Ticket Management

Technical support organizations manage tickets received through a variety of channels, which require various levels of support. This section shares the current practices and experiences involved in managing end-user tickets.

Ticket Management in the Support Center
- Reasons for increased ticket volumes
- Reasons for decreased ticket volumes
- Time spent on tickets and other activities
- Ticket resolution by level
- Ticket resolution strategies
- After-hours ticket handling
- Channels used to contact support
- Tickets per channel
- Cost per ticket

Ticket Management in Desktop Support
- Reasons for increased ticket volumes
- Reasons for decreased ticket volumes
- Time spent on tickets and other activities
- Tickets received by channel
- Criteria for ticket categorization
- Channels through which desktop support is provided
- Expectations for technician travel
- Vehicle use and reimbursement policies for technicians who travel
57% of support organizations saw an increase in ticket volume over the past year. They attribute this increase to the following factors:

- Number of customers: 39%
- New applications/systems: 36%
- Acquisitions/mergers: 27%
- New equipment/devices: 24%
- Scope of services offered: 22%
- Number of applications: 22%
- Number of equipment/devices: 21%
- Change in infrastructure: 20%
- Supporting mobile devices: 18%
- Supporting outdated equipment: 15%
- Customer competency: 14%
- Use of personal equipment/devices: 14%
- Security requirements: 12%
- Supporting a mobile workforce: 11%
- Remote support technology use: 9%
- Compliance expectations: 9%
- Cloud computing: 8%
- Analyst competency: 7%
- Knowledge base: 7%
- Software as a Service (SaaS): 6%
- Problem management processes: 5%
- Virtualization: 4%
- Self-help: 3%
- Shadow IT: 2%
- Outsourcing desktop support functions: 1%
- Outsourcing service desk functions: 1%
- Other: 4%
10% of support organizations saw a decrease in ticket volume over the past year.

They attribute this decrease to the following factors:

- Change in infrastructure: 24%
- Self-help: 22%
- Knowledge base: 18%
- Problem management processes: 18%
- New applications/systems: 16%
- Analyst competency: 14%
- New equipment/devices: 14%
- Number of customers: 12%
- Customer competency: 10%
- Compliance expectations: 8%
- Software as a Service (SaaS): 8%
- Cloud computing: 6%
- Acquisitions/mergers: 4%
- Outsourcing desktop support functions: 4%
- Outsourcing service desk functions: 4%
- Remote support technology use: 4%
- Scope of services offered: 4%
- Security requirements: 4%
- Use of personal equipment/devices: 4%
- Virtualization: 4%
- Number of applications: 2%
- Shadow IT: 2%
- Supporting mobile devices: 2%
- Number of equipment/devices: 0%
- Supporting a mobile workforce: 0%
- Supporting outdated equipment: 0%
- Other: 0%
Time spent on tickets and other activities:

**Level 1 Support**
- 64% Ticket handling
- 10% Knowledge management
- 9% Problem management
- 4% Asset management
- 7% Projects
- 7% Other (e.g., meetings, training)

**Level 2 Support**
- 41% Ticket handling
- 14% Knowledge management
- 15% Problem management
- 7% Asset management
- 14% Projects
- 8% Other (e.g., meetings, training)

**Support Center Manager**
- 12% Ticket handling
- 13% Knowledge management
- 16% Problem management
- 8% Asset management
- 24% Projects
- 28% Other (e.g., meetings, training)

*Percentage of time spent on each activity*
Ticket resolution by level:

- Level 1 Support: 53%
- Level 2 Support: 19%
- Desktop Support: 13%
- Level 3 Support: 9%
- Management: 4%
- Other: 2%

Ticket resolution strategies:

**Skills-based routing**

58%

Matching an end user’s specific needs with an analyst, or group of analysts, who has the skills required to resolve the specific incident or request.

**Intelligent swarming**

28%

Aligning resources by assigning the correct people with various appropriate skill sets (regardless of tier) to “swarm” around issues as they occur.
72% of support centers are not staffed 24×7.

**After-hours ticket handling:**
Includes responses only from those organizations that don’t provide 24x7 support

- Another department in the organization handles them: 9%
- Answering service or operator fields calls: 13%
- On-call staff: 41%
- Outsourced service provider: 7%
- Tickets aren't handled outside of business hours: 33%
- Other: 4%

*Percentage of support centers*
Channels used to contact support:

Formally offered

- Chat: 38% (2016), 32% (2015)
- Email: 85% (2016), 88% (2015)
- Fax: 10% (2016), 8% (2015)
- Mobile app: 5% (2016), 10% (2015)
- Phone: 87% (2016), 93% (2015)
- Social media: 6% (2016), 5% (2015)
- Tech support station(s): 13% (2016), N/A (2015)
- Text message: 10% (2016), 5% (2015)
- Video chat: 7% (2016), N/A (2015)
- Walk-up (at support center): 49% (2016), 54% (2015)
- Web/online form: 48% (2016), 54% (2015)

