Executive Summary

What’s so great about a help desk? Plenty, if it has kept pace with evolving information technology. Our technology environments have made quantum leaps in the past decade, but most organizations are still operating with the dated model of simpler times, when fewer things went wrong. In that era, sending a living, breathing human being to fix problems at the user’s desk made sense. The problem was solved, the cost was minimal, and the user was happy.

But our world has changed. With today’s converged networks, such a simplistic, “help is just a phone call away” approach no longer works. Costs associated with on-site support have skyrocketed for one reason: more things can go wrong when the network becomes more complex. The CIOs focused on survival understand that it’s crucial to transform outdated “help desks,” which rely primarily upon telephone communication, into efficiently managed “service desks” that easily and economically accommodate multiple forms of interaction—from voice and data to e-mail and instant messaging. They also understand that, by moving to self-assist and remote incident resolution, they can reduce service desk operational costs by half, while dramatically increasing the quality of service provided.

No longer relegated to the basement of the organization, or considered an afterthought or necessary evil, today’s highly evolved service desk is key to driving maximum value from the organization’s IT infrastructure; in fact, it is the very heart of the infrastructure. The more rapidly an organization succeeds in implementing the e-support tools that enable self-assisted incident resolution, the faster this maximum value will be realized.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s Cooling the Adoption of this Hot, New Technology?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Support Tools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Approaches to Incident Resolution</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Solution</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cost of Live Support</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Author</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About CCSI</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Service Desk Defined

It’s important to distinguish among three different entities that are often erroneously used as synonyms for one another, namely, a call center, a help desk, and a service desk. Let’s take a closer look.

• IT Call Center—A call center, which can be inbound or outbound, generally focuses on accomplishing one thing consistently, and that is to handle a high volume of customer interactions associated with equipment repairs or information gathering. It is rarely involved with technical support.

• IT Help Desk—A help desk is a single point of contact for managing customer problems and problem resolution requests. It provides solution-oriented support services.

• IT Service Desk—A service desk is equipped with multiple methods or channels that clients can use for requesting support services. It is a much more robust service offering that not only empowers users to solve a certain level of problems themselves but also enables interaction through a multiplicity of channels other than the telephone and provides significant opportunities to dramatically reduce costs and improve the quality of service provided to users. A true service desk can add quantifiable business value to any organization.

Introduction

What’s so great about a help desk? Plenty, if it has kept pace with evolving information technology. Our technology environments have made quantum leaps in the past decade, but most organizations are still operating with the dated model of simpler times, when fewer things went wrong. In that era, sending a living, breathing human being to fix problems at the user’s desk made sense. The problem was solved, the cost was minimal, and the user was happy.

But our world has changed. With today’s converged networks, such a simplistic, “help is just a phone call away” approach no longer works. Costs associated with on-site support have skyrocketed for one reason: more things can go wrong when the network becomes more complex. The CIOs focused on survival understand that it’s crucial to transform outdated “help desks,” which rely primarily upon telephone communication, into efficiently managed “service desks” that easily and economically accommodate multiple forms of interaction—from voice and data to e-mail and instant messaging. They also understand that, by moving to self-assist and remote incident resolution, they can reduce service desk operational costs by half, while dramatically increasing the quality of service provided.

A smart service desk supports an environment of continuous improvement and access to new innovations as they become available—at a competitive price—so the enterprise remains agile and adapts quickly to the inevitable change that is always coming. A smart service desk also reduces an organization’s total cost of support and maintenance without sacrificing quality. Although electronic service delivery is still in its infancy, its potential to increase service quality while simultaneously reducing costs is widely recognized.

The critical components of a customer service automation solution include:

• Centralized, multi-channel issue tracking that captures a complete history of a customer’s service experience

• Self-service, online tools

• Two-way e-mail management

• Knowledge management

• Live e-support tools

• Integrated telephony

• Automated reporting and metrics to monitor performance and productivity
What’s Cooling the Adoption of this Hot, New Technology?

Despite the remarkable promise of e-support tools, they have been slow to gain acceptance. As with any other new automation technology, adoption takes time, and knowledge has to build so improvements can be incorporated. Remember the shift from live receptionists to voice mail, and the adjustment from live tellers to ATMs? It took time for us to get comfortable with those technologies, but now we can’t imagine life without them. More change is on the way, and each change will take a while to assimilate: for instance, who knows how voice over IP (VoIP) technology will change the way the service desk of the future operates?

