

## HDI<sup>®</sup> Healthcare Providers Forum (HPF)

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University of Wisconsin (UW)  
Hospital and Clinics

### Measuring Up

Given the importance of quality assurance in patient care, the HDI Healthcare Providers Forum (HPF) is extending that vision to customer service and technical support. The HPF has set out to define standard benchmarks that will allow participating organizations to isolate current service levels and map improvements on a consistent basis.

This benchmarking initiative was spearheaded by Ben Walters, director of IT Customer Support Services for the Ohio State University Medical Center, who manages a staff of seventy-five, fifteen of whom are dedicated to the help desk. Three of his staff members are also dedicated to ITIL process implementation, and according to Walters they are initially addressing "the big three": incident management, change management, and problem management.

Ben's group supports 13,000 employees who are focused on three core missions: teaching, research, and clinical care. The hospital itself boasts six signature programs: cancer, critical care, heart, imaging, neurosciences, and transplantation. Though the IT organization tries to stay just on the back side of the "bleeding edge" of technology, as a teaching hospital, they have to stay on top of technology to attract the best students to the institution.

### Seeing the Need

What inspired the benchmarking initiative was the realization that while everyone in the HPF group was tracking performance metrics, they were all measuring differently. That made any meaningful comparisons across institutions impossible. They recognized that they were going to have to agree on some standard definitions if they were evergoing to be able to make meaningful comparisons.

While everyone may be using the same term to identify a metric, when you peel back the layers of the onion, you might find they are talking about vastly different things. "We had to buckle down and take a much more fine-grained look at the problem, specifying exactly what was in and what was out," he says. By the end of the exercise, the group hopes to have an agreed-upon set of definitions that can be applied to the entire support center space and provide a meaningful way to compare performance.

### Creating Definition

"Organizations like HDI and Gartner publish goals surrounding these support center metrics, and our CIOs tend to take those as gospel," Ben says. "We need to be able to point to a more standard definition that allows for an apples-to-apples comparison." One example he cites is the customer satisfaction survey. "Everyone uses a 1-5 scale, but does a 3 really mean the customer was satisfied? I don't think so. A 4 is satisfied and a 5 is extremely satisfied. We didn't wow them if they gave us a three."

That view is shared by another member of the HPF, Shane Juedes. Shane is the help desk manager for the University of Wisconsin (UW) Hospital and Clinics. He manages a group of twelve agents who support over 7,000 users. He's been with the help desk for eight years, four of those as manager. Shane became a member of HDI when he was promoted, and he was almost immediately given the opportunity to join the HDI Healthcare Providers Forum.

"Upper management looks at a metric without recognizing there can be a half-dozen different ways to interpret it," Shane says. "There are too many variables, even in similar healthcare organizations, to make valid comparisons in most cases." Shane also contrasts his experience in healthcare with the support requirements he has found in other arenas. "In healthcare there is typically one core electronic medical records (EMR) system, but there are also hundreds of other clinical/specialized systems. Improving first call resolution in that environment is a lot different from fielding calls about MS Office applications all day."

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## Taking a Broader View

Both Ben and Shane agree on the value of the HPF. Even though they may be working for competing institutions, when they sit down at an HPF meeting, it's about working together toward a common purpose. The members compare metrics on a quarterly basis and Ben notes that when someone seems to be doing particularly well in one area or another, they're invited to give a presentation on their approach so that others can learn from it. The group typically meets in person three times a year, and that familiarity builds camaraderie. Ben says, "We exchange emails regularly, and when you send out an inquiry to the group, you can expect a half-dozen responses within a day." The HPF also has an extranet where members can upload documents and other materials to share.

The other thing both Ben and Shane agree on is the importance of working closely with customers. UW Hospital and Clinics is currently completing its Epic implementation, and Shane has seen a big difference in how things get done at the hospital. In planning the migration, the ITS department took great pains to partner with the healthcare staff. Shane had heard stories of nurses flat out quitting in the midst of an EMR cutover at other organizations, so he was pleasantly surprised with how efficient the process was. "Our ITS folks took on most of the problems beforehand by working directly with the users, which made for a much smoother transition than was expected," Shane says.

"To do well in support, you have to understand your customers and their needs. Communication is the key, and you need to gain an understanding of their expectations. They also need to recognize your abilities. If you can mesh those two, you have the basics for success. In the end, the KPIs are system availability and customer satisfaction," Ben notes. "There are quite a few management metrics like average speed to answer and first call resolution, but all of those lead to customer satisfaction." We couldn't agree more.

## About HDI Forums

The HDI Leadership Connection Membership is a top-of-the-line membership, bringing together elite groups of senior-level professionals who meet face-to-face multiple times per year. These groups are the HDI Forums. The HDI Leadership Connection Membership includes your choice of one HDI Forum annual package.

The HDI Forums serve as a valuable opportunity for support leaders to learn, network, share ideas and experiences, and to discuss the latest developments in support center best practices with peers who work in similar industries or share similar roles and responsibilities. Participants gain fresh perspectives on world-class support and ideas about how to improve the people, process, and technology strategies within their support center. There is no better place to connect and exchange knowledge and information with other service and support managers, directors, and executives than the HDI Forums. HDI Forums offer you the opportunity to connect with some of the brightest and most driven in the industry resulting in both enhancing your own performance and your organization's, and help the industry at large.

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