

5 Key Reasons to Upgrade Your Homegrown Help Desk

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5 Key Reasons to Upgrade Your Homegrown Help Desk

The flaws associated with homegrown help desks are a big part of why businesses increasingly need dedicated solutions.

The lack of built-in organizational, prioritization and management tools in a homegrown help desk are extremely limiting.

Introduction

For a long time, many businesses have gotten by with simple, homegrown help desk solutions. After all, email and SharePoint can be useful tools when trying to organize user support requests. However, such practices only remain viable when IT requirements are fairly simple and easy to control. As businesses of all sizes face escalating demands from both technology and infrastructure, the demand for more a more advanced, modern help desk solution may become necessary.

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What are the Limitations of a Homegrown Help Desk?

It is true that email and other starter solutions have their place in the organization. At a rudimentary level, they can help business users quickly communicate any tech problems they are having and pass that information on to the support team. However, the simplicity ends there. On the support end, it is easy for messages to slip through the cracks as urgent tasks come up, support workers attend meetings or messages get opened, but not acted upon. The lack of built-in organizational, prioritization and management tools in a homegrown help desk are extremely limiting.

Running into organizational problems with a basic help desk may not be a big deal when you have a small support team handling a relatively low number of incidents on a day-to-day basis. However, with trends like enterprise mobility, cloud computing and DevOps on the rise, not many support teams can sustain smooth, stable operations without a dedicated help desk solution.

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There are a few key indicators that will tell you that it's time to move on.

When is it Time to Move to a Professional Help Desk Solution?

Choosing to invest in a dedicated help desk solution is a big decision. If you're using email or SharePoint, chances are you aren't spending much, if anything at all, on the actual software. Although budgetary issues are important, there are a few key indicators that will tell you that it's time to move on:

You can't meet your SLAs:

- Even a small help desk will have Service Level Agreements that must be accounted for in order to meet compliance. You need to consider an upgrade the moment your system shows signs of being unable to keep up with end-user demands.

You are running into too many operational challenges for support teams to keep up:

- There will usually come a point with a homegrown help desk that the volume of incidents being filed with your support workers becomes so great that some messages will be missed. If support requests are consistently being missed (or simply taking much too long to resolve) it may be time to make an upgrade.

Managing support messages takes too much time:

- The effort that goes into reading and prioritizing different emails or communications can take time away from actually helping end users. Your support team's primary task needs to be helping the end users. If managing messages is taking time away from that, you need a solution that will sort tickets and automate processes for you.

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The Major Advantages of a Dedicated Help Desk

A dedicated help desk solution can provide some advantages to an organization, but when it comes to really moving the needle for your business, these five benefits stand out when compared to a homegrown solution:

1. Incident Management

A dedicated ticketing solution can single-handedly resolve many of the challenges that emerge with a basic help desk. A good incident management platform will:

Sort tickets

- Incident management systems will use automations to sort tickets to make sure they get to the right support technicians, balancing workloads across the team(s).
- Tickets are organized into clear workflows as they are escalated or resolved, ensuring that nothing is disregarded when people get busy.

Support SLA management

- Incident management lets you create managerial alerts that will make team leaders aware when a support ticket is taking too long to resolve or other SLA conditions are at risk of being unmet.

These capabilities come together to give you the minimum management oversight necessary to streamline operations on the help desk and make sure your support team is delivering value to the business.

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2. Intelligent User Dashboards

The dashboard of your help desk is the nerve center for each of your support workers. A good dashboard helps users prioritize tasks, keeps track of everyday tasks to ensure everything gets proper attention, exposes workers to productivity metrics to keep them focused and gives them calendar reminders and similar updates.

A help desk dashboard offers advantages far greater than email inboxes. These functions can include:

- Metrics - both team and individual
- Customizable widget integration
- Incident status:
 - Open
 - Active
 - VIP
 - Critical
 - New
- Clear feedback on SLA compliance and other productivity metrics

The right dashboard will give users the information they need at a glance, and a dedicated help desk lets users customize what they see to maximize productivity.

3. Simple Customization

No two organizations are the same, and trying to shoehorn a generic email or SharePoint interface into a help desk isn't just unwieldy, it limits your ability to customize processes and interfaces to meet specific requirements. A dedicated help desk can also offer codeless customizations.

If you want to change which information is displayed on user dashboards, you can do it in just a few clicks of the mouse.

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Want to move a tab to make a data set more notable? Just click and drag. Freedom to customize elements of the interface and incident management workflows without any coding lets you:

- Customize processes with ease
- Design custom forms quickly
- Create templates
- Access visual workflow management tools

You want software that can meet your specific needs. In the end, that often means customizing solutions. A dedicated help desk provides code-free manipulation, letting you quickly adjust your platform without having to hire consultants or devote development resources to the project.

4. Self-Service

Your IT and support teams don't have to do all the work. A self-service portal empowers users to resolve basic issues on their own, leading to considerable operational benefits, including:

- Fewer incidents for support teams to navigate.
- Improved resolution times – users get help immediately because they help themselves.
- Support team value creation – your trained support workers aren't spending their time handling repetitive, basic incidents that don't require specialized knowledge.
- Flexibility – users don't have to wait for the help desk to be available to resolve issues.

Self-service functionality enables users to complete basic tasks, like resetting a password or setting a new mobile device up on the network, without having to get the help desk involved. You can also use forums, how-to videos and similar resources to help users take on even more complex tasks.

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For example, you can create a tutorial of common bug fixes that can help users get apps up and running again, and put that in the self-service portal. With that information users can resolve even somewhat complex incidents without getting the help desk involved.

You can't always find a perfect solution for every problem, but self-service platforms create considerable value by letting users help themselves, something that would be extremely difficult to achieve without a dedicated help desk.

5. Value Creation

A homegrown help desk may get you through the day, but it will only leave your support team as a cost sink for the organization. Supporting operations is only one component of what your help desk can accomplish. With the right technology in place, your help desk team can create value by:

Improving user productivity:

- Productivity losses are minimized when incidents are resolved quickly and workers aren't left sitting around waiting for a solution.

Identifying common incidents:

- Reporting tools clue you in to incidents that pop up frequently. From there, you can use the knowledge center to document the resolution and let people solve the issue quickly each time it comes up.

Maximize staff efficiency:

- Analytics tools let you understand exactly how productive your staff is, see if they are overwhelmed and get ahead of any potential workload problems before people get burnt out.

A dedicated help desk will move your support operations from being a sunk cost to operating as a value creation tool.

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Prepare for the Future of Your Organization

A good help desk will give your business exactly what it needs to operate at peak efficiency right now. The support tools provide the combination of efficiency and value potential you need to take control of your technologies and services. But chances are you are hoping your organization will look very different a year from now. You want to grow consistently and need your support technologies to expand with you.

Modern help desk solutions are being built with scalability in mind. Get started with the core features and benefits we already discussed, and be ready for more. The right help desk will help your business grow until you need to expand into a service desk and, eventually, to a fully featured IT service management platform.

About SunView Software

Founded in 2003, SunView Software is a leading provider of IT service management software that enables companies to better track, manage, and control IT services across the enterprise. Based on the ITIL best practices framework, ChangeGear® allows companies to gain greater visibility into their IT infrastructure, increase security, eliminate system downtime, reduce operational costs, and ensure regulatory compliance.

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