A 5 Step Plan
for Selecting the Right Service Desk

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Introduction

Businesses face numerous challenges when selecting a service desk, ranging from balancing the budget to projecting future requirements and assessing the degree to which consultants will be necessary to install and configure the new solution. With so much to keep in mind, many organizations end up making decisions they later regret. This is especially evident in extreme situations such as when components of a solution end up becoming unused or shelfware. However, a company that chooses the right service desk solution can create incredible value.

Businesses that maximize the value of their service desk solution can create ROI in a variety of ways, but doing so depends on a company's ability to understand their service delivery needs. Accurately measuring these demands and finding the right solution hinges on a company's ability to follow a few key requirements for getting the most out of their decision.

Step 1: Understand your service management readiness

Self-evaluation is an integral component of any purchasing decision, but it is incredibly important when choosing a service desk. The overarching purpose of the solution is to equip organizations to support end-user requirements in order to avoid lost productivity. When a technology problem or incident arises, the support ticket goes to the service desk. If software and staff are capable of handling the volume and variety of tasks sent their way, issues can be resolved quickly and business can return to normal. If the setup is inadequate, downtime can become extended, leading to major productivity losses.

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Fully understanding current needs is necessary to establish a baseline for the new service desk solution. The system must be, at minimum, capable of supporting current requirements and minimizing the negative impact of technology incidents and problems.

When current needs have been assessed, businesses also need to understand what got them to the point they are at now. Like the old cliché says, "If we fail to learn from our past, we are doomed to repeat it." If a company wants to make the optimal service desk investment, it needs to understand how business and technology development altered its current service desk requirements. This will make it much easier to project how operational needs will change and allow a business to choose a solution that is flexible enough to meet those needs.

The knowledge of current service desk requirements can be used alongside an understanding of how the company's service requirements change over time to project what future demands will look like. Organizations that combine this information with an understanding of future business and technology plans can position themselves to develop a service desk strategy that is well equipped to meet future needs. With this strategic vision in place, IT and business leaders can work together to create a prioritized list of service desk requirements to guide purchasing decisions.

Step 2: Leverage industry best practices

When a business knows itself and its requirements, it is ready to compare its expectations for a service desk with industry best practices. Architectures like the IT Infrastructure Library and the Microsoft Operations Framework, among other systems, are incredibly valuable in this area because they establish a clearly-defined set of terms and procedures to guide organizations to achieve

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procedural excellence. Furthermore, understanding how different technology leaders have handled the service desk can help organizations set a baseline for success and identify ways it can better employ service management to gain a competitive advantage.

However, this process is not necessarily a simple one. Service desk requirements often vary substantially from one business to another, creating a situation in which decisions that may seem like industry best practices are less than ideal. As such, IT leaders who have successfully identified the service desk functions that are common across their industry must evaluate how those practices will apply within their organizational setting. Choosing the right industry practices to follow, and the ones to leave behind, is critical to gaining a competitive edge.

Step 3: Understand functional tiers in the service management solutions

There is a great deal of variety in the IT service management industry, making it difficult to identify precisely what kind of solution a company needs to get the job done. With choices ranging from basic ticketing and help desk solutions, to a service desk with the ability to grow and complete ITSM suites, there are many factors to consider when searching for your next solution.

Tier 1: Help Desk - Many organizations will use SharePoint or email systems to establish their ticketing system and a basic homegrown help desk. Moving up to a dedicated help desk software solution is usually the first step forward for a growing business. Such systems usually include incident management and knowledge management as the primary functions.

Tier 2: Service Desk - The next tier above an advanced help desk is the service desk platform. A service desk will feature everything included in a help desk, but also expands to cover

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problem, service request, release and change-related issues. A service desk is a more robust, fully-featured solution than a help desk and is often necessary for businesses attempting to establish more mature IT services.

Tier 3: Service Management - Service management platforms stand at the top of this ladder, representing the architecture needed to support extremely mature and complicated IT configurations. A service management system generally includes all of the functionality of a service desk in addition to a configuration management database, service catalog and other ITIL processes. This feature-rich solution enables businesses to establish the IT functionality they need to proactively drive business innovation.

Step 4: Explore other needs for process automation

Many companies have begun expanding the reach of their service desk solutions to support request management in a variety of other aspects of business. For example, many companies have implemented line-of-business processes to bring the organization, scheduling and collaboration capabilities of the service desk for the management of facilities, contract fulfillment, project processes, as well as other business processes.

Process management is at the core of this functionality. A service desk gives organizations the ability to automate repeatable processes and coordinate other operations across multiple departments. For example, a human resources worker that needs to get a new employee set up with a corporate email account, workstation and software access no longer needs to go through the process of emailing IT and hoping technology workers get the job done in time. Instead, the HR service desk can integrate with IT, allowing the HR professional to simply check the necessary boxes on the screen

and have the ticket sent to IT, where the service desk will prioritize the ticket to ensure the necessary changes are made within the correct timeline.

Line-of-business service desk modules are fairly common for functions like human resources, procurement and project management. Such tools are also being used in facilities departments to handle service requests and maintenance scheduling.

Businesses that understand how line-of-business modules and other service desk special features can impact their operations can put themselves on a path for value creation.

Step 5: Plan for the Future

Innovation rarely happens in a straight line forward, and businesses often run into roadblocks as they try to align service desk upgrades with ever-changing IT and business demands. Organizations that want to maximize the value of their service desk investment must accompany the purchase with a clear strategy to make upgrades.

Having a 3 year plan

This could mean having a plan to progress from a help desk to a service desk and eventually, a service management platform. However, it could also include adding change management to a current help desk solution or implementing specific line-of-business modules. Understanding the path a company wants to take to add features can be key in the decision-making process behind a service desk purchase.

Before choosing the next service desk solution, there are a few key considerations to keep in mind when considering the ability to make future adjustments:

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Ability to easily update to new releases

Service desk updates can add advanced functions and key capabilities that are invaluable to businesses. However, solutions that are inflexible and difficult to update can hold an organization back and make updates incredibly difficult. Deploying a solution that is designed to be easily updated for new releases can prove invaluable for businesses.

Ability to add functionality and sophistication without re-implementation

Effectively upgrading different elements of the service desk with minimal disruption depends on completing alterations in a timely and effective manner. In some cases, adding a CMDB can take an extended period of time as configuration items and their relationships are documented. Organizations that take too long to add features to their service desk can find themselves severely limited in their service management capabilities. A good schedule for upgrades and migration is critical to smoothing this process.

Choosing the right solution is also key in making iterative upgrades to the service desk. Some software platforms are built to meet a very specific set of requirements and cannot be upgraded without considerable customization and help from consultants. Others cannot be easily upgraded and instead need to be replaced. Smooth migration depends on deploying a service desk designed with flexibility and scalability in mind.

Selecting the right service desk to maximize value

A great deal of planning and research must go into any service desk purchasing decision. Following the five requirements of completing internal analysis, exploring best practices, understanding functional tiers, evaluating specialized modules and establishing a migration path can give companies

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the insight they need to identify the right solution for their needs.

Buying a solution that is too large and complex to manage effectively, or too limited to meet a company's needs can handcuff a business and prevent it from establishing efficient IT practices. A business that follows the right purchasing process however, can set itself on a path for innovation and long-term success.

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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