

Providing Remote Support to Customers

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In a time when ticket volumes are steadily increasing (68% of support centers have seen an increase this year, according to the *2011 HDI Support Center Practices & Salary Report*), and both customers and support professionals are located in various on-site and off-site locations, the widespread adoption of remote support technology in the IT service and technical support industry comes as no surprise. The implementation of remote support technology enables support teams to resolve incidents and provide service by connecting to customer devices without dispatching technicians to the customer's location.

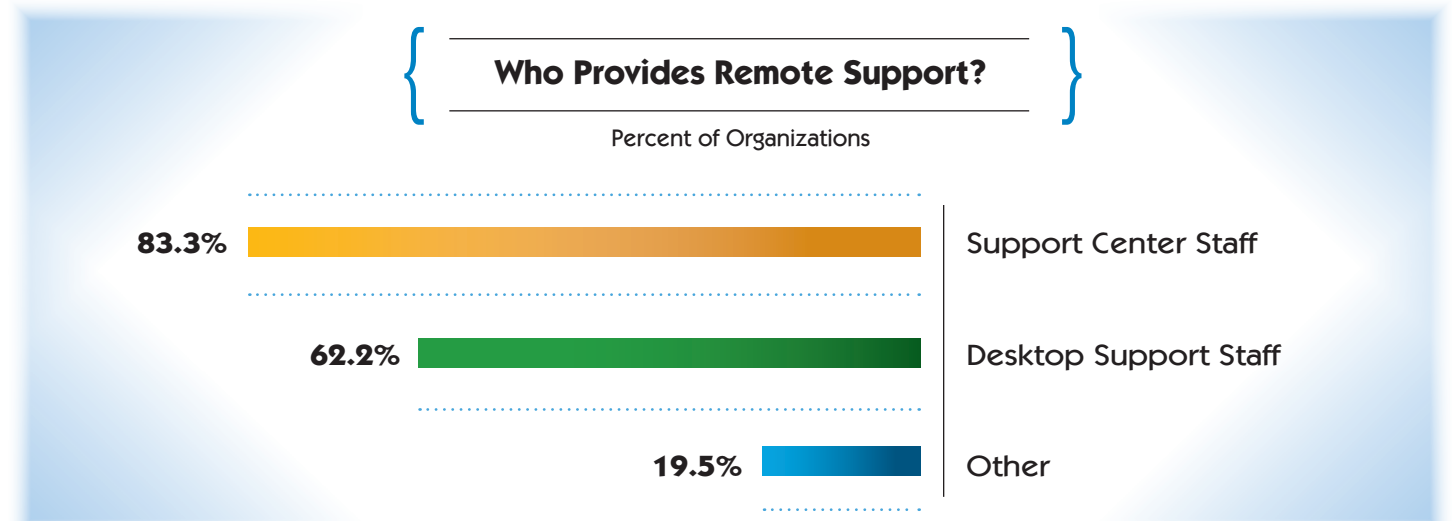
The HDI Research Corner survey on remote support practices was live online between September and October 2011, and it collected responses from 503 IT service and technical support organizations that are currently resolving tickets using remote support. This report explores the results of that survey.

Survey Results

Of the 525 organizations that completed this survey, 503 are currently providing remote support to their customers. Because survey respondents elect to participate based on the survey's topic, we can assume this ratio is a bit high. Other HDI research has indicated that, this year, about three-quarters of the industry is providing support using remote support technology.

A Job for the Support Center or Desktop Support?

Among organizations that provide remote support, approximately 54 percent of their tickets are being resolved remotely. In 83 percent of organizations, remote support is provided by support center staff; in 62 percent of organizations, the same support is provided by desktop support staff. Twenty percent of organizations permit other support staff to provide remote support. The most common positions listed in the other category are *application support, engineers, system administrators, and level 2 staff*.

