TechExcel | White Paper

ServiceWise Self-Service
Benefits Revealed
How offering a self-service portal benefits the Service Desk

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Introduction

IT organizations continue to face tight budgets and headcount restrictions that threaten to reduce the quality of service. This is taking place while IT's role is being expanded to be the single point of contact for both IT and non-IT related issues. In addition, the credibility of the IT help desk is based on key metrics that are often affected by lack of adequate resources. Metrics include first call resolution, call handle time, escalation rates and average time in the queue. These metrics are used as gauges to determine the end-user's or customer's level of satisfaction and the support team's success.

Too often, service desks are plagued by the lack of a centralized, accessible knowledge base, requiring support agents to escalate calls, consult colleagues or struggle through complex key word searches to find answers - ultimately producing negative support metrics. Today's companies have discovered knowledge management as a solution to improve the productivity and efficiency of thier service desk teams.   But using the service desk solution alone can be considered reactionary - your teams must wait for the phone to ring or an e-mail to arrive before the end-user or customer can receive a resolution to his or her problem. The next step in improving support - both quality and cost - is to provide access to this support knowledge directly to the end-users or customers. This will enable them to proactively answer their own issues and easily escalate to a support team member if necessary.

Self-Service: A Necessity

Self-service is important in many industries - from your local ATM machine to online banking - people often prefer to find a solution or complete a task without assistance. Companies are providing self-service options on their corporate web sites so customers can solve their own product and service issues. For many of the same reasons, IT service desks are discovering Web self-service. Escalating employee expectations have resulted in increasing demands on the service desk. Plus, companies have more complex IT infrastructures than ever before - complex networks, multiple integrations, a plethora of applications running in global environments - creating more opportunities for end-users to contact support. These new

levels of support drive hiring increases in the help desk, and come with escalating expense. Even if these higher costs were acceptable, they are not a long-term solution. You can't buy your way out of your IT support burden by increasing your support staff.

As support management knows, most queries are similar in nature and often inefficiently satisfied. Does someone really need a live person - the most expensive method of support - to explain how to reset a network password? Of course not. Nor does an employee want to wait in a queue for 15 minutes to get an answer. Gartner estimates password reset costs range from $51 (best case) to $147 (worst case) per incident for the labor alone. So, the inflection point is providing this type of support via a channel that is most convenient for the end-user or customer - 24 x 7 web self-service.

What About Knowledge?

It's not enough to put the information on your intranet and ask your end-users to go find it. You need to make the information timely, accurate, easy to find, and in the format that most end-users want. To do this, you need to knowledge-enable your self-service portal. You may or may not have already provided knowledge to your teams in the service desk. Knowledge should be accessible through dynamics FAQs that are updated with the most requested information, and a knowledge-base search. The knowledgebase should include a ranking system to ensure that the most relevant information is easily accessible. Just imagine if there was a problem with your department's network printer and everyone on your team called the IT service desk with the same issue. The support team member would have to research and fin the solution once and then convey it to every caller that experienced the problem throughout the day. Is that an efficient process? Use the self-service portal to post warnings and outages to end-users. Overtime this will reduce the call volume associated with duplicate issues. The win-win here is that end-users are more productive and satisfied, you've reduced your support expenses, and the knowledge-enabled self-service solution remains a centralized point of contact. The more a self-service tool is used the lower the transaction cost to you.

How Self-Service Affects Costs

Let's look at a hypothetical service desk to get a feel for the magnitude of the types of savings, which can be obtained via self-service call deflection to the web. We will need to make a few assumptions for example purposes:

- First, let's assume that due to the nature of our business we can only offset 10% of our monthly call and e-mail volumes to self-service.
- Second, we need to assume that 10% of our end-users are willing and able to use our knowledge-enabled self-service portal.

Figure A shows how our example service desk can recognize $74,000 in savings per month by diverting just 10% of its monthly call and e-mail volume to online self-service.

In **Figure B** we take a look at how incremental increases in our end-user base using self-service affects our support costs. In this scenario a 15% call deflection rate delivers even greater savings - nearly $120,000 per month.

