

5 of the Biggest Pain Points on the Service Desk



Presented by:





SUPPORT

In the [February 2018 HDI Toolkit](#) (PDF link), HDI discusses the results of their annual Practices & Salary Survey where they ask leaders in the service and support industries about the greatest challenges they faced in the previous year. Not surprisingly, the top issues companies reported were:

- 1 Managing increased workload with existing staff (“doing more with less”)**
- 2 Implementing new technologies**
- 3 Successfully implementing knowledge management**
- 4 Hiring, training and recruiting staff needed to succeed**
- 5 Increasing analyst/technician productivity and/or efficiency**

Let’s take a look at these issues one by one to see why they’re such a concern and what can be done to mitigate them.

Increased Workload

One of the biggest issues facing support and services of companies and departments is greater workload, especially in the context of being expected to do more with the same—or even less—staff.

There are a number of reasons why this is happening. In some cases, lingering concerns about the economy continue to cause some companies to be slow about hiring additional staff, and instead, they try to squeeze as much productivity out of their existing workforce as possible.

The ongoing evolution of the IT department has created challenges, and at the same time, the IT department has also become a major player in the decision-making process of companies large and small. As entire industries have become more tech-oriented, IT's role has become more elevated, beyond simply providing help and support. This, in turn, has strained the resources available for the traditional roles.

Another factor impacting the service desk workload is the increasingly complex ecosystem the service desk must support. In the age of *Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)*, the desktop computer is no longer the only technology employees use to do their work. A single employee may now be using a desktop, laptop, tablet, and smartphone to accomplish tasks, not to mention that employees may also take work with them on any combination of those devices. This increases the workload and creates additional stress for the service desk as staff attempt to offer support for a myriad of devices, while also working to implement security best practices on devices they may have little to no control over.

Whatever the cause, the result is often less-than-stellar support. In fact, [research](#) shows that support desks take “an average of 24.2 hours to provide a first response to an internal support ticket.”

Increased Workload:

The Solution

One way service desks can take back control of their workload is by implementing artificial intelligence (AI) into the workflow. Studies show that [50% of customers](#) want to be able to solve product and service issues themselves. In addition, [70% think](#) a company's website should offer a self-service application.

[AI can assist](#) by helping customers to quickly and efficiently find the information they need, escalate cases that are beyond self-service and aid support staff by directing customers to the right agent—all of this is based on previous experience with similar issues. In addition, AI can preemptively gather information the agent needs to be able to assist the customer.



New Technologies

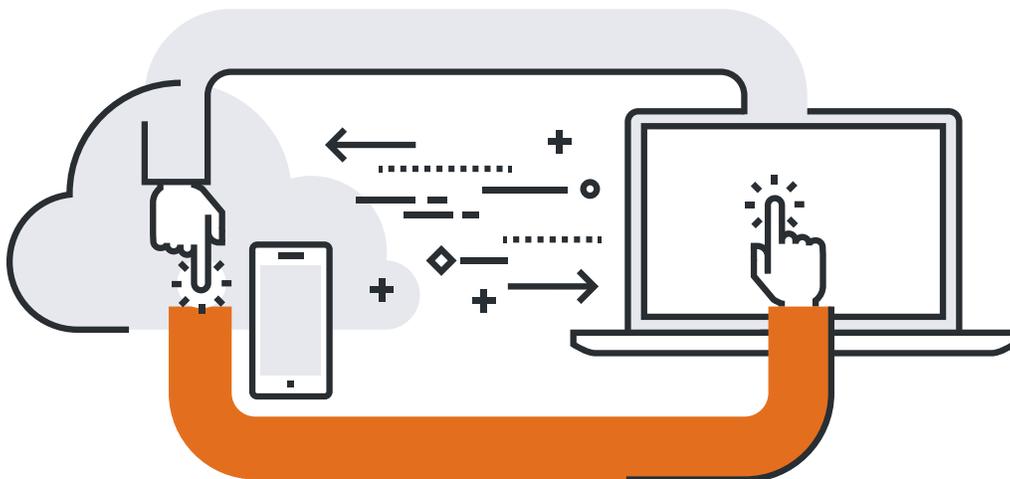
While IT and service desks may seem synonymous with technology, rolling out new technology can represent a challenge. All too often, decisions to implement new technology are made without fully vetting either the software or the problem the software is trying to solve.

