

Having just a service desk is not service management

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Information Technology (IT) has become an essential component of practically every business today, underpinning the basic functioning of the enterprise.



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As such, providing effective IT services is critical to the efficiency and profitability of the enterprise. IT Service Management (ITSM) offers the best practice tools and processes necessary for improving the delivery of IT services; however a common mistake enterprises make is regarding the service desk alone as the 'silver bullet' to deliver the required level of ITSM and improved service delivery. A service desk is one function of ITSM and is a useful first step along any service improvement journey.

ITSM focuses on a combination of people, process and technology in order to provision quality IT services. This assists organisations to develop better relationships with customers of IT, whether internal or external, and provides the foundation for improved operations and productivity. While the service desk is important, it does not equate to service management, nor is it able to deliver any significant improvements to performance, efficiency or service delivery in isolation. The service desk is simply a centralised point of contact for the submission of incidents and requests for service. In order for this function to deliver value it must be supported by process management and intelligence that is able to analyse the information generated to derive insights that will drive continual service improvement.

Not one-off implementation

In addition, another common challenge organisations face is the misconception that ITSM is a one-off implementation, a problem that can be solved with the installation of tools and technology. However, the reality is that ITSM is a journey of constant learning and improvement, and leveraging ITSM using best practice frameworks, such as ITIL, has a number of benefits. These include reduced business risk, reduced costs, optimised resource utilisation, increased reliability of IT infrastructure and services and improved customer service. ITSM also assists organisations to improve the business value of IT by means of improved risk management and the ability to identify business challenges and utilise IT to provide solutions.

The service desk is an important component of this ability, as this is where incidents are managed, and process owners should rely on the information gathered at the service desk to understand where the quality of processes needs to be improved. However, in many instances, the emphasis is in the wrong place. The focus of ITSM should not be on the service desk, but on business processes and how information from the service desk can be used to enhance and improve these processes. There is a significant amount of value that can be derived from the analysis of this data, and only once processes are monitored and measured can they be improved upon. Data - such as the type of incidents, their underlying causes, what was done to resolve them, what should be done to prevent them from occurring, service improvement metrics, how many queries were closed within agreed times and so on - is valuable data that can be used to identify failures or

points of improvement within processes.

Identify the root cause of the problem

If the information regarding incidents and issues remains at the service desk its value is never harnessed, and service improvement becomes challenging. For example, a service desk may begin to receive increasing volumes of incidents about a specific area of the IT department. Rather than remaining reactive in firefighting mode, the information gathered at the service desk can be used to identify the root cause of the problem. Converting data into information and applying intelligence to information, knowledge is gained for corrective actions. By resolving the underlying cause, service can be improved, which will decrease the number of incidents.

Remaining competitive in a challenging environment requires organisations to adapt in order to remain relevant, and become better, faster, and more cost effective and so on. This agility can only be achieved through continual service improvement, which is the foundation of a healthy productive business. While a service desk forms an essential component of an organisation's ITSM efforts, in isolation it will not enable organisations to fully achieve their service management and continual service improvement aims. In the current economic climate, organisations are all under increasing financial pressure and, as such, service reliability and customer satisfaction are essential. By leveraging the power of ITSM, organisations are able to turn a reactive approach into a proactive one, for enhanced efficiency and continual service and business improvement.

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