



Leading IT Service & Support

3, 2, 1...Contact: Getting it Right – The First Time

HDI Faculty Trainer Rae Ann Bruno shares strategies for improving first contact resolution.

3, 2, 1...Contact: Getting it Right – The First Time

HDI Faculty Trainer Rae Ann Bruno shares strategies for improving first contact resolution.

First Contact Resolution (FCR) is a crucial performance metric in the support center, and one that is continuously tracked. To understand how support centers can improve FCR, we spoke with HDI Faculty Trainer Rae Ann Bruno. Rae Ann has over 15 years of management experience with an emphasis on process re-engineering, employee development, and business alignment of IT services.

Process & Performance

When addressing the issue of improving first contact resolution, Bruno emphasizes processes. “The first step is to gain a clear picture of what’s going on in the support center and that begins with information” she says. The key is logging 100% of the contacts in the service management tool and identifying trends. From there, it’s a matter of analyzing trends and developing strategies to improve them. A very useful report for the support center is the top ten incident types.

“There is no ‘magic bullet’ for improving FCR performance,” she explains, “You have to analyze the nature of the most common incidents and develop strategies to address them.” The solution could come in any number of forms. For example, it is estimated that roughly one-third of contacts relate to password resets. Therefore, self-service password reset is an obvious strategy to address that issue, but other incident types might call for training or better use of knowledge management.

Knowledge as a Core Element

Bruno also stresses the importance of collaboration across all areas of IT. The support center cannot operate effectively in a silo. However, the support center is in the best position to recognize patterns of incidents that indicate a problem and help to identify the root cause. It could very well be that the issue is related to a known error or defect, but in the interim, a workaround can be developed that allows the user to be up and operating. The key is to ensure that the workaround is captured in the knowledge management system so the fix is institutionalized.

In building the team approach to support, knowledge management will be a core element. Rae Ann endorses the Consortium for Service Innovation focus on Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS), which they describe as involving four basic concepts:

- Create content as a by-product of solving problems
- Evolve content based on demand and usage
- Develop a knowledge base of our collective experience to date
- Reward learning, collaboration, sharing, and improving

Bruno also sees great promise in the use of Wikis and other social networking tools in using that “collective experience” for building the knowledge base.

Areas for Improvement

“When you analyze your processes in an organized fashion, you can often find practical and workable solutions,” Bruno notes. Things as simple as access rights that limit level 1 agents from resolving routine problems can wreak havoc on the support center’s performance. This is a significant financial incentive to resolving issues on the first contact. In the US, the internal IT cost for resolving an incident at level 1 averages \$22 while escalating it to level 2 or 3 could increase the cost to \$200, with the cost of self-service incident resolution averaging around \$12.

Having the right tools and using them effectively is also important. Skills-based routing and interactive voice response (IVR) call screening can help ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to address each class of incident. Desk side support is generally more expensive to provide so remote monitoring tools can also be a tremendous cost saver.

Ironically, the by-product of this type of process improvement could actually be a reduction in FCR. “When you improve your processes for routine contacts and handle them with self help or automated solutions, the easy stuff is being taken care of. That means your agents are fielding the more challenging incidents that really do call for human intervention,” Rae Ann states.

In the end, FCR is just one element in a customer service focused support operation. The overall goal is customer satisfaction, but the challenge is always to do that in the most efficient and cost-effective fashion. Good processes developed in the ITIL framework can help support center professionals meet that challenge.

About HDI

HDI is the world’s largest IT service and technical support membership association and the industry’s premier certification and training body. Guided by an international panel of industry experts and practitioners, HDI is the leading resource for help desk/support center emerging trends and best practices. HDI provides members with a vast repository of resources, networking opportunities, and the largest industry event, the HDI Annual Conference & Expo. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, CO, HDI offers training in multiple languages and countries. For more information, call +1 719.268.0174 or visit www.ThinkHDI.com.