become apparent over the next five years:

- Customer centric approach - The SD2017 will put its customers at the heart of the experience by treating customers more like a butler would treat his eccentric master – ensuring that his every whim is catered for. If you treat someone like a king and they are extremely happy with the service you provide as a result, they will keep coming back!
- Metrics - The SD2017 will focus on more customer-centric metrics such as Customer Engagement (how often the customer engages with the service desk through one of the available channels) or Pre-emptive Resolution (the ability of the service desk to spot and resolve customer questions or problems before they happen).
- Communication channels - SD2017 will add new channels such as Social IT Support and SMS support to its existing methods of communicating with customers. The SD2017 will increase response times and create a closer relationship with its customers.
- The addition of Social IT Support as a channel (i.e. enabling IT users to help each other resolve IT issues) means that the service desk will become part of a wider support network that partially exists within the domain of the customer. Furthermore, by enabling a Social IT Support channel, the service desk can harness the latent IT knowledge its customers have, and somewhat alleviate the headache of the almost endless varieties of support requests that BYOD users will generate.
- Skills - SD2017 analysts will require both “Community Management” and “Information Management” skills.

Community Management

- Moderate and encourage discussions within community-based support platforms to guide customers towards the best information.

- Build and maintain relationships with the support community, identifying and rewarding key contributors for their knowledge and commitment
- Moderate and encourage discussions within community-based support platforms to guide customers towards the best information.

Information Management:

- Manage and manipulate information within the support community, cleaning and re-purposing it where appropriate to create a powerful knowledge repository for customers.
- Analysis of the data gathered through all support channels, to identify trends and problems with the IT services as well as behaviour trends and expectations of the customers of that IT service.



10 WHAT WILL THE SERVICE DESK LOOK LIKE IN 2017?

Sherry Bevan, Intelliteach, offers a wise reminder that although self service will provide innumerable benefits for some organisations, for others such as hers it might be a more difficult fit.



Many service management experts predict that self-service will rise significantly which will allow the service desk to drastically reduce time and costs associated with user incident resolution, while enhancing the quality of service. But we think it's different for the law firm service desk.

Is Self-Service the future?

The younger generation expects the convenience of an end-user facing searchable knowledge base. Those controlling the budgets prefer self-service because it reduces costs. However self-service will never be 100% accepted in a typical law firm. Self-service sells itself on efficiency - but for whom? The end-user or the service desk?

A partner charging £600 per hour is not going to take the one minute required to go to the Intranet page, enter details, then skim the resulting knowledgebase articles. Not when that same partner can press a button on his telephone and speak to an experienced service desk analyst. Self-service will never gain sufficient traction in an environment where individuals are highly compensated (such as lawyers) or generate high revenues (such as grocery store cashiers). Time really is money.

Growth of email tickets

We have seen email growing as a channel for users to report incidents; from 16% in 2006 to 30% in 2011. We predict this trend will continue, albeit more slowly, over the next few years.

Email is often seen as faster by the end user because they do not have to spend time on the phone however in reality, email tickets take longer to close. Our data indicates that, on average, tickets created via email have a lifespan six times longer than live telephone calls. This is typically due to the user's inability to troubleshoot their situation or clearly describe their need in their original request,

requiring an additional email exchange or callback.

What about Instant Messaging technology?

Instant Messaging is easy to deploy, requires no or very little training, and it's quick. However before you consider implementing, think about how you will manage this channel. It is important to measure service levels, ticket volumes and user satisfaction. This data is particularly valuable if you track it over time allowing you to compare and analyse the metrics. Therefore any Instant Messaging technology has to be fully integrated. Although it may be possible for analysts to manage one or more IM conversations at any one time, the channel will soon lose its appeal if the analyst stops to handle a lengthy telephone call mid-chat.

The mobility revolution

The mobility revolution over the past 10 years has had far-reaching consequences. Lawyers continue to work long hours and now expect a work anywhere, work any time, any device solution. Lawyers have embraced the global mobility and virtualisation trends taking full advantage of remote access technology to work long hours both in the office and from home or on vacation. Yet, lawyers do not seem to want the flexibility being demanded in other industries, AND still have high service expectations.

11

THE SUPPORT CENTRE IN 2017 AND BEYOND

Roy Atkinson, HDI Senior Writer, sees service desks of the future using multiple homegrown support models, with self service front and centre of service desks' future plans.



