



MODERNIZING THE FEDERAL SERVICE DESK

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INTRO

Service Desks must transition themselves in order to stay relevant and accommodate and integrate new technologies and trends in IT Service Management (ITSM).

Technology is constantly changing, and with it are customer IT support needs. The rise of new technologies, methodologies, and service structures are forcing companies to rethink their approach to Federal IT support. Emerging technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence (AI), Software and Platform as a Service (SaaS/PaaS), coupled with the increased digital literacy of the Millennial and Gen Z generations are leading the charge to “shift-left”.

Shift-Left is a strategy to drive common Help Desk issues towards lower tiers through knowledge sharing, IT modernization, and refining customer experience.

Customer expectations are high given the maturity of commercial technologies so companies must bring this same level of ease to the customer experience in the Federal Government.

A password reset that would previously require a call to the Service Desk can now be performed by users themselves through web-based service portals and involve no human interaction. AI Chat Bots powered by massive knowledge databases can solve problems that previously required troubleshooting from a service technician. Applications and IT infrastructure that were previously built, hosted and maintained on-premises have been shifted off-prem to the cloud with the emergence of SaaS and PaaS. BYOD moves issuance and management of mobile devices to users; currently, over 70 percent of organizations have some sort of BYOD policy in place. Furthermore, access to user support portals and knowledge bases offer a tempting alternative to waiting on-hold or checking your email to see if a technician has responded to your inquiry.

Service Desks must transition themselves in order to stay relevant and accommodate and integrate new technologies and trends in IT Service Management (ITSM). How does a Service Desk accomplish that task within the constraints of the federal market that still relies on the prescriptive tiered model of IT support? They should seek to blend these tiers as much as is feasible while still maintaining a structured environment. This blending of tiered roles is referred to as the swarming support method that allows all members of a service desk, regardless of tier, to assist. This nimble, “swarm-like” model of IT support which has proven successful in large commercial organizations and data centers may be the solution.

