

Proactive problem-solving in the **GLOBAL SERVICE DESK**

For many global organisations the service desk is the place to call when problems arise with IT. But as Fujitsu's Mick Lait reveals, talking to frustrated IT users is only the tip of the iceberg for the average service desk employee.

A good service desk focuses on continuous improvement, with sophisticated demand analysis that allows them to get to the bottom of the problems and work out ways to resolve them all at once.

When an IT problem is uncovered in a small or medium-sized business, there will typically be somebody internally who can take a look. As organisations expand – and particularly when there is a global dimension – personal support of this nature becomes hugely expensive, extremely impractical and also inconsistent across geographical boundaries.

It is here that the global service desk comes into its own, with reliable support provided for staff in a variety of locations around the world. Fujitsu's service desk in Lisbon, for example, provides wide-ranging support to 40,000 users in 106 countries, with staff speaking 12 different languages. So whether there's a problem with a desktop, printer or network – and whether the end user speaks English, French, Spanish or Danish – there is the expertise within the service desk to resolve the problem quickly and effectively.

Real insight

When the service desk is functioning well, the support will be so seamless that end users may not even realise they are speaking to an outsourced service provider.

“Staff within a global service desk should fully understand the organisations they represent. This is crucial if they are to offer tailored support,” says Mick Lait, Fujitsu's Head of Lisbon Global Delivery Centre.

“Beyond this, they should also understand their customers' customers,” Lait continues. *“Imagine, for example, a call comes in from a retailer with a broken till. The person who takes the call should have a real understanding of the impact this broken till could have on the business, whether it's longer queues or falling revenues.”*

To deliver a truly valuable service, employees also need to be proactive in their approach, according to Lait. *“It is important to empower and encourage staff to make changes to the services they take calls on each day. The people answering the phone are the real experts – they are the ones with the knowledge and experience – and it is important to fully exploit this potential,”* he says.

The benefits for the end user are clear, with quicker incident resolution, reduced downtime and the assurance of insightful support that only improves with time.

Continuous improvement

The suggestion, it seems, is that a world-class service desk must do much more than simply answer calls. Inevitably, staff will spend a good proportion of their time on the phone, but it is actually the analysis of these calls that offers the real value.

“In general, the people working on service desks do not spend 100% of their time on calls. This is the nature of the business,” Lait observes. “But a good service desk will not spend the rest of their time waiting for the phone to ring. They use this time to seek continuous improvement, with sophisticated demand analysis that allows them to get to the bottom of the problems and work out ways to resolve them once and for all.”

For instance, a global service desk may receive a spate of calls about one particular IT area. By examining the calls it may become evident that a simple network failure was to blame. On the other hand, the demand analysis may reveal an underlying problem with a piece of software. Either way, it is only by carefully scrutinising the calls and looking for patterns that real progress can be made, as part of a culture of continuous improvement.

The benefits for the end user are clear, with quicker incident resolution, reduced downtime and the assurance of insightful support that only improves with time. According to Lait, empowering service desk staff in this way is also great for staff retention.

“At the Lisbon service desk, we pride ourselves on low attrition rates,” he says. “Because of the faith we put in our staff to be at the heart of service improvement, they know they are directly responsible for the improved service levels that their customers enjoy. Job satisfaction is therefore high and staff turnover is low, which has the added bonus of keeping our services consistent and reducing the amount of time and money devoted to induction training.”

Running a global service desk capable of supporting a cross-section of industries in a multitude of languages seems like an almost impossible proposition. But with the dedication of talented staff and a commitment to continuous improvement, the results can be truly world-class. ■

WHAT NEXT?

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