



# Metric of the Month: Mean Time to Resolve

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.

## Mean Time to Resolve

Mean time to resolve (MTTR) is a service-level metric for desktop support that measures the average elapsed time from when an incident is reported until the incident is resolved. It is typically measured in hours, and it refers to business hours, not clock hours. A desktop incident that is reported at 4:00 p.m. on a Friday and closed out at 4:00 p.m. the following Monday, for example, will have a resolution time of eight business hours, not seventy-two clock hours. Most incident management systems can easily track MTTR.

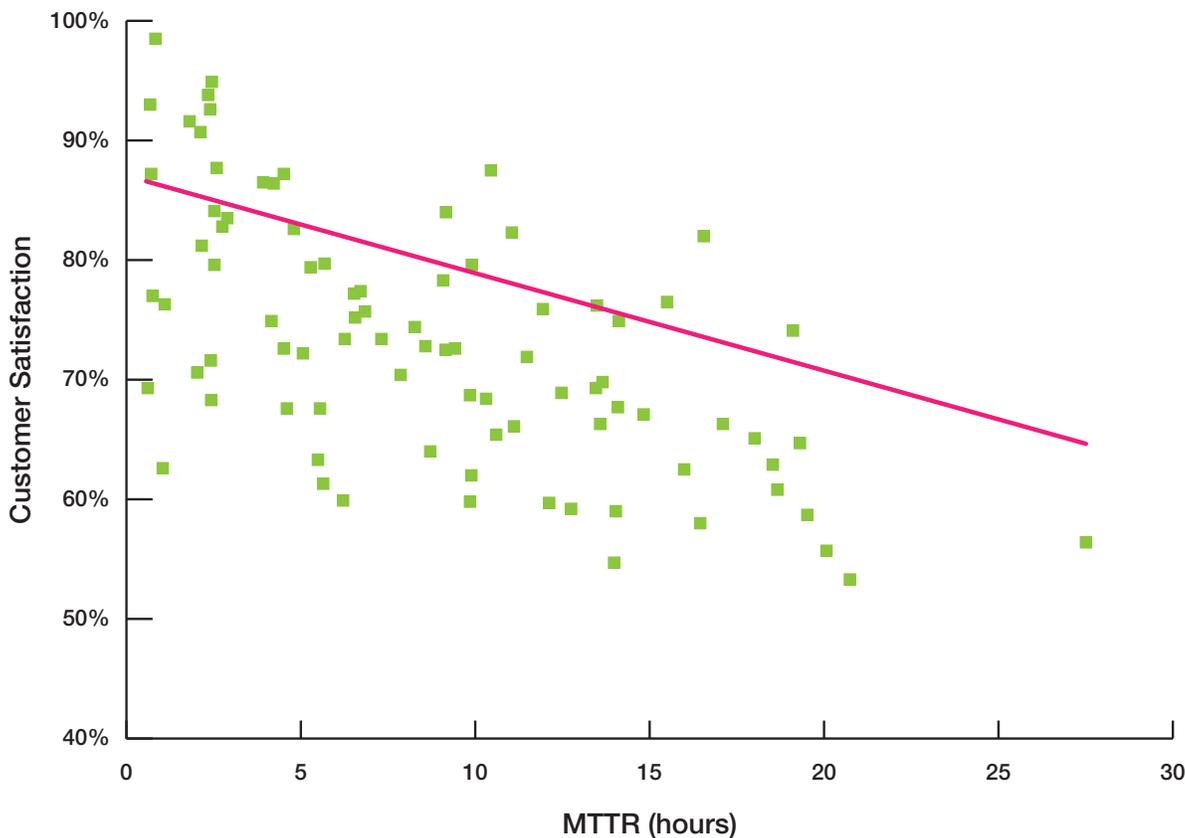
Please note that we make a distinction between incidents and service requests. A desktop incident is typically unplanned work that requires the assistance of an on-site technician to resolve. Common examples include break/fix requests for a laptop computer, a printer or server failure, connectivity problems, or other issues that cannot be resolved remotely by the service desk (level 1). By contrast, most desktop service requests represent planned work. Among the most common desktop service requests are move/add/changes, hardware refresh/replacement, and device upgrades. In this article, MTTR refers specifically to incidents, not service requests.

## Why It's Important

As you know from prior Metric of the Month articles, service levels at level 1, including average speed of answer and call abandonment rate, are relatively unimportant. They have little, if any, influence on customer satisfaction. The same, however, cannot be said of service levels for desktop support. In fact, MTTR is one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction for desktop support. This makes sense, as users may be either completely down or forced to use workarounds until their incidents have been resolved. This, in turn, has a significant impact on their overall satisfaction with desktop support.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between customer satisfaction and incident MTTR for a representative cross-section of global desktop support groups. The strong correlation between MTTR and customer satisfaction is readily apparent.

