Support-on-the-Go: Using Mobile Devices to Provide End-User Support

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For several years now, technical support centers have been trying to handle the rapid influx of end users’ mobile devices that require support. Customers expect support for a wide variety of devices, and new devices continue to penetrate the market at a quicker pace than support staff can learn to support them. But has the day finally come when mobile devices are not simply the nemesis of the technical support center, but the hero of the story? Are support teams not only supporting smartphones and tablets but also using these mobile devices to their advantage?

In this report, HDI shares the current practices of technical support staffs, across more than thirty industries, regarding their practices related to using mobile devices to provide support to end users. The online survey was available from May through June 2013, and it collected information from 233 technical support organizations. The research results provide insight into not only the utilization of mobile devices by support teams but also the pros and cons of that practice.

RESEARCH RESULTS
The percentage of organizations using mobile devices to provide technical support was higher than anticipated. Sixty-four percent of staffs are using mobile devices, at least part-time, to provide technical support to their customers. In some organizations, on-call staff members are the primary users of mobile devices; in other organizations, mobile devices are staff members’ primary devices.

Support Gone Mobile
Of those organizations using mobile devices, most staffs are able to access alerts/monitoring (68%), provide remote support through remote control and screen sharing (59%), manage (e.g., enter, escalate, update, and check the status) tickets (53%), and access the knowledge base (52%). Most organizations that cannot currently perform these tasks on mobile devices would like to be able to, and many have plans to implement more support through mobile devices in the near future. The charts below illustrate how mobile devices are currently being used and what organizations’ plans are for the future.

How technical support is using mobile devices to provide end-user support

Includes 149 organizations that currently have staff providing support via mobile devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Will implement in the next 12 months</th>
<th>Will implement in the next 1-2 years</th>
<th>No plans to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ticket management</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., enter, escalate, update, check)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote support</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e., remote control and screen share)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access knowledge base</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access SCCM (System Center Configuration Manager)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access alerts/monitoring</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of organizations
Support-on-the-Go: Using Mobile Devices to Provide End-User Support

Future plans for organizations not currently providing support via mobile devices

Includes 84 organizations that do not currently have staff providing support via mobile devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of organizations</th>
<th>Will implement in the next 12 months</th>
<th>Will implement in the next 1-2 years</th>
<th>Wish we could, but no plans to</th>
<th>No desire or plans to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access alerts/monitoring</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access knowledge base</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access SCCM (System Center Configuration Manager)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote support (i.e., remote control and screen share)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket management (e.g., enter, escalate, update, check)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned previously, 64 percent of support organizations are delivering technical support through mobile devices. But what are the main factors keeping the other 36 percent of support organizations from moving in this direction? About 41 percent of those organizations that are not currently providing any support via mobile device plan to implement ticket management via mobile device in the next two years, and 46 percent plan to allow support staff to access the knowledge base on mobile devices. Very few report that they have no desire to bring mobile devices into their technology lineup, so there must be other factors in play. Budget limitations (56%) is the most frequently reported reason why organizations are not yet providing support via mobile devices.

Factors that keep organizations from delivering support using mobile devices

Includes organizations not currently providing support via mobile device

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of organizations</th>
<th>Budget limitations</th>
<th>Need better technology solutions</th>
<th>Lack of executive support</th>
<th>Security concerns</th>
<th>Not in line with company culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need for it</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Difficulty managing dispersed teams</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Time to onboard or train</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff resistance</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Logistics

Providing support via mobile devices raises security concerns that prompt discussions about how staff should connect to internal resources. For those organizations whose staffs are able to provide support using mobile devices, ticket management and knowledge base access are primarily provided by a secure web portal, while remote support is provided through either a mobile app or VPN.
Pros and Cons

We asked the organizations that are currently providing support using mobile devices about the benefits and drawbacks of this fairly novel practice. The most frequently reported benefit is a measurable decrease in the time to respond to customers (54%), which is closely related to the increased availability of staff (52%). Forty-four percent of organizations report increased support staff productivity, and 40 percent report an increase in support staff job satisfaction.

The most commonly reported drawback is the difficulty tracking actual time spent (effort) working on tickets (27%). Less than 20 percent of organizations have seen pushback from HR or staff with regard to working outside of the office or outside of office hours.

As an industry practice, delivering support using mobile devices is still in its infancy; so far, however, the positives seem to outweigh the negatives. The results of this research are compelling, and we will be revisiting this topic over the next few years to track and analyze the trends.
Pros/cons to providing support via mobile devices

**Pros**

- Decrease in time to respond: 54%
- Availability of staff to the customer: 52%
- Increased productivity of staff: 44%
- Support staff job satisfaction: 40%
- Resolution times decrease: 40%
- Increased customer satisfaction: 38%
- Increased productivity for customer: 34%
- Improved work/life balance: 28%
- Flexible schedule for staff: 28%
- Cost effective: 20%
- Other: 7%
- None: 7%

**Cons**

- None: 32%
- Difficulty tracking actual time spent working the ticket (effort): 27%
- Increase in “drive-by” and “hallway” work (e.g., “While you’re here…”): 22%
- HR concerns (e.g., nonexempt employees working overtime): 18%
- Staff resistance to working while not in the office: 16%
- Cost: 15%
- Difficulty managing dispersed staff: 13%
- Customer service focus seems to drop when on the go: 12%
- Negative security issues: 7%
- Difficulty maintaining accurate staffing level for phone queues (shrinkage): 7%
- Other: 7%
- Decrease in team camaraderie: 5%
- Decreased resolution rates (e.g. FCR): 2%
- Decreased customer satisfaction: 1%
- Increased reopen rates: 1%