

For the Service Desk, **ITSM Matters**

Kevin Burke

Senior Vice President of the Americas, *TechTeam Global*

Today's emphasis on integrated service management technology enables the IT service desk to resolve incidents faster and with less escalation than the help desks of years past. Integrated software packages provide increased efficiency—they enable service desk analysts to open problem and change records directly from the incident record, with fields pre-populated with incident details. Centralized databases enable them to spot trends, and integration extends the analyst's knowledge from just the issue at hand to how it fits into the bigger picture. For example, if a network router goes down, access to the Configuration Management Database will show the service desk analyst that all of the applications tied to that router will also be down—enabling the analyst to close the gap on the incident cycle time.

What's exciting about this integrated approach is that the technology is flattening the formerly hierarchical layers between level-one, level-two, and level-three incidents. By providing the level-one analysts with access to integrated toolsets and data, they are able to quickly and easily answer the calls that used to get escalated. This certainly saves time and money, but more important, it greatly increases customer satisfaction.

Today's network monitoring tools provide a proactive approach that end users need—when thresholds are breached, the technology can automatically generate an incident ticket that warns the service desk of a potential failure. The service desk can then, in turn, proactively notify users, avoiding a wave of unhappy calls.

The technology also offers us better management reporting that enables us to identify negative trends faster, and implement the needed improvement initiatives.

At TechTeam, we continue to migrate toward tools that support integrated service management processes; they enhance our troubleshooting capabilities, enable us to deliver support more efficiently, and ensure that we are focused on continual improvements to our customers.

Patrick Bolger

Chief Marketing Officer, *Hornbill Systems Inc.*

Technology that is compatible with ITIL processes is nothing new. The difference is whether it can actually help to overcome the barriers to successful adoption, the most common of which lies with people.

Unfortunately, the people aspect is too often restricted to ITIL foundation training for IT staff, with little emphasis on the need to adopt a service ethos and provide good customer service. So how can technology help to develop the “people” side of ITIL?

Technology really can help to enable good customer service and bridge the gap between people and process. To do that, the service desk needs to be entirely at home with the language the business uses and understands.

When dealing with requests or incidents, the customer's profile needs to be immediately visible to the service desk (including a photograph), so the analyst can easily identify with their customer, determine their technical competency, priority services, and even their satisfaction rating against current and previous requests. By providing this information, at the point of logging a ticket, the service desk is better briefed and empowered to handle the customer's request appropriately. Technology really can help an organization to know its customers better for improved satisfaction.

Customer self-service portals can also help if designed from a business context using business language; for example, a business unit manager's “new hire” request is channeled to the service desks of IT, HR, and Facilities Management/Operations who then process the request to provide a seamless service to the customer.

Maria Stedman

Marketing Director, *Touchpaper*

IT should be at the strategic heart of every organization but most companies are still not connecting the dots in terms of leveraging its value throughout the company.

Of course, technology plays an important role and increasingly automated service management solutions are being deployed that fully support ITIL best practice principles and integrate seamlessly with other leading business applications, such as those from SAP and Oracle. But, technology is not everything. CIOs and IT directors can be their own worst enemy, allowing themselves and their departments to be seen as the “tech guys in the basement,” rather than business leaders with the expertise and insight to be high-level executives. They need to elevate IT in today's business environment.

To justify the investment, the IT department needs to go one step further by using key performance indicators to demonstrate the true value of IT to the overall business. In addition, at Touchpaper, we also see more of our customers extending the functionality of their ITSM solution to support non-IT organizational departments such as HR, development, facilities, and finance in their drive to deliver ever increasing efficiencies and enhanced customer value at all levels.

For example, Alameda County Medical Center is using a service management approach to optimize its IT service desk. It is now able to handle over 350 requests per day across 100 locations and, with the ability to record and analyze those requests electronically, Alameda County Medical Center can plan more effectively for language-proficient resources and evaluate the effectiveness of the overall program.

Over the last several years, IT Service Management (ITSM) has become popular in the United States. IT Service Management is performed by IT service providers through an appropriate mix of people, process, and technology. With this convergence of processes and technology, service desks are able to better serve their customers. As interest in the implementation and management of quality IT services that meet the needs of the business continues to grow, technology to support various ITIL/ITSM processes has been incorporated by most support/service desk vendors into their products. How is technology continuing to meet ITIL- and ITSM-structured IT and service desk demands?

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