Cost/call	$15		
Cost/e-mail	$ 5		
Cost/online query	$ 1		
Current Scenario:			
Monthly contacts:			
Calls	50,000	$15	$750,000
E-mails	10,000	$ 5	$ 50,000
Monthly contact support cost			**$800,000**
Self-Service Scenario: 10% call avoidance			
Monthly Contacts:			
Calls	45,000	$15	$675,000
E-mails	9,000	$ 5	$ 45,000
Online self-service	6,000	$ 1	$ 6,000
Monthly contact support cost			**$726,000**
Monthly Savings from self-service			**$ 74,000**

figure A

Cost/call	$15		
Cost/e-mail	$ 5		
Cost/online query	$ 1		
Current Scenario:			
Monthly contacts:			
Calls	50,000	$15	$750,000
E-mails	10,000	$ 5	$ 50,000
Monthly contact support cost			**$800,000**
Self-Service Scenario: 15% call avoidance			
Monthly Contacts:			
Calls	42,500	$15	$637,500
E-mails	7,500	$ 5	$ 37,500
Online self-service	10,000	$ 1	$ 10,000
Monthly contact support cost			**$681,000**
Monthly Savings from self-service			**$ 119,000**

figure B

The Bottom Line

As you can see from the examples, the return on investment (ROI) from knowledge-enabled self-service can be significant. As we all know, every support situation is different, and the amount of savings and percentage of calls that can be avoided will vary. Often we find that the cost of providing support, per call, is much higher than we estimate here. In fact, industry experts have reported the cost of a single technical support call to be as much as $45, making the potential for savings even higher.

Of course there is no free lunch...there are many other factors to consider such as the initial investment in self-service functionality and knowledge-enabling your organization. It's important to recognize that investing in self-service will only lead to an increase in cost reduction if it is given proper set-up and maintenance.

Will Self-Service Drive More Complex Calls to the Service Desk?

In many cases, effective knowledge-enabled self-service does change the mix of inbound calls. This is a desirable phenomenon. You want to support your end-users in the most efficient and economical way possible. This dictates that you use the appropriate resources for the given issue. Basic questions can be quickly and easily solved through self-service, which is the optimal media to handle these "Tier 0" questions. If we re-use our assumptions from earlier (cost per call = $15, cost per online query = $1), then it is easy to see what the most efficient channel is for this type of question. You still have to pay your support teams - don't you want them working on the more demanding problems and issues? Team members that are utilized for complex and demanding issues are often more satisifed in their careers and are less likely to jump from job to job.

What cost savings are ServiceWise Customers Realizing?

The costs of implementing a robust knowledge-enabled self-service application on the web are real, but so are the returns that organizations are realizing from making the investment. ServiceWise is helping service desks, call centers and enterprises implement and maintain self-service for their end-users and customers. Most ServiceWise customers are reaching a break-even in 10-12 months. Of course some clients may take longer to achieve ROI, but with increasing frequency many are realizing break-even points in just a few months. The companies experiencing rapid ROI are doing so as a result of being able to roll their knowledgebase out to their end-users. These organizations are moving significant portions of their incoming queries to self-service and it is paying off substantially. Realizing benefits from self-service doesn't stop at the break-even point. You can expect self-service to continue to yield positive returns in future years. Self-service is also allowing companies to handle growth, while minimizing the need to grow the size of the support staff. The ServiceWise self-service portal can help save additional money by assisting support team members during service calls by reducing training time, preserving corporate knowledge as turnover occurs, and shrinking the time it takes to answer both simple and complex questions.

In Closing

Today's support environment is demanding, talent is hard to find and retain, and end-users/customers continue to demand answers - faster, better and cheaper. Online knowledge-enabled self-service is a proven way to help manage these demands. TechExcel's applications are helping companies deal with the challenging taks of service and support. You can increase your service levels, improve customer satisfaction, and quickly begin recognizing a compelling return on investment. To find our exactly how TechExcel's products and services can benefit your service desk, or to request more information, contact TechExcel:

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