Question

What are some standard staffing ratios for a technology support team? (i.e. one team member for every 100 employees?) What are some factors in this ratio? Complexity of environment, mobility, number of applications, etc.

Answer

The ratio of service desk professionals to supporting customers varies, depending on the environment. *Ratios should only be used as a guideline*, and the variance enters the recommended ratio due to differences in organizational environments, infrastructures, and business needs. To accurately determine the number of professionals needed for your organization, HDI recommends using the Gross Staffing Model to calculate staff based upon actual data regarding number of requests, request handling time and professional availability.

Each of the factors in the list below has an effect on the staff size. Assume a *starting* ratio of 100 customers per professional (1:100) if you have no available data to calculate using the Gross Staffing Model. Adjust the ratio if the listed conditions exist in your environment.

Decrease Ratio	Increase Ratio
Large number of products to support	Experienced support staff; formalized training and regular training programs
Multiple shifts and weekends	Support staff has strong business knowledge and understanding
Both internal and external support	Support staff has customer handling expertise
Primarily external customers	Internal support only
Multiple platforms to support (i.e., Windows, Mac, Linux, VDI)	Service Level Agreements negotiated and met

Decrease Ratio	Increase Ratio
Multiple support center locations	Budgetary concerns
Quality Assurance or Quality Control responsibility	Automated tools in place
Supporting mobile customers	Experienced support center management
Use of multiple contact methods	Effective use of knowledge base
Complexity of applications supported; higher number of proprietary apps supported	Experienced/technically savvy customer base
Support center has poor reputation in the company	Support center has a strong reputation in the company

Note: To decrease the ratio means fewer customers per professional; to increase the ratio means more customers per professional.

Keep in mind that determining staffing levels is not an exact science. There is no universal formula you can plug numbers into and get the answer. Big factors are training, management and the technology in use in your environment.

In instances where a staffing decrease may be required to meet your budget, too small a staff can create bigger problems later on, such as dissatisfied customers, excessive stress, technician burnout and high turnover. Offering the highest level of customer satisfaction sometimes requires more staff per customer. As customers experience excelled levels of service and the support center's daily metrics reflect high first contact resolution, the ratio on the desk should be adjusted.