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Metric of the Month: The Desktop Support Balanced Scorecard

By Jeff Rumburg

Every month, in the Industry Insider, I highlight one key performance indicator (KPI) for the service desk or desktop support. I define the KPI, provide recent benchmarking data for the metric, and discuss key correlations and cause/effect relationships for the metric. The purpose of the column is to familiarize you with the KPIs that really matter to your support organization, and to provide actionable insight on how to leverage these KPIs to improve your performance.

This month we depart from our usual format, and instead of discussing a single metric, I will explain how a handful of critical metrics can be combined to create a single, overall indicator of desktop support performance. We call this the desktop support balanced scorecard.

The Balanced Scorecard

Today's technologies and reporting packages make it easy to capture copious amounts of performance data. Most desktop support managers can tell you everything from last month's ticket volume to yesterday's mean time to resolve. But what does it all mean? If my cycle time goes up, but my cost per ticket goes down, is that good or bad? Is desktop support performing better this month than it did last month?

Despite all of the data that support managers have at their fingertips, most cannot answer a very basic question: How is desktop support performing? The balanced scorecard resolves this dilemma by combining the most important desktop support KPIs into a single, overall measure of desktop support performance.

Research has shown that establishing an overall performance metric for desktop support is critical. We call this metric the *balanced score* because it truly does communicate a balanced picture of desktop support performance. The *balanced scorecard*, therefore, is a mechanism that aggregates the most important desktop support metrics—such as cost per ticket and customer satisfaction—into a single, all-inclusive measure of desktop support performance. The value of this metric, when tracked over time, is that it enables desktop support to determine whether overall performance is improving or getting worse.

Oftentimes, when desktop support attempts to communicate its performance to other stakeholders in the business, particularly to laypeople who do not understand desktop support operations, those stakeholders quickly become overwhelmed by the minutia of such measures as technician utilization, and they are confused about how to interpret the results. They are likely to focus in on one, easily understood metric, like customer satisfaction, and draw conclusions about overall desktop support performance from this single metric. This is a classic case of missing the forest for the trees.

It is therefore absolutely critical to communicate the overall performance of desktop support, and the balanced scorecard does that for you. Think of the balanced scorecard as your letter grade for the month. In any given month, desktop support may see costs go up or customer satisfaction go down or mean time to resolve increase, but these individual measures take on a secondary level of importance because the balanced score provides a more complete and accurate picture of overall desktop support performance.

Creating a Balanced Scorecard

The process for creating a balanced scorecard is relatively straightforward. Follow along in Figure 1 as I explain the process.

Figure 1: Desktop Support Balanced Scorecard

Performance Metric	Metric Weight	Performance Range		Company Performance	Metric Score	Balanced Score
		Worst Case	*Best Case*			
Cost per incident	15.0%	$288.04	$16.48	$61.00	83.6%	12.5%
Cost per service request	15.0%	$324.65	$35.60	$90.05	81.2%	12.2%
Customer satisfaction	20.0%	59.1%	97.8%	84.8%	66.3%	13.3%
First visit resolution rate	10.0%	70.6%	97.1%	85.0%	54.3%	5.4%
Technician utilization	10.0%	30.2%	72.6%	56.9%	63.0%	6.3%
Incidents resolved within 8 work hours	10.0%	16.7%	95.1%	74.1%	73.2%	7.3%
Service requests fulfilled in 24 work hours	10.0%	7.0%	83.0%	52.2%	59.5%	5.9%
Technician satisfaction	10.0%	67.8%	95.1%	79.4%	42.5%	4.3%
Total	100.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	67.2%
STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3		STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6

STEP 1: Select eight critical performance metrics for the scorecard.

STEP 2: Weight each metric according to its relative importance.

STEP 3: Record the highest and lowest performance levels for each metric.

STEP 4: Record the actual performance for each metric.

STEP 5: Calculate the score for each metric using this interpolation equation:

[(Worst case - Actual performance) ÷ (Worst case - Best case)] × 100

STEP 6: Calculate the balanced score for each metric using the following equation:

Metric score × Metric weight

First, select the metrics you want to include in your scorecard. We suggest including the following eight metrics: cost per incident, cost per service request, customer satisfaction, incident first visit resolution rate, technician utilization, percentage of incidents resolved within eight work hours, percentage of service requests fulfilled in twenty-four work hours, and technician job satisfaction. Depending upon the metrics you track in desktop support, you may include fewer metrics or a different mix of metrics in your scorecard.

Second, establish a weighting for each metric based upon its relative importance in the scorecard. This is a judgment call, but we suggest overweighting cost and customer satisfaction, since these are the foundation metrics for service and support.