In other words, many software purchases are made based on one or more problems companies think they are trying to solve, rather than what is *actually* happening. The result is often software that is less than ideal or, worse yet, the software creates even more issues.

New Technologies: The Solution

The simplest solution is to involve the individuals who have a birds-eye view of the problems being faced: the support desk. Support desk personnel help others solve and address problems day-in and day-out. This means they often have the best idea of exactly what is needed and—just as importantly—what isn't.

Similarly, involving the support desk early on has the added benefit of giving support personnel time to get up-to-speed on new software before a rollout, and that leads to smoother integration.



Knowledge Management

There's no doubt that we are currently in a knowledge-driven economy. More and more, companies' entire workforce is based on knowledge workers, a term first coined by Peter Drucker.

Unfortunately, however, while the workforce has become increasingly knowledge-based, companies often fail to properly catalog and exploit that knowledge. The urge to do things as fast as possible, poor communication between departments, a disparity in the tools being used and lack of education can all combine to create a corporate culture where the acquired knowledge of a company's workers is not properly gathered, recorded, cataloged and used. As a result, countless amounts of time and money is wasted reinventing the wheel as companies fail to learn from their own pasts.

Knowledge Management: The Solution

The first step in overcoming knowledge management issues is to implement a strategy that ensures that knowledge—no matter how small or repetitive—is recorded. This means deciding on a platform to use, designating personnel whose primary responsibilities revolve around knowledge management, as well as the methods by which knowledge will be gathered and stored.

This is another area where AI can help. As a company's knowledge-base continues to grow, it can quickly reach the point of being unwieldy. AI, in contrast, can do much of the legwork to catalog and search available data, providing personnel with the necessary information as quickly as possible.

Hiring Staff

For many companies, hiring qualified staff is an ongoing struggle. Often, the more skills the job demands, the harder it is to find qualified applicants. This can be especially challenging in competitive environments or regions where there are a large number of companies competing for a finite amount of qualified workers.

Further exacerbating the problem is the amount of cost incurred in filling positions. [The Center for American Progress](#) reports that, on average, replacing a worker costs as much as one-fifth of that worker's salary. That figure goes up for highly skilled workers, with it costing as much as 213% of a worker's salary to replace them.

Hiring Staff:

The Solution

There are a number of factors that can help companies deal with hiring issues. One of the most basic steps is to properly train and educate incoming hires, giving them what they need to succeed in their jobs. Few things will lead to job turnover more than frustration due to poor training or a feeling of being unable to succeed.

Similarly, many companies have had success hiring remote workers. A [study by Stanford University](#) demonstrates that remote workers have higher job satisfaction, leading to lower turnover among remote employees as a direct result. Remote workers can also cut costs as it gives a company the ability to hire employees from regions where the median pay for a given position may not be as high as where the company is based. Regardless of how a company chooses to address challenges, this is another area where knowledge—along with easy access to that knowledge—is vital to the successful integration and ongoing training of new hires.

Increasing Productivity

After analyzing the preceding four challenges highlighted in HDI's report, it's little wonder that the fifth challenge companies report is trying to increase the productivity of their staff.

With increased workloads, new technologies in play, and challenges hiring additional personnel, companies are looking to increase the productivity of the employees they already have, especially at the service desk.



Increasing Productivity:

The Solution

Just as this problem is a culmination of the preceding problems, so too is the solution. In order to get peak productivity out of service desk employees, they must be given the right tools and training to be able to do their job.

All too often, service desk personnel are expected to learn on the job, which means in addition to facing an increased workload, these employees are also expected to learn new skills as well as software and processes on-the-go. While this may work in some instances, in others it's a recipe for disaster, especially if service desk personnel haven't been given proper lead time on new technologies.

Similarly, having the right tools for service personnel to be able to do their job is essential; tools that are streamlined and efficient should be provided. This is another area where the introduction of AI can be a **valuable asset**; based on the AI's initial interaction with the customer, it can find and provide relevant information to customer service agents faster than they could find it manually.

The Future

Moving forward, there's no doubt that service desks will continue to face challenges, both internal and external. As the economy continues to emphasize knowledge, purveyors of that knowledge will continue to be in high demand—with high demands placed on them.

By providing the right tools and training, service desks can and will continue meeting the challenges they face. Read our guide, [Getting Started: 25 Requirements for a Service Desk Solution](#), to learn more.