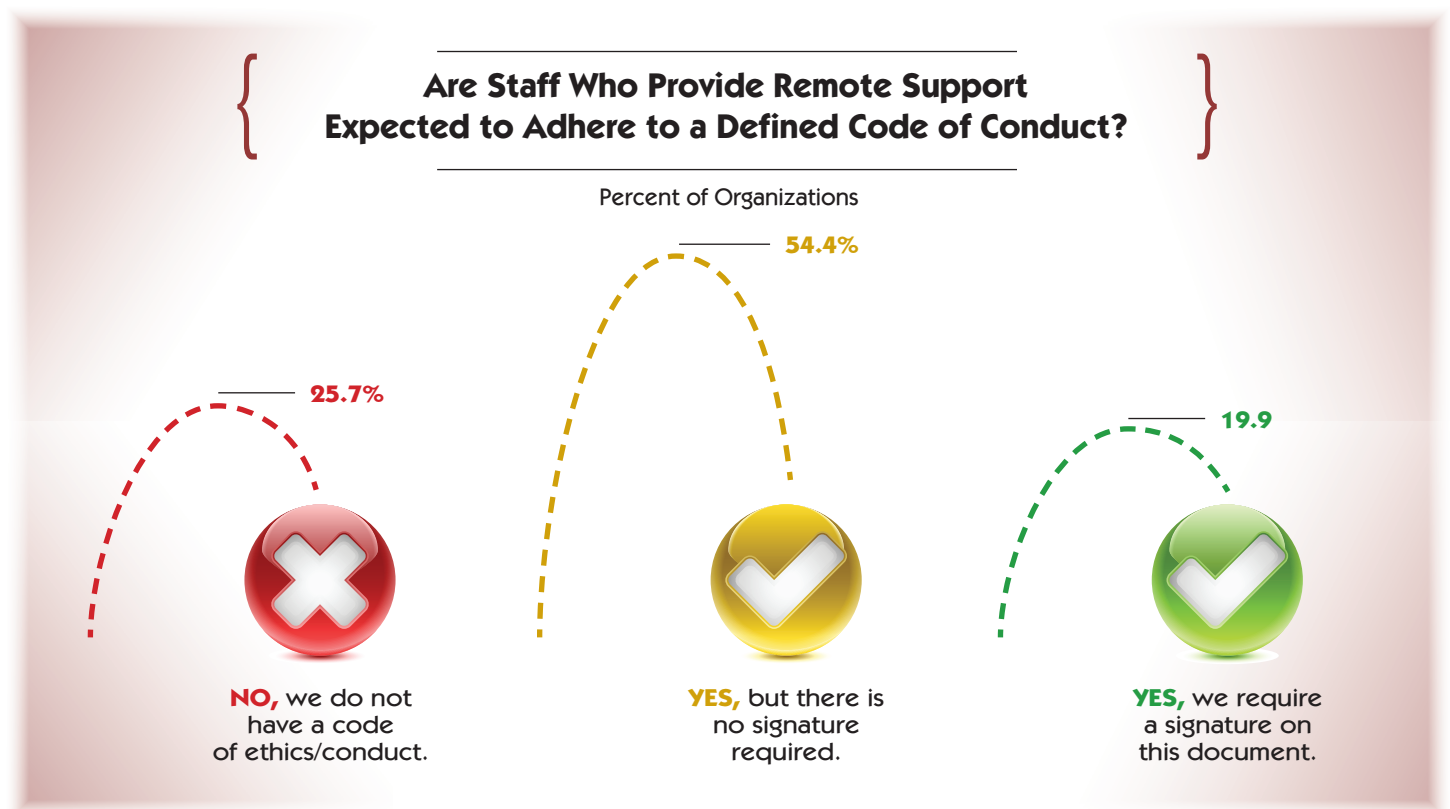


Many organizations (49%) that provide remote support allow both support center staff and desktop support staff to provide remote support to customers. In those organizations, on average, 60 percent of the tickets resolved through remote support are resolved by support center staff, 37 percent are resolved by desktop support staff, and 3 percent are resolved by staff in other positions.

Ethics and Authorization

Although customers may appreciate the convenience and efficiency of remote support, the idea of an invisible “IT person” coming in through the backdoor and viewing their data, files, and everyday activities makes them uneasy. Customer acceptance is one of the most frequently mentioned topics that comes up when organizations are asked what they would improve about remote support in its current state. A code of ethics for IT support teams and established customer authorization practices can help alleviate some of the uncertainty that causes customer concerns.

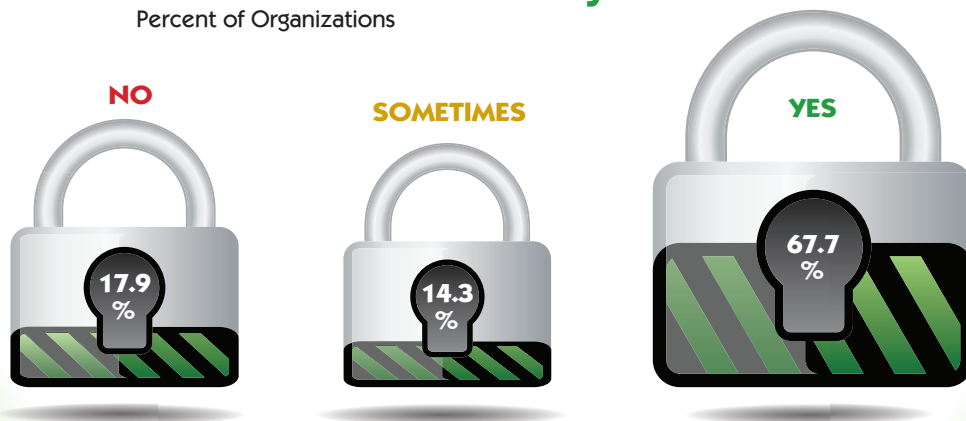
No matter which team provides the remote support, most organizations (74%) expect staff members that connect to customer devices to adhere to a defined code of ethics/conduct. However, only 20 percent require a signature on this type of document before allowing the support professional to assist customers in this manner, and about a quarter do not have a defined code of ethics/conduct.