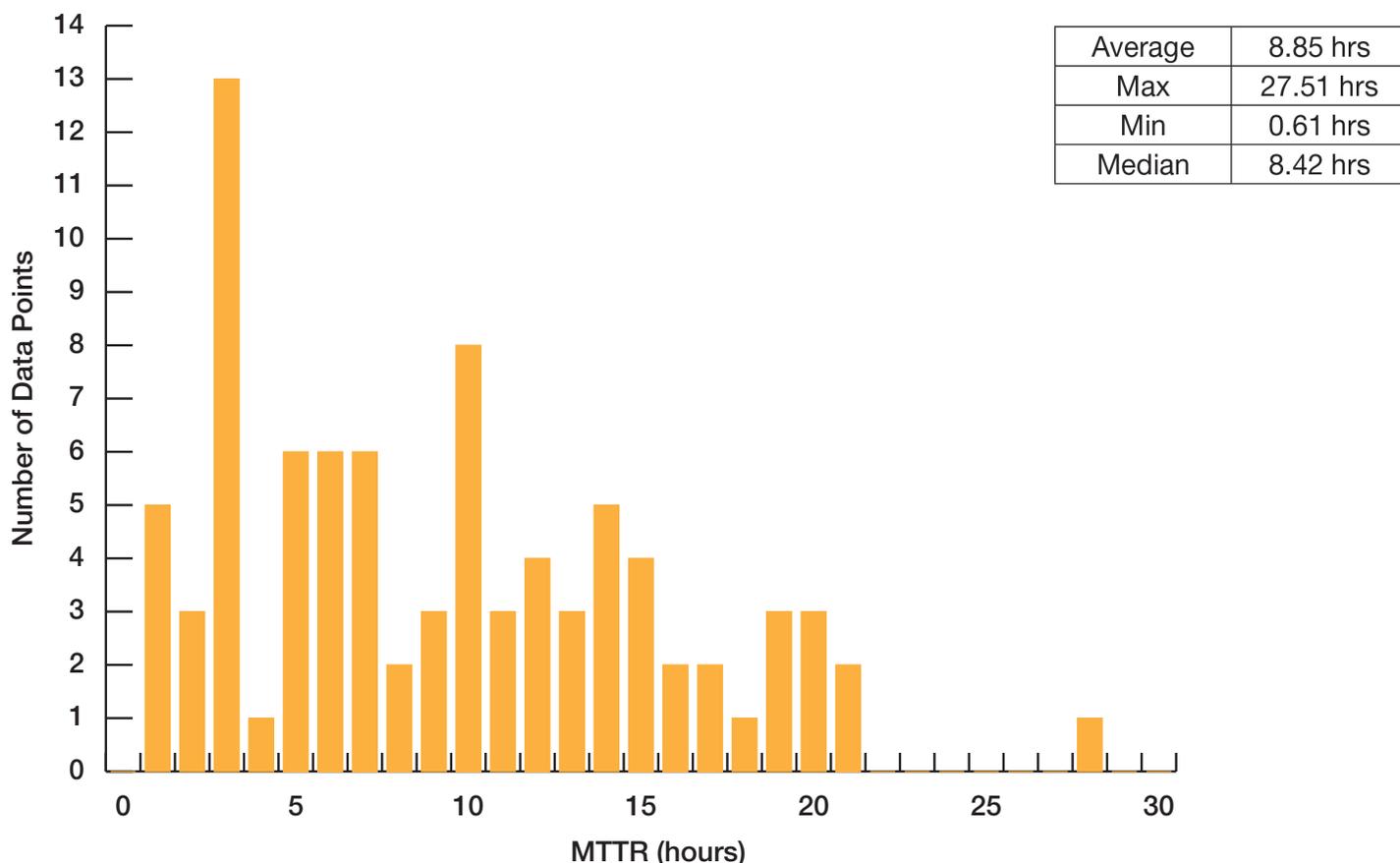
**Figure 1: Incident MTTR vs. Customer Satisfaction**



### Benchmarking Data for Mean Time to Resolve

Industry data from MetricNet's global benchmarking database shows that the average incident MTTR is 8.85 business hours, but it ranges widely, from a high of 27.5 hours to a low of 0.6 hours (Figure 2). This huge variation is driven largely by user population density. In a high-density user environment (think of a high-rise office building with lots of cubicles), the technician travel time to and from the site of an incident is generally short (e.g., less than ten minutes). This results in shorter MTTR. By contrast, technician travel time for users who are spread out over a broad geographical area (think of a retail bank with many regional branches) is often significantly greater, and MTTR will increase accordingly.

Figure 2: Industry Benchmarks for MTTR



Inasmuch as customer satisfaction is driven by MTTR, many desktop support organizations take steps to manage and minimize this metric. Although user population density, and hence the travel time per incident, cannot be controlled, other factors affecting MTTR can be managed. These include maximizing the first visit resolution rate (comparable to first contact resolution rate at level 1), and routing desktop technicians in real time. This latter technique allows an organization to manage the incident queue by dispatching technicians based on the proximity and geographic clustering of incidents rather than on a first-in-first-out (FIFO) basis, as is common in the industry. This has been shown to significantly reduce MTTR for desktop incidents.

Please join us for next month's Metric of the Month, **agent training hours**, a service desk metric that affects everything from customer satisfaction to first contact resolution rate.

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