Just as there is no single support model now, there won't be one in 2017. There will be many models, from homegrown social support to complex technical support to security-driven oversight and assistance. Some businesses will be opening up far more to social interaction, while some will find this impossible because of regulation, security concerns, or both. Some will have well-established BYOD (bring your own device) policies and others will not.

The best predictor of what will be in five years is what is being purchased now. Our research tells us that support centres are in the market for knowledge management, chat and self-help tools. According to HDI research, for example, 52% of support centres are shopping in 2012 for new self-help tools or updating ones they have, and only 14% report that they do not use self-help. Level 1 support will become more focused on handling complex requests and high priorities, so levels of support will likely have been collapsed as much as possible to the front line.

Multichannel support will be much more common. Chat's popularity rebounded after a slump in 2009. HDI research from 2011 shows that about one-third of support centres are planning to add chat during 2012.

Many support thought leaders are busy declaring that the future of service and support "is not about the technology," but—in many senses—it is about the technology. We can visualise how people might connect and interact in a seamlessly networked environment with virtualised servers, desktops and teams; but if that environment only exists in small, noncontiguous pockets, our vision will remain only a vision. It is all about the network.

Although it's commonly stated that "cookie cutter" computers are falling out of favour, some industry verticals (banking for one) are driven by compliance considerations to standardise devices, and to remove capabilities from them, turning laptops

into typewriters except when they are wired-up at workers' desks—no wireless. The virtual desktop will only become a broad solution when truly high-speed connectivity is both secure and ubiquitous. Secure gateways will have to make quantum leaps in speed and usability. We cannot expect a physician to spend five minutes connecting to—and authenticating in—a virtual desktop environment from a tablet that is intended to improve patient care and increase patient-focus, and instead have the physician's time and attention splintered by efforts to use an overly complex and slow system.

Managed Services

Many services will have been moved to managed services companies or outsourcers. With applications, servers and storage moving off-site and into the cloud (public, private or federated), secure gateways in place and many employees using the equipment of their own choosing, some advanced service desks of 2017 will look more like network operations centres (NOCs) than call centres. Service desk analysts will be monitoring dashboards showing the behaviour of networks, cloud-based infrastructure and applications. They will be responding to alerts from tools that will show the status of storage, the availability of applications and infrastructure. When there is an interruption of service—or the indication that one is about to happen—they will determine quickly whom they must contact and by what method, be it by phone or through a microblogging tool, or live chat. That contact, as often as not, will be to the customer service team of the company that provides the service, making many support centres a liaison between an organisation and its service providers. This requires a new and different set of skills for support centre management and staff, who need to become focused on the business needs and initiatives of their larger organisations.

12 SERVICE DESK IN 2017 - BYOD AND THE SERVICE DESK

Karen Ferris, Macanta Consulting, sees BYOD as the way forward for organisations looking to attract and retain talent.



Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is on the rise in 2012 and set to drastically increase over the next 5 years. Organisations have to face up to the fact that employees want to use and will use their own devices in the workplace. They are already doing it and have been doing it for some time!

Forward thinking organisations are embracing BYOD as a way of attracting and retaining talent. Students leaving school and university where they have been able to plug in their own devices – smartphone, tablet, laptop etc. – are not going to be satisfied when told by a potential employer that they have to use equipment provided by the employer and are not allowed to connect their own devices. This will be seen as archaic, restrictive and unsatisfactory. The likelihood is that the equipment being provided by the employer is inferior to the leading edge technology owned by the employee.

FORWARD THINKING ORGANISATIONS ARE EMBRACING BYOD

The biggest fear of CIOs is security including access to sensitive information and the chance of that information leaving the organisation. Neither of

these should be new concerns raised by BYOD. Employees have had access to sensitive information for decades and the availability of CDs, USBs, email forwarding, phone cameras, photocopiers, pen and paper etc. has allowed this information to leave the organisation.

The forward thinking organisations are using methods such as virtualisation, security control such as “wipe and lock”, GPS tracking and fencing, anti-malware and firewalls, device encryption, device fingerprinting solutions etc. along with a good BYOD policy to overcome the security challenges. So as BYOD is here to stay, what will it mean for the service desk.

The key will be for the boundaries to be clearly stated and understood. The service desk will need to communicate the level of support and maintenance that will be provided to employees who bring their own devices and what minimum standards are to be met before an employee is allowed to connect their device to the network.