Formally measured

- Autologging: 16% (2016), 16% (2015)
- Chat: 20% (2016), 19% (2015)
- Email: 70% (2016), 70% (2015)
- Fax: 3% (2016), 3% (2015)
- Mobile app: 3% (2016), 2% (2015)
- Phone: 76% (2016), 83% (2015)
- Social media: 1% (2016), 1% (2015)
- Tech support station(s): N/A (2016), 5% (2015)
- Text message: 3% (2016), 2% (2015)
- Video chat: N/A (2016), 3% (2015)
- Walk-up (at support center): 28% (2016), 31% (2015)
- Web/online form: 36% (2016), 43% (2015)

Percentage of support centers

2016 2015
Tickets per channel:

- Autologging: 21%
- Chat: 9%
- Email: 3%
- Fax: 14%
- Mobile app: 7%
- Phone: 47%
- Social media: 6%
- Tech support station(s): 11%
- Text message: 13%
- Video chat: 20%
- Walk-up (at support center): 11%
- Web/online form: 19%

Cost per ticket (USD):

$18.50 (median)

The cost of the support center’s operations (including people, support infrastructures, and overhead) divided by the total number of tickets resolved through any channel.
Ticket Management in **Desktop Support**

*Includes responses only from the 618 organizations that responded to the 2016 Desktop Support Practices & Salary Survey*

56% of desktop support teams saw an increase in ticket volume over the past year. They attribute this increase to the following factors:

- Number of customers: 50%
- New equipment/devices: 49%
- New applications or systems: 38%
- Use of personal equipment/devices: 35%
- Number of equipment/devices: 30%
- Change in infrastructure: 24%
- Supporting mobile devices: 24%
- Number of applications: 24%
- Acquisitions/mergers: 22%
- Customer competency: 21%
- Scope of services offered: 20%
- Older equipment: 19%
- Supporting a mobile workforce: 18%
- Cloud computing: 17%
- Compliance expectations: 17%
- Security requirements: 14%
- Service desk staff competency: 13%
- Knowledge management: 12%
- Problem management processes: 8%
- Self-help: 6%
- Virtualization: 6%
- Remote support tools: 5%
- Outsourcing service desk functions: 4%
- Outsourcing desktop support functions: 3%
- Software as a Service (SaaS): 2%
- Other: 4%
13% of desktop support teams saw a decrease in ticket volume over the past year.

They attribute this decrease to the following factors:

- Service desk staff competency: 33%
- Change in infrastructure: 32%
- New equipment/devices: 29%
- Knowledge management: 28%
- Problem management processes: 26%
- Customer competency: 22%
- Self-help: 22%
- New applications or systems: 18%
- Remote support tools: 18%
- Number of customers: 17%
- Cloud computing: 13%
- Compliance expectations: 11%
- Number of equipment/devices: 11%
- Use of personal equipment/devices: 11%
- Outsourcing service desk functions: 8%
- Other: 8%
- Number of applications: 7%
- Outsourcing desktop support functions: 7%
- Virtualization: 7%
- Scope of services offered: 5%
- Security requirements: 5%
- Supporting mobile devices: 5%
- Older equipment: 4%
- Software as a Service (SaaS): 4%
- Acquisitions/mergers: 1%
- Supporting a mobile workforce: 1%

Percentage of desktop support teams
Time spent on tickets and other activities:

- **51%** Ticket resolution
- **9%** Projects
- **5%** Training end users
- **5%** Meetings
- **4%** Professional development (e.g., training)
- **7%** Knowledge management
- **10%** Problem management
- **5%** Asset management
- **3%** Information security
- **5%** Other

Percentage of time spent on each activity
Tickets received by channel:

- Assigned by the support center/service desk/help desk: 37%
- End user directly contacts desktop support via phone: 19%
- End user directly contacts desktop support via email or chat: 13%
- End user directly contacts desktop support via a web request (not assigned by the support center): 9%
- End users informally walk up/drop in on a technician (“drive-by”): 7%
- Desktop support technician provides support at a formal tech support station: 5%
- Other: 1%

Percentage of tickets

51% of organizations track tickets resolved by desktop support separately from other tickets in the ticket tracking system.

Criteria for ticket categorization:

- The type of issue (e.g., hardware repair): 72%
- The agent who receives the ticket assignment (e.g., desktop support technician): 47%
- The manner of resolution (e.g., deskside, remote control): 20%

Percentage of organizations
### Channels through which desktop support is provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote control</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deskside (i.e., a technician provides support at the device's location)</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-up/drop-in/drive-by at the support center</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web request</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech support station (i.e., a designated physical location other than the service desk where end users can receive face-to-face support)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile app</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of organizations
Expectations for technician travel:

- Yes, technicians travel within a specified region: 46%
- Yes, technicians travel anywhere they’re needed: 20%
- Yes, at least one technician travels with VIPs: 4%
- No, technicians don’t travel off-site: 37%

70% of desktop support technicians travel to provide support. 56% of organizations track travel time in addition to other metrics.