In a 2005 user survey, Gartner asked what was needed to improve the self-service experience. Specifically, respondents were given a list of improvement areas and asked to consider the benefits, effectiveness, and ease of use of self-service solutions, and identify which are needed to significantly increase the use of self-service solutions. The results were:

• Easier to find solution for a specific problem
• Organized to make it easy to find the right tool
• Content that is more relevant to the context or problems
• Content that is specific to the application or operating system
• Content that is more comprehensive in scope and depth
• Increased performance of Web-based self-service
• Support site and content personalized to my needs
• Tailor site to my unique IT environment, rather than IT products
• Security of automated remote monitoring and management
• Easier to log in

For some time, CCSI has provided clients with a portal that enables them to submit service requests, track issues, and search knowledge repositories and frequently asked questions (FAQs) for solutions—without engaging a live agent. However, it quickly became abundantly clear that users require a phased approach to adoption of self-service tools, and CCSI advocates a gradual, agent-assisted transition to e-support problem resolution tools. CCSI also collects the vital user feedback that makes it possible to continually refine the quality of the tools.

E-Support Tools

E-support tools enable the delivery of world-class service, improved customer satisfaction, and dramatically reduced operational costs. Let’s take a closer look at the e-support tools currently available.
“New automation technology can be intimidating for anybody at first. For example, when I initially encountered a self-service check-in kiosk at an airline ticket counter, I was wary. I walked right past it and took my place in the check-in line, preferring to talk to a human being, because I felt more secure that the process would go smoothly. But then an airline agent approached me and offered to personally walk me through the self-assisted kiosk check-in process. She was helpful and patient, and I was amazed at how fast and easy it was. On my next flight, I took one look at the long check-in line and immediately walked to the kiosk. Now, I not only never stand in line anymore, but I’ve also increased the number of kiosk services I use—from upgrading my ticket and changing my seat assignment to checking my bags.

This is the same psychology CCSI advocates in overcoming users’ barriers to adopting e-support. When users learn how quickly and easily their incidents can be resolved using e-tools, they’ll willingly make the transition. That transition can be accelerated by initially offering agent-assisted support that helps users feel confident about flying solo with electronic service desk tools.”

Meg G. Frantz
Vice President, Service Desk
CCSI Technology Solutions, A CompuCom Systems Company

Web-Based Incident Initiation
A smart service desk provides users with several avenues through which to contact support technicians—whenever it’s convenient and however they choose. A centralized system captures, routes, tracks, manages, and reports all incoming requests received by each channel, enabling agents to streamline processes, prioritize tasks, and respond efficiently, while controlling every aspect of the problem resolution life cycle. Users experience a higher level of customer satisfaction because they are presented with more options for requesting support, staying informed as to the status of their problem’s resolution, and speeding issue resolution. This component of the e-support solution centrally manages and automates incoming and outgoing e-mail, providing more personalized service. With customizable e-mail notifications and auto-respond features, it is easy to forward crucial acknowledgments and issue-tracking information to close the loop on service requests.

Web-Based Chat
Web chat solutions typically cost slightly less per contact than traditional voice service, especially when agents can conduct multiple chats simultaneously. Current service desk technology enables users to initiate this type of contact, but innovations are in development that will enable the system to detect problems and initiate the contact, making the Web-based chat functionality much more proactive.

Web-Based Self-Service
Technology is available that enables users, via a portal, to access and search a customer knowledge base or archive of professionally-written knowledge that includes solutions and FAQs that will help them resolve their own issues without the assistance of a live customer service agent. Web-based self-service features automated diagnostics software that ascertains settings and configurations of each user’s system. Capabilities such as these provide users with valuable information and additional tools that can help them troubleshoot their own problems. As stated elsewhere in this paper, this type of self-assist service desk call resolution offers a greatly improved experience and frees resources while reducing incident-handling costs.