Third, set a reasonable range of performance—worst case to best case—for each metric. Normally, these performance ranges are derived from a benchmark of desktop support. Fourth, input your actual performance for each metric. Fifth, use the interpolation formula provided to calculate a score for each metric.

Finally, multiply the metric weighting by the metric score to get the balanced score for each metric. Sum up the metric scores and you have the total balanced score for desktop support!

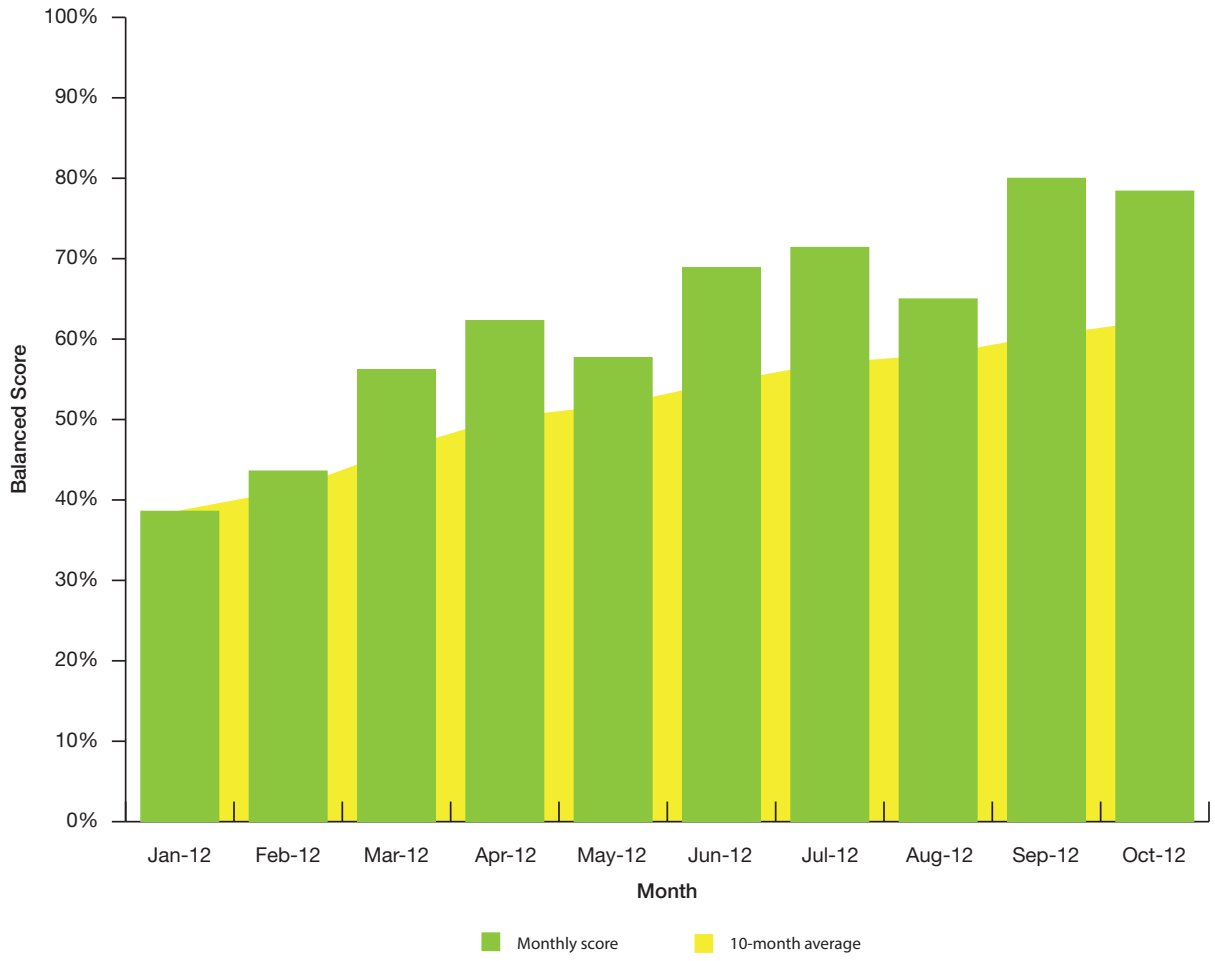
In this particular example, the desktop support balanced score is 67.2 percent. Your balanced score will always range from zero percent (i.e., the worst possible performance for every metric in the scorecard) to 100 percent (i.e., the best possible performance for every metric in the scorecard). As it happens, the desktop support group in our example has scored quite well.