The service desk and support staff will have to have clear cut criteria to determine what is supported by IT, what is supported by a third party and what is the responsibility of the employee in relation to BYOD. It will need to be ensured that employees understand the level of access the organisation has to the employee’s personal devices and the content held on it. This has to be defined in conjunction with HR and incorporated into policy. For example, is the organisation enabled to investigate breaches of codes of conduct on an employee’s device e.g. the presence of pornography on a device used for work purposes? If a device is lost or a security breach detected, can the organisation wipe all the data on the device or will the wipe exclude “personal” data? As with any support requirement, the service desk and support team should be equipped with enabling knowledge and tools.

13 WHERE DO WE GO FROM **HERE?**

Daniel Wood, Head of Research, service desk Insitute, sees service desks of the future as moving forward but with a key appreciation of having strong foundations in place to build on.



In five years' time it's a safe bet to assume that service desks will still be here, and more to the point will be thriving. service desks will always be needed because IT breaks and IT does not do things that it should (or at least we think it should) do. And actually this last point is why I'll pin my hat to the flag and say that there will be more people employed in the service desk industry in five years' time – because our expectations of IT will continue to grow, and thus we'll become more disappointed/frustrated/angry when it doesn't work or do what we think it should. When it doesn't work, we'll expect that someone will be available to make it work.

So there'll be more people, but what will they be doing? As an SDI auditor, I have been privileged to have visited service desks up and down the country, all of whom support a variety of different customers and divergent businesses. What might be surprising is that they all face the same issues, namely that they need to tighten up processes, and crucially want to improve their relationship and standing within the business. The first part will come with maturity, and if service desks – as it seems highly probable – start to support user owned devices, processes will have to be put in place: with the increasing diversity of hardware and those increased expectations, there simply will be no alternative.

The second part will be harder, as service desks' position within many businesses (and indeed often within IT as well) is at the bottom of the food chain, something for employees to grit their teeth and endure before moving elsewhere. Fortunately this perception is changing with the increasingly high calibre of professionals that the industry is attracting (along with healthy salaries), but the business standing is taking longer. The main drivers for change will come through the service desk proving that it is adaptable to the business and its customers; that it's proactive; provides excellent service; and, crucially, provides excellent value for money. These are long term changes, and whilst some service desks

will have accomplished these already, others are still lagging way behind. Conceivably the inability to demonstrate value (in all its forms and guises) may drive outsourcing, so we may expect to see more outsourcing in the future. However, it is also likely that service desks that don't play catch up and continue to lag behind might be consolidated into a 'services desk' which could be an amalgamation of IT, HR, facilities management, and administration. This would keep the service desk in house, but allow its resources to be shared.

Overall though, if we could jump into our DeLorean and look at service desks in five years' time, we might be surprised by how little has changed. This isn't a pessimistic view, but one grounded in the realities and experiences of today's service desks. service desks will continue to improve the service they deliver and will work with customers to make sure that they are managing and meeting expectations. There are lots of great developments surrounding self service, social media, web portals etc. etc., but to many these are mere sideshows to the main attraction. When 67% of service desks spend the majority of their time fire-fighting, simply keeping the lights on seems to keep them busy enough and steal time away from looking at new service improvement technologies. To build something that lasts it must have strong foundations, so let's ensure that those foundations (our processes, procedures, people, metrics etc.) are rock solid so that when we grow and add value, we can keep building towards the sky. New technology must add to service, not place strain on creaking foundations.

14 SERVICE DESKS OF 2017 - THEY'VE COME OF AGE

Elina Pirjanti, MATERNA Information & Communications, believes that service desks will mature in the future, but how far they evolve will be highly dependent on their organisation.



The service desk really has “come of age”, but still...how hard it can be? Here in Finland I see lots of organisations which are absolutely clueless how to organise their IT support. service desk is industry's best practise, but it still isn't adapted to all organizations. Organisations are suffering same pains year after year, but every year looks brighter. Of course many large companies now have a very mature service desk.

But let's think of those organisations which already have pretty effective and efficient service desk. I think that over time those service desks will enhance their maturity, tools and way of working all the time. 2017 is quite close, but I believe that more and more services are offered through self-service channels, which are planned from end user point of view – not from IT's. Yes, I know, it SHOULD be done like that in our dreams, but hardly ever is. Usually self-service channel looks copy of Incident Management tool and even the language used and fields are totally irrelevant for end-users.

I also think contact channels will enhance so that service desks will be easier to reach. Maybe using instant messaging and chat tools. And I wish to see effective monitoring and automated responses. Also, I would like to see service desk contacting end users if they find out issues, instead of the other way around.

