



## HELP DESK

### Introduction

As you transform to a proactive service desk, beware of the seven deadly sins that historically plagued help desks, making it difficult to break free from firefighting:

- Growing call volumes
- Increased training costs
- Increased call escalations
- Duplicate effort
- Inconsistent responses
- Long resolution times
- Lost expertise

To provide a more proactive mode of service delivery and support, you must avoid committing these sins with your service desk. Volume II of this five-part series explores these seven deadly sins and reveals how they can be avoided or neutralized with an integrated centralized knowledgebase.

### Growing Call Volumes

A primary cause of growing call volumes is the inability to leverage an existing solution to a repeated problem. Look for a knowledgebase that enables technicians to quickly capture a new solution in a knowledge article with an easy-to-use template, when a new problem is diagnosed and resolved. This will lower the burden of populating the knowledgebase and ensure the new solution is immediately available to others. Additionally, the knowledgebase should simplify the process of finding solutions. For example, technicians should only be required to type a few symptomatic words to obtain a list of best solutions.

In the spirit of being proactive, the knowledgebase should automatically alert technicians and managers of problems that are being encountered repeatedly by generating a categorized top-ten list of solutions. This ensures technicians are forewarned and well prepared should they encounter one of the recurring problems. Additionally, look for a knowledgebase that flags recurring problem knowledge articles and permits managers to seamlessly publish articles to a self-serve website, enabling customers to access answers directly. This yields a dual benefit of reducing call volume and increasing customer satisfaction.

### Increased Training Costs

In today's world, the only constant is change. Your technicians are under tremendous pressure to stay current on new products, new problems, and new solutions. Add employee turnover to the mix and your training costs can quickly skyrocket. The goal is to reduce time spent in training and increase technician confidence and competence with customers over the phone.

A centralized knowledgebase reduces new product training time for inexperienced and seasoned technicians by eliminating the need to memorize information and search multiple sources for answers. The knowledgebase delivers a single source of authoritative solutions at the technicians' fingertips and makes it simple—even for rookies—to find the best answers. To help rookies ramp up, look for a knowledgebase that generates top-ten lists of hot issues. This will focus new technicians to understand problems they are likely to encounter, which increases training retention and proficiency in responding to customers. The knowledgebase can also reduce the service desk and company jargon learning curve, which is often a barrier to efficiently finding answers, if it enables knowledge administrators to define acronyms and other environment-specific terms in a customizable thesaurus. This way, a new technician's search for knowledge articles containing "desktop" will have the same result as a veteran's search using the shorthand, "PC."

## HELP DESK

### Increased Call Escalations

Incident escalations are expensive. According to the Help Desk Institute an incident escalated from the self-serve site to a front-line technician can increase your costs from \$2.00 to \$25.00. If the front-line technician further escalates the call to a second-level resource, the cost can ratchet up to \$80.00. There are also informal escalations that take place, which are more difficult to quantify, but increase your costs nonetheless.

To decrease call escalations, you need to increase the likelihood that self-serve customers and front-line technicians can find the right answers to their problems without assistance. Therefore you must make it drop-dead simple for technicians to add new knowledge, and for all users to find answers. Again, look for a knowledgebase that provides input templates so technicians can quickly author and submit new solutions. Also, consider making top-ten lists available to customers via the self-serve website. This will go a long way toward helping customers resolve their own issues and reducing escalations.

### Duplicate Effort

Redundant effort is a waste of resources and a source of frustration for second- and third-level technicians who would prefer to tackle unique, challenging problems and work toward becoming more proactive rather than enduring the constant grind of firefighting.

Look for a solution that can streamline the knowledge article review process so that proposed resolutions can be verified, approved and made directly available to technicians and self-serve users. This way, front-line technicians don't spend time researching resolutions that have been previously identified by others. The goal is to document once and reuse often.

More importantly, if the knowledgebase can flag recurring issues, the information can be leveraged to initiate permanent solutions, helping you move to a more proactive mode of business service delivery.

### Inconsistent Response

Delivering inconsistent or inaccurate responses to customers undermines technician and service desk credibility. It can cause users to bypass established processes and directly contact technicians they have successfully worked with in the past.

A centralized knowledgebase can help build credibility by providing access to consistent answers, as long the information remains current and accurate. Look for a solution that combines reporting and workflow capabilities so knowledge administrators can painlessly identify and promote useful knowledge and purge outdated or underused information.

### Long Resolution Time

While there are many factors that can exacerbate resolution time—problem severity, call queues, lack of centralized knowledge—the resulting perception is the same: poor service.

As discussed earlier, consider providing customers with direct access to a subset of the knowledgebase. This will reduce resolution time and increase satisfaction by allowing customers to efficiently find their own answers. Internally, if an answer does not exist in the knowledgebase, coach technicians to stop surveying their peers for anyone that has "heard of this one," and immediately initiate troubleshooting or escalation to a subject matter expert.

## HELP DESK

### Lost Expertise

High turnover is a service desk reality. Yet you can minimize the negative impact by ensuring that when seasoned technicians leave, their valuable knowledge remains. This will require a culture that values knowledge sharing, as well as a centralized knowledgebase that captures information.

Look for a solution with robust reporting that can identify the best knowledge contributors by quantity and quality. This will make it possible for managers to create incentives that encourage team members share information, which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all service desk technicians.

Classic help desks were plagued by the lack of centralized knowledge, which became the source of many sins. As you transform from a reactive help desk, pay heed to these past transgressions and include a centralized knowledgebase as part of your proactive service desk solution to help ensure these seven deadly sins are not repeated.

Next, Volume III: “Transforming From Help Desk to Service Desk: Volume III: Essential Process Automation Capabilities,” coming soon.