When we run hundreds of desktop support groups through this algorithm, we get a normal distribution centered right at 50 percent. Those that score above 61 percent are in the top quartile; 50–61 percent, second quartile; 39–50 percent, third quartile; and those below 39 percent are in the bottom quartile for overall performance.

Benchmarking Your Performance

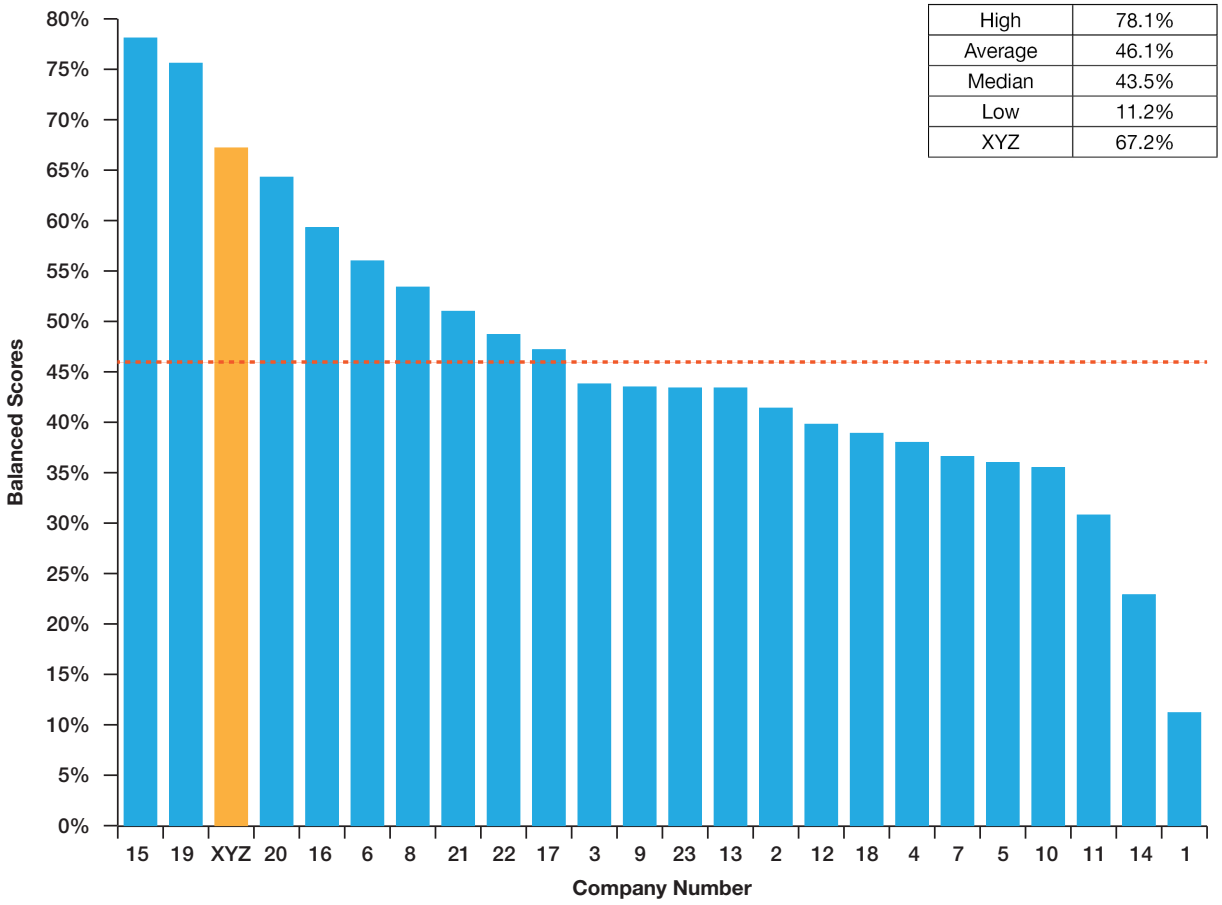
The balanced scorecard is an ideal way to track, trend, and benchmark your desktop support performance. Figure 2 shows the trend in one company's desktop support performance over a twelve-month period. The blue bars in the chart represent the monthly balanced scores, while the red background represents the twelve-month trailing trend in scorecard performance. Clearly, the performance trend for this particular desktop support group is improving!

Figure 2: Desktop Support Balanced Score (Trending)



Finally, the desktop support balanced score can be used to benchmark your desktop support in a fair, apples-to-apples comparison with other desktop support groups. Figure 3 shows how the desktop support group in our example compares to twenty-two other desktop support groups in its benchmarking peer group.

Figure 3: Desktop Support Balanced Score Comparison (Benchmarking)



Please join us for next month's Metric of the Month, **self-service completion rate**, a common service desk metric that has gained increased attention in recent years.

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