A few years back, there was huge trend of outsourcing service desks (to Finland, or cheaper countries), but now some organizations have started insourcing service desks. Maybe professionalism still counts or maybe those outsourcings were badly handled in so many ways... Maybe customer organisations weren't mature enough, maybe the transition period didn't went well, maybe outsourced service desks didn't gain enough business knowledge..? Who knows..? Gaining business knowledge through understanding service catalogues and integrated CMDB will enhance the value of the service desk. But service desk alone

can't gain true maturity without the help of whole organisation, good ITSM processes and relationship with business.

So what changes? Nothing much. service desks will mature, but how much? It all depends on the current state of the organisation...



15

IT KEEPS GETTING **FASTER**

Ian Aitchison, LANDesk Software, sees a widespread move to the cloud where IT becomes hosted and owned by external organisations.



Let's start with what 'work' will look like in 2017. We can be sure there will be no WindowsXP, no InternetExplorerv6. I'd even hazard that there will be no desktop computers, possibly even no laptops as we know them now. Tablets will be ubiquitous, whether on your desk, at home or in your bag. More than that, screens, keyboards are replaced with micro projectors and lasers. But the biggest difference is surely that the desktop will be dead. The appstore model will accelerate wildly into virtual environments, meaning your 'computer' is only a cloud concept that probably follows you from job to job, perhaps as a part of what we now think of as Facebook (imagine that).

SO WHAT ABOUT CORPORATE IT?

Yes we still have jobs to do, and need software tools to do those jobs, but they'll be much more voice powered, largely in-space, accessible everywhere. Google goggles - those new glasses coming - will surely be google lenses, although I doubt surgically enhanced much, but you never know. This may all seem science-fiction but just look at the changes since 2009 when the iPad first appeared. Siri, Twitter, Facebook... extraordinary innovation.

So, what about corporate IT? - Well, there'll be less of it. Less of IT. Much of it surely shifts to 'cloud' - where IT becomes hosted and owned by external organisations. Not in every case, but in many. It always starts in the small, and grows up - and IT is already increasingly out of house.

Basic IT - connectivity, web, print - becomes a utility like gas and electric. Storage is cloud. Apps are

virtual in your own workspace in the cloud. Yes some remain in-house, but increasingly the outsourcing of storage and publication becomes common.

So then, finally, what about ITSM? Well, funnily enough, that remains. ITIL breaks down into separate components distributed across the core business and the cloud service providers, but within every business, employees need help. and the business needs innovation.

Maybe ITSM finally gets to provide true measurable IT service and true measurable business value, and IT outsources the whole break fix to host services, and IT and the service desk become all about innovation and enablement. In house app development becomes common and vertical market ecosystems develop.

Now in the service desk... I'm not saying the service desk of 2017 will be anything like the Apple Store we see on the high street today - I think it will be way different, but you can see in the Apple Store of today the basic concepts that 2017 will give us. Enablement. little 'troubleshooting' - rather than just replace. But enhancing and providing advice to get the best out and be more productive. Perhaps much more data analytics, more tools.

Problem management is less IT problems, and more business problems. IT becomes a part of the business around data, analytics, decision, enablement. Work anywhere, anytime - absolutely. The paperless office? Never.

In summary, the future for IT is definitely in the realm of 'interesting times', but the service desk and provision of Information and Technology value to the business looks pretty secure to me.

16 THE SERVICE DESK LIVES!

In the opinion of Barclay Rae, Independent Management consultant, he's confident that service desks will still exist but a change in the general approach to IT does threaten its existence.



Will the service desk still exist at all in any major form in five years' time?

Of course it's difficult to predict the future, but I'm confident that there will still be many good service desks in place. There – I've said it - I don't think the service desk is finished..! There will of course be changes to the way the industry looks from how it is today, so to me the question is really about how much things will have changed.

THERE IS A LOT OF DEBATE NOW ABOUT THE DEMISE OF IT

So what are my reasons for saying this? - There is a lot of debate now about the demise of IT, never mind the service desk. Challenges like Cloud, Consumerisation, BYOD and the general change in commercial approach to IT (i.e. who's buying and how they are buying) do threaten the very existence of IT as a separate entity within organisations – particularly the traditional internal IT Department. As a result I do think that many of these departments will be by-passed and outsourced – or reduced to a minimum of supplier management and some customer liaison and support.