In 68 percent of organizations, customers must give the support team permission to access their machines. This is not always the case, though; in 18 percent of organizations, support staff may remote into machines at anytime, without the customer's permission. Some organizations (14%) will request permission, but not in every situation. The need for authorization can vary depending on the sensitivity of the information handled by the customer (e.g., HR, EMR). Several organizations only require authorization when the customer is logged into the device; after-hours access is allowed without requiring permission. Likewise, if a prompt goes unanswered by the user, the analyst is allowed to connect to the device. Some of the organizations that selected “sometimes” pointed to another option: the customer can allow blanket access, so that authorization is not required for each ticket that necessitates remote support.

Is Customer Authorization Required?

Percent of Organizations



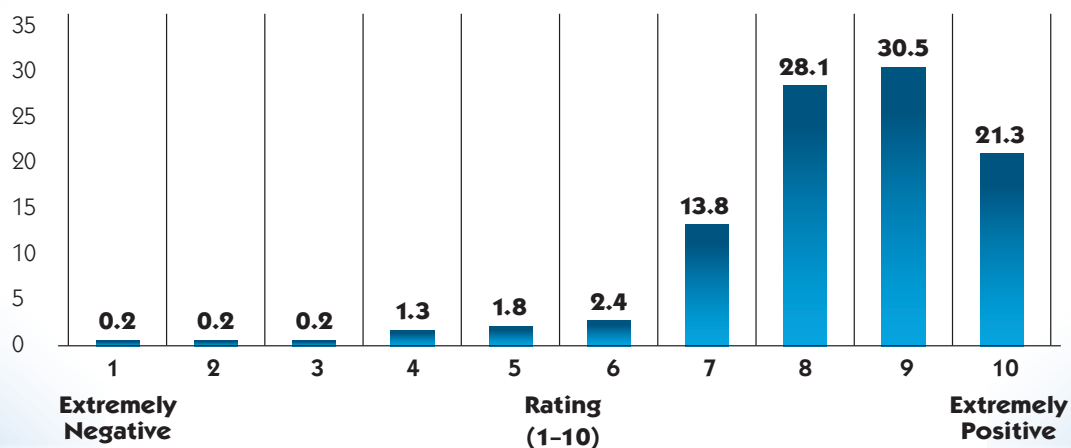
The Impact of Remote Support

Survey respondents were asked to rate the impact (positive or negative) of remote support, as measured by performance metrics like FCR, time to resolve, and customer satisfaction. Based on the responses, it's no surprise that so much of the industry is currently utilizing this capability.

On a 1–10 scale, where 1 is an extremely negative impact and 10 is an extremely positive impact, the average rating is 8.4 and the median rating is 9.0. This means more than half of respondents rate the impact of remote support not just positively, but *extremely* positively (a 9 or 10).

What Is the Impact of Remote Support on an Organization's Performance?

Average = 8.4 | Median = 9



Though the response to remote support is extremely positive, there is room for improvement, as there is with any process or technology. When asked if anything could be improved about remote support, the most common response was that organizations would like more of it. Specifically, they would like to expand the use of remote support to resolve more types of incidents and service requests, include more customers, and allow more support staff to use it as a means of resolving customer tickets.

Training on the technology and practices involved in providing remote support to customers is another area identified as needing improvement. Also, as mentioned previously, customer acceptance is something many organizations are struggling with, along with establishing standard practices and policies around remote support. These two areas are not mutually exclusive. Further research might show that establishing policies and practices, and making sure customers are aware of them, can help set customer expectations and can, in turn, increase the acceptance of remote support.

Finally, the technology itself has been identified as an area for improvement, as about 5 percent of organizations are still struggling to find the tool that best fits their support organizations. Most organizations (61%) use more than one technology to provide remote support. The table above lists the technologies most commonly used by survey respondents, as either the primary or secondary tools for providing remote support.

What Are the Most Common Technologies Used to Provide Remote Support to Customers (Alphabetical)?

Bomgar
Cisco (WebEx)
Citrix (GoToAssist , GoToManage, GoToMeeting)
DameWare
LANDesk

LogMeIn
Microsoft (Microsoft Remote Desktop, SCCM/SMS , Windows Remote Assistance)
RealVNC (VNC)
Symantec (Altiris, pcAnywhere)
TeamViewer

Conclusion

As reported in the *2011 HDI Desktop Support Practices & Salary Report*, about half of the desktop support teams that provide remote support are able to resolve more than 50 percent of tickets assigned to desktop support without dispatching. This finding, coupled with the results of this HDI Research Corner survey, indicates that the use of remote support will continue to increase. Many support organizations that are not providing remote support today will likely implement it in the near future, and those that are currently doing so will find ways to employ it more. With the appropriate policies, training, tools, and communication, remote support can be a valuable asset to the organization and, more importantly, its customers.

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