FOCUS ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

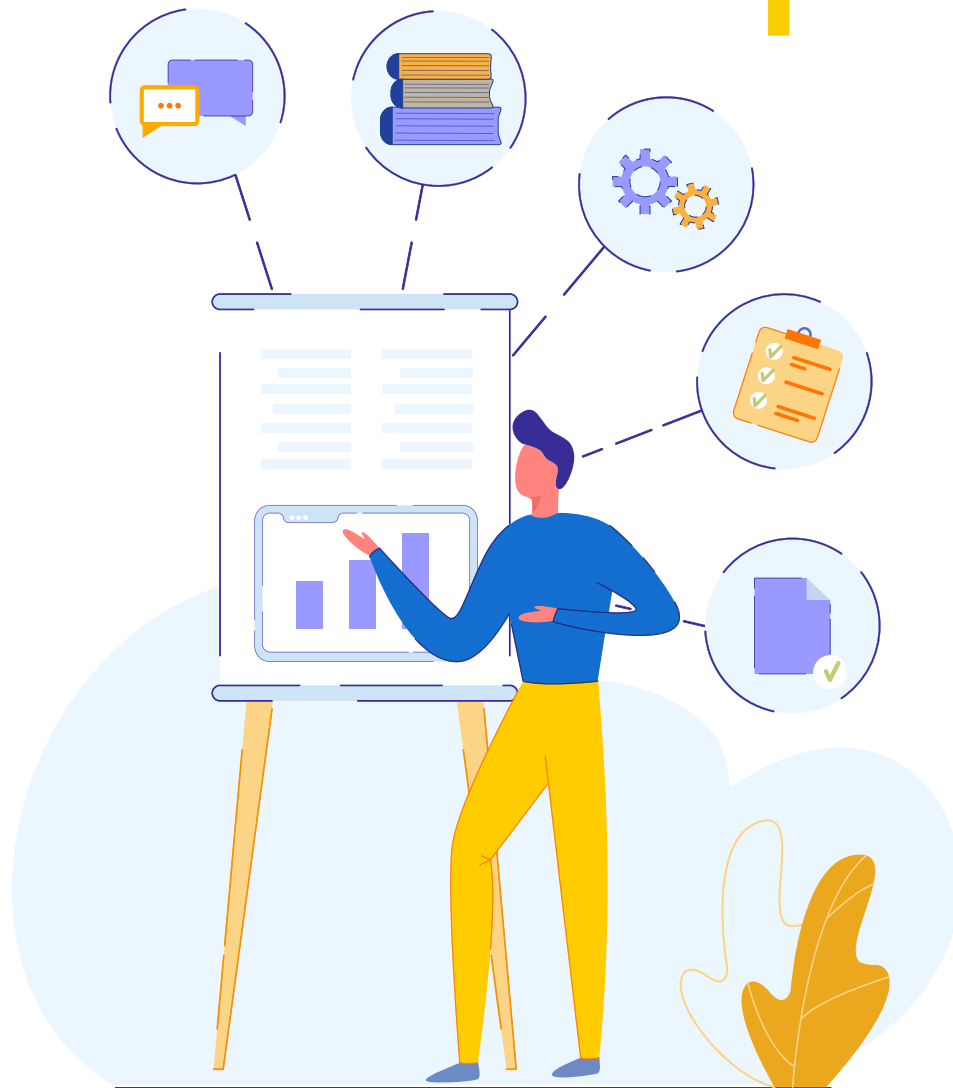


CROSS TRAIN STAFF

Cross training better leverages everyone's time and increases the skillsets of the whole team leading to a powerhouse of a Service Desk!

Tier 1 Service Desk technicians can spend up to 80 percent of their time resolving tickets related to account lockouts and password resets, but that number is quickly dropping due to the growing adoption of user self-service portals, which leads to more Tier 1 downtime. To ensure they are getting the most efficient use of their workforce, organizations should cross-train their staff so they can shift resources whenever necessary. For example, during times of low call volume, newer technicians can work with those more experienced and take more traditional roles when volume is high. Over time, this more evenly distributes the workload and results in a more agile, versatile, and collaborative Service Desk staff while also maintaining the traditional three-tiered IT support structure required by most Federal customers.

This same thinking can be applied with Tier 2 and 3. Smaller organizations with more meager budgets could even consolidate



Tier 1 and 2 roles to help reduce costs and leverage self-service technology to offset the smaller IT staff. Cross training better leverages everyone's time and increases the skillsets of the whole team leading to a powerhouse of a Service Desk!

The swarm model is gradually being adopted in the private sector by large corporations such as Cisco Systems and BMC with great success and is being touted as the long-awaited placement for tiered support. This success will assuredly trickle down to the Federal market so IT organizations can better position themselves by embracing this methodology sooner rather than later.

ADAPT TO NEW ROLES

EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Support Technicians are able to offer insight into what new technologies and processes a business should adopt in order to accomplish their mission and goals.

The key to successful IT support has historically required technicians to have a broad but shallow knowledge base. With the changing IT landscape, deeper and more specialized skills and knowledge are in increasingly higher demand.

Technicians are in a uniquely advantageous position to deepen their expertise by leveraging their existing skills and relationships. Having already established

relationships with the organization and its users, they are able to offer insight into what new technologies and processes a business should adopt in order to accomplish their mission and goals.

Embracing new technologies in areas such as cloud computing, AI, Cyber Security and blockchain also present hurdles for end users who must learn how to use them. Fortunately, support technicians are well-positioned to move into a training role to help facilitate this and ensure a smooth transition for the users. Taking these steps will further develop the Service Desk's relationship with the customer and make it a vital part of the organization and its overall success.



IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Some organizations have gone as far as implementing Experience Level Agreements (XLAs) in addition to or in lieu of their SLAs. The logic behind this is that making the customer happy and improving their experience is more important than meeting a metric outlined in an SLA. The organization sees itself as part of the customer journey and its main focus is interacting and collaborating with the customer to ensure their needs are met and that they are happy.

Implementing Experience Level Agreements (XLAs) in addition to or in lieu of SLAs allows organizations to improve upon and ensure the customer experience.

Meeting your Service Level Agreements (SLAs) is all well and good, but that doesn't mean that the customer always walks away happy. Sure, a ticket might have been successfully resolved, but perhaps it took hours on the phone to fix. In addition to implementing the latest tools and processes in ITSM, it has never been more important for companies to focus on customer satisfaction and the customer experience (CX).

A key to measuring a customer's happiness is feedback. It is very important to get customer feedback and even more important to ensure that the timing is right when requesting that feedback. For example, it wouldn't be helpful to ask the customer to complete a survey after a service call when their ticket is still pending in the system. Instead, the survey should be requested at the most important point of the interaction with the customer, which would be when their problem has been resolved.

Furthermore, the customer should be given flexible options to provide their feedback. That way, they do not feel pressured and can submit their feedback on their own time. Over time, customer feedback can be used to compile CX metrics that help organizations identify the factors most important to their customer, the optimal level of customer engagement, and ultimately lead to a better overall experience for both company and customer.



GO BEYOND YOUR SLAs

Compile CX metrics that help your organization identify the factors most important to your customer, using these to create optimal solutions for customer engagement, and ultimately lead to a better overall experience for both your organization and your customer.



CONCLUSION

Don't fear change!

It is vital for organizations to embrace new ideas, technologies and methodologies in the Federal IT Service Industry. If you become stagnant the market will pass you by. By blending Service Desk roles,

adopting new roles, and implementing CX-based policies and metrics, a company can turn itself in a more streamlined and agile unit that can easily adapt to an ever-changing marketplace. ■