In this instance we will either see the 'service desk' elements also outsourced or kept as one of the last

few parts of IT – i.e. the contact with the customer base. In this case IT jobs will still exist except that of course they will move from one supplier to another – as has been the ongoing trend over the last 10 years or so...

So why do I think that many skeleton IT organisations will still require a service desk? Simple – complexity, convenience and customer-power.

As long as we continue to operate in commercial markets and technology continues to develop, there will be a need for people to sort out complex, complicated and time consuming issues. This is not necessarily just 'incidents' when things go wrong, but also requests, set-ups, changes and developments of (particularly individual) configurations and personal usage of IT. As markets continue to grow - and more new and disruptive technologies appear – this problem will continue to grow in tandem, despite the fact that technology is more stable and predictable. The very nature of growth and change will mean that there is an ongoing need to explain, answer, solve and co-ordinate 'stuff' relating to individuals and organisations' needs.

So, whilst we might become more efficient at controlling a standard-build on company laptops, we need time to spend on co-ordinating the effort to order and build and support individuals' configurations, perhaps also on a number of platforms (including their own) , then there will always be a need to help busy people along the way in setting up and maintaining their ever expanding universe of individual technology.

So the service desk in many cases will be a personal 'outsourcer' for people and organisations to help them get on with their real jobs... so IT at last becomes a business service that helps organisations and people to meet their needs and provide efficient and competitive services.

So the service desk is there to disentangle the complexity and provide convenience, flexibility and choice to users of technology. It also provides a vital business function in the support and continuity of services and I don't see this disappearing for some years to come, regardless of the commercial delivery model in use. Many large organisations will of course continue to operate with big internal IT departments for some time and I still expect to see a good few of them still around in 2017.

THE REAL SHIFT HERE IS IN CUSTOMER POWER

The real shift here also is in 'Customer Power' - mainly due to the growth in mobile user-friendly technology. Because everyone now buys and uses technology in a far more savvy way than they did 5 - 10 - 15 years ago - there is a far higher level of expectation of both what this can do, how to use it and also how this will be supported and serviced - at a personal level. So the expectation is much higher and we expect service providers to be able to sort our stuff out rather than let us get on with it ourselves. The service desk will be at the centre of the technology Business and Personal Relationship - we'll continue to need great people to deliver excellent service to an ever more demanding customer.

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CONCLUSIONS



There have been lots of different opinions about where the service desk might be in five years' time (as well we might expect) but a common trend runs through all; and the recognition that the service desk has come a long way and has earned its name service desk as opposed to helpdesk. A quick glance at any modern day service desk will reveal that customer service skills are in very high demand and whilst technical skills are still highly valued, the way that our service desk staff communicate is rightly identified as absolutely crucial in delivering the standard of service that customers expect.

Demands on service desks will be even greater in the future, and history tells us that some will rise to the challenge whilst others will fall behind. Those who succeed will be the ones who embrace challenges and change as opportunities; those who fall behind will see only problems and ever increasing mountains to climb – for some these challenges will simply be too much.

Doubtless some of the predictions proffered in this paper will come true while others we'll find fanciful when we reflect back on them in five years' time. Whatever the outcome though one thing is for sure; we have lots to be proud of but the key is to consolidate and then innovate ensuring that we have the right base to build on. Whether you agree or disagree with our experts, it's worth taking five minutes out of your day to ask where you see your service desk in five years' time – will it look the same? Or are you concerned that your desk might not even be here at all? Have a vision and then plan how you're going to get there: success does not just happen, it's earned.

ABOUT SDI



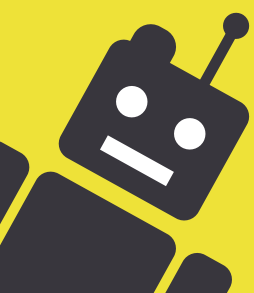
Founded in 1988 by Howard Kendall, the service desk Institute (SDI) is the leading authority on service desk and IT support related issues, providing specialist information and research about the technologies, tools and trends of the industry. It is Europe's only support network for IT service desk professionals, and its 2500 organisation members span numerous industries.

Acting as an independent adviser, SDI captures and disseminates creative and innovative ideas for tomorrow's service desk and support operation. SDI sets the best practice standards for the IT support industry and is the conduit for delivering knowledge and career enhancing skills to the professional community, through membership, training, conferences, events and its publication SupportWorld magazine. It also offers the opportunity for international recognition of the support centre operation through its globally recognised service desk Certification audit programme.

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