Vehicle use and reimbursement policies for technicians who travel:

- Technicians use personal vehicles: 69%
- Reimbursed for gas: 50%
- Technicians use company vehicles: 63%
- Reimbursed for mileage: 86%
Introduction

The Technical Support Practices & Salary Report is a tool used by technical support leaders to better understand the workings and state of the industry as a whole, and to provide them with the knowledge needed to make research-based decisions that will ultimately improve the support provided by their organizations and even help them advance in their careers. This report illustrates current practices, processes, plans, and challenges in a variety of areas, such as metrics, ticket management, technologies, operations, staffing, and salaries.

All survey responses were collected via a web-based survey, open from December 2015 to January 2016 (desktop support) and again in August 2016 (support center). The 2016 report compiles the responses from 1,124 technical support professionals in more than thirty vertical industries (618 from the desktop support survey, 506 from the support center survey). The findings are based on responses submitted by support center and desktop support managers and professionals in similar positions around the world, and in support centers and on desktop support teams of all sizes. A full profile is available in the Demographics section.
Defining the Support Center

In the support center-specific sections of this report, most of the information presented refers to the individual support center, but a few of the survey questions refer to the company and support organization. The illustration below should help to clarify some of the terminology used for the purposes of this report.

Job Titles

LEVEL 1 SUPPORT/SUPPORT CENTER ANALYST: The frontline technical support professionals who receive and handle tickets. These professionals are responsible for providing customers with information, restoring service, providing specific services, and escalating tickets to a higher level of support. These individuals are typically technical generalists.

LEVEL 2 SUPPORT: The technical support professionals who handle tickets that are escalated from level 1. These professionals require greater technical skills and/or access rights than level 1 support personnel. They’re typically technical specialists and may also be responsible for participating in root cause analysis of problems. (This doesn’t include desktop support technicians, who are reported on separately.)

DESKTOP SUPPORT TECHNICIAN: The technical support professionals who respond to tickets escalated by the support center that are related to customer equipment; additional skills, knowledge, tools, or authority are required. They may resolve incidents remotely, at the user’s location, or via equipment returns. Responsibilities may include hardware and software deployments, moves, adds, and changes.

LEVEL 3 SUPPORT: The technical support professionals who build, maintain, and/or enhance technical products and services. These professionals are typically engineer-level staff. They’re involved when the ticket cannot be resolved by either level 1 or level 2, and when there’s high business impact or urgency. Level 3 support is commonly provided by either an internal engineering/development team or an external vendor.
**SUPPORT CENTER TEAM LEAD:** The technical support professionals who oversee the day-to-day activities of a team of support staff. These professionals serve as the communication link between the team and the manager, as a coach or mentor to support staff, and are often the first point of internal escalation within the support center. Other possible titles include coordinator, supervisor, or senior analyst.

**DESKTOP SUPPORT TEAM LEAD:** An advanced DST who, in addition to DST responsibilities, provides training, mentoring, and/or coaching for a team of DSTs, but does not have direct staff management responsibilities. May have oversight responsibility for processes, project management tasks, and/or providing support to management.

**SUPPORT CENTER MANAGER:** The management professionals who manage a team of support center analysts and/or team leads while executing the operational and tactical plans of the support center and satisfying customer and business needs. Their responsibilities may include recruiting and hiring, monitoring and managing performance, monitoring and reporting metrics, and ensuring that process are followed and service levels are met. Other possible titles include help desk manager or service desk manager. This position typically reports to the support center director.

**DESKTOP SUPPORT MANAGER:** Manages a team of DSTs and/or supervisors while executing the operational and tactical plans of desktop support, and satisfying customer and business needs. Responsibilities may include performance management, monitoring/reporting metrics, audits, purchase approvals, and other similar job functions.

**SUPPORT CENTER DIRECTOR:** The management professionals who are responsible for leading the support organization as a whole, rather than a specific support center.

Their responsibilities may include overall service delivery, strategic direction, business alignment, financial accountability, and performance reporting. In addition to the support center(s), this person may also oversee other departments involved in technical support, such as desktop support. Other possible titles for this position include senior director, senior manager, or vice president. Support center managers report directly to this individual.

**DESKTOP SUPPORT DIRECTOR:** The management professionals who manage a team of desktop support technicians and/or team leads while executing the operational and tactical plans of desktop support and satisfying customer and business needs. Responsibilities may include recruiting and hiring, monitoring and managing performance, monitoring and reporting metrics, auditing, and approving purchases.

**Salary Regions (US)**

Where applicable, average US salaries are broken out by region. The fifty US states fall into three regions, as follows:

**EAST:** Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia

**CENTRAL:** Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

**WEST:** Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington
About HDI

In 1989, HDI became the first membership association and certification body created for the technical support industry. Since then, HDI has remained the source for professional development by offering the resources needed to promote organization-wide success through exceptional customer service. In other words, we help professionals in service management better connect with customers, and that’s just good business. We do this by facilitating collaboration and networking, hosting acclaimed conferences and events, producing renowned publications and research, and certifying and training thousands of professionals each year.

Technical support professionals love HDI because it provides them with a profound sense of community. At 190,000 people strong, HDI is a community built by industry peers and leaders that gives you the resources, knowledge, and drive to be great at what you do.