Self-Healing Capability
Support automation software transforms reactive support organizations into preventive support organizations. Issues are detected, diagnosed, and repaired before they can impact the user, reducing downtime and increasing productivity. Support automation solutions reduce costs associated with the service desk by preventing problems from occurring and reducing time spent on problem deflection and optimization. Because self-healing is technically complex, it’s crucial to work with a service provider highly experienced with self-healing technologies.
A CompuCom Systems Company

Get Smart: Make the Move to Self-Assisted Incident Resolution

The heart of the integrated service delivery model is a world-class service desk, or one that:

- Is the single point of for incident resolution
- Is staffed by highly qualified professionals who understand that they own the problem and have a proven track record of resolving issues during the first call
- Has access to industry-leading tools that accommodate remote diagnosis and/or resolution, as well as e-support tools for self-assisted resolution

“Before outsourcing your service desk or help desk, it’s imperative to build in the benchmarks that will enable you to incrementally measure the rate at which incident resolution is improving and operational costs are going down. If you don’t have that roadmap up front, you’re not going anywhere.”

Meg G. Frantz
Vice President, Service Desk
CCSI Technology Solutions, A CompuCom Systems Company

Autonomics

Multiple “smart” devices have the capability to automatically generate a trouble ticket when a user’s PC has the potential to fail or has already failed. They can also generate replenishment orders at the appropriate juncture so that it arrives at the appropriate time.

Voice Over IP

VoIP capability enables users to speak directly through their PCs to interact with the service desk, eliminating the telephony portion of the interaction. It provides features such as point-and-click and voice e-mail that allow a service desk to operate more efficiently, and therefore, improve customer satisfaction. The advantages of VoIP to the service desk, as well as the end user, are dependent on the functionality provided by the convergence vendor of choice, but clearly the opportunities for increased efficiency and ease of use help ensure an improved customer service experience.

Three Approaches to Incident Resolution

Re-engineering the service desk service delivery model to encompass three options for incident resolution will continuously expand the value the overall IT infrastructure can provide. These options are self-assist, remote, and on-site support. Let’s clearly define what we mean by each option.

Self-assist allows users to easily reference a dynamic knowledge solution to obtain training, information, and/or access a solution to resolve an issue on their own. For example, the most common problems can be identified, and their solutions provided, via fully automated, self-healing tools.

Remote resolution enables users to leverage both smart technologies and a remote expert at a world-class service desk to resolve their issues. Consultants apply technologies to remotely monitor all network equipment and availability, providing a service desk interaction of significantly enhanced quality. As helpful information is made available to the service desk, it may automatically dispatch a professional on a preemptive call.

On-site support involves dispatching a professional technician to the user’s site, if and only if the self-assist and remote resolution options have failed to resolve the problem.

A New Solution

CCSI leverages our Integrated Infrastructure Management™ (IIM) solution—a unique, proven methodology that assesses the integration maturity of a client’s IT system—to favorably rebalance its ratio of on-site, remote, and self-assisted support. By enabling this shift, we help clients...
not only move toward the realization of maximum business value from their IT infrastructure but also benefit from a continuous expansion of its value. (See Figure 1.) A highly evolved service desk is the heart of the IIM solution, and it is central to the maintenance of the infrastructure’s robust health. Transforming the help desk into a true service desk requires the vertical integration of self-assist and remote incident resolution into one holistic solution. And if your service desk is not operating as the core component of an integrated IT infrastructure, you’ve missed the boat.

The Cost of Live Support
A smart service desk’s knowledge database contains a complete repository of an organization’s data. With its ever-expanding history of incident resolution, the service desk not only helps users help themselves, thus saving the company money, but it also provides valuable aids to decision making, while helping the organization avoid repetition of costly errors in the future.

No longer relegated to the basement of the organization, or considered an afterthought or necessary evil, today’s highly evolved service desk is key to driving maximum value from the organization’s IT infrastructure; in fact, it is the very heart of the infrastructure. The more rapidly an organization succeeds in implementing the e-support tools that enable self-assisted incident resolution, the faster this maximum value will be realized.

Barriers to Adoption of E-Support Incident Resolution Tools
Self-assist e-support incident resolution tools can dramatically reduce the costs associated with on-site support. However, to achieve maximum ROI from an e-support initiative, it is essential for the initiative to be embraced by users. Driving adoption requires the following:

• Gaining executive buy-in to effectively socialize and promote the e-support initiative throughout the organization
• Staging adoption by providing agents who assist users in resolving incidents using the e-support tools
• Providing intuitive e-support tools to ensure users’ initial self-assist experience is successful
• Making certain the knowledge database is easy to navigate and has usable content

Top 10 Support Actions
The most common support actions that can easily be handled by self-assist methods include:
• Clear temp files
• Clear cache
• Reset password
• Check exchange server connectivity
• Check network connectivity
• Fill out questions and answers
• Empty recycle bin
• Create Webmail icon
• Clear Web browser history
• Map network drive

“Run as far and as fast as you can from an IT services provider who tries to sell you a ‘one-size-fits-all’ help desk or service desk solution. No single process can fit every scenario.”

Meg G. Frantz
Vice President, Service Desk
CCSI Technology Systems, A CompuCom Systems Company

“Run as far and as fast as you can from an IT services provider who tries to sell you a ‘one-size-fits-all’ help desk or service desk solution. No single process can fit every scenario.”

Meg G. Frantz
Vice President, Service Desk
CCSI Technology Systems, A CompuCom Systems Company
IIM Maturity Level 1

**Characteristics:**
- Information silos; no enterprise-wide view of data
- Disparate platforms, processes and functions
- Multiple IT vendors providing products and services with no central accountability
- Asynchronous procurement of hardware and software

At IIM Maturity Level 1, the least efficient methods of IT problem resolution are emphasized: predominantly on-site and remote.

IIM Maturity Level 3

**Characteristics:**
- Hardware not completely integrated with software
- Somewhat better integration of platforms, processes and functions
- Synchronized procurement of hardware, software, and services from a single source

At IIM Maturity Level 3, somewhat more integrated methods of IT problem resolution are emphasized: remote and self-assist are becoming more dominant.

IIM Maturity Level 5

**Characteristics:**
- Tightly integrated hardware, software, processes, functions and services provided by a single source with central accountability
- Significantly increased efficiency and effectiveness linked to economies of scale made possible by a single-source provider and tightly integrated infrastructure

At IIM Maturity Level 5, the most efficient method of IT problem resolution is emphasized: predominantly self-assist.
About the Author

Meg G. Frantz
Vice President, Service Desk
CCSI Technology Systems,
A CompuCom Systems Company

Meg Frantz oversees the development, implementation, and service delivery activities for CCSI Technology Systems’ award-winning service desk and dispatch support offerings. Her objective is to ensure that CCSI delivers unparalleled technical support services to its clients. With more than 20 years of experience creating and building help desk organizations, Ms. Frantz is recognized as a leader in the industry. In 2005, she was named to the Help Desk Institute’s Executive Forum, and in 2002 she received Compaq’s Support Visionary Recognition.

In 1995, Ms. Frantz was recruited to build CCSI’s help desk and dispatch support services. Under her leadership, CCSI has earned prestigious client support industry commendations, including the Support Center Practices Site Certification, Support Professionals Association’s Software Technical Assistance Recognition (lifetime achievement), Help Desk Institute’s Team Excellence Award (finalist), Help Desk Institute’s Team Excellence Award (winner), and Users’ Choice Award—Gold/Best in Class—Help Desk Outsourcer (winner).

Before joining CCSI, Ms. Frantz was Director of Help Desk Services for Accenture, where she built the internal help desk and managed more than 10,000 support events a month. Prior to that, she was Director of Help Desk Services for Greyhound Lines, where she designed, implemented, and managed the company’s nationwide support infrastructure.

Ms. Frantz holds a bachelor’s degree in business management from Louisiana Tech University, and she completed the mid-management program at Southern Methodist University in 1994. In 1999 and 2000, Ms. Frantz earned the Help Desk 2000 Certified Help Desk Manager and Director certifications, respectively. Ms. Frantz is also an active member of the Help Desk Institute, Software Support Professionals Association, Association of Support Professionals, CompTIA, and Call Center Network Group.
About CCSI

CCSI is a leading IT outsourcing company providing infrastructure management services, application services, systems integration and consulting services, as well as the procurement and management of hardware and software. With 20 years of IT experience, CCSI employs more than 7,400 highly skilled associates who have earned a combined total of more than 42,000 industry certifications company-wide. As experts in workplace services, CCSI's unique Integrated Infrastructure Management™ (IIM) solution reduces costs, increases productivity and helps clients gain maximum value from information.