ManageEngine
ServiceDesk *Plus*

Delivering the
IT Service Desk
of Tomorrow*

*While Working within the Realities of Today's Constraints

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The Changing Role of IT Support

IT support is critical to the success of any organization, and the IT service desk has been the customer-facing image of IT for years. It has offered a single point of contact for departments and end users alike for all IT-related issues. Yet the role of the IT organization itself is changing. Once it was a driver of cost efficiency; today there is pressure for IT to become a technology enabler, aligning itself with business goals and aiding revenue growth. This evolution is full of challenges:

•Increasing demands and expectations from end users have contributed to the increasing complexity of IT systems.

•New technologies and application improvements have resulted in ubiquitous networks and multiple service delivery platforms.

•Organizations have expanded their operations to new locations and new time zones; the workforce itself has become more mobile and untethered.

Striving to deliver strong customer-oriented support in the face of an increasing influx of support calls, IT teams are adopting an "anytime, anywhere" approach, because that is the approach that the business offices are now taking.

Nowhere is the pressure to deliver a rapid response greater than the IT service desk. Yet there are other pressures in the system that make it very difficult for an IT help desk to deliver the kind of proactive services that organizations want. IT help desk budgets took deep cuts during the recent recession, and they continue to be managed tightly. IT help desk managers now face the challenge of responding to a demand for increased commitment to service delivery and a demand to do more with fewer people and smaller budgets.

That combination of pressures is pushing technician productivity and cost efficiency back into the spotlight again. IT managers need an effective service desk solution that can support a rapidly changing business climate, one that offers:

•Flexibility to scale up and down rapidly in response to business needs

•Little or no maintenance and administrative overhead

•Anytime, anywhere access by both technicians and users

And, they need to deliver this service without large CAPEX and OPEX investments or the inflexibility of long-term contracts.

The Need to Break with Tradition

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While the traditional install-and-deploy service desk model has worked for many years, the on-premise infrastructure required to support it often involves large capital investments, lengthy deployment cycles, and resource-intensive maintenance. Proving both initial and ongoing ROI has been a challenge. Let us examine these matters in more detail:

Traditional service desk deployments require heavy investments in infrastructure
The traditional service desk requires an integrated, secure, and reliable IT infrastructure, including multiple versions of management, messaging, and security server technologies. Installing and configuring servers, managing vital business information with network data backups, and maintaining the data center itself pose additional burdens.

Traditional service desk deployments come with maintenance and upgrade hassles
The complexity of the service desk system can mean that that an IT organization must devote a measurable portion of its resources and time to monitoring and managing the service desk infrastructure itself, which drives up costs and reduces time to market. There is hardware to manage and maintain, software to back-up and patch. Technicians must be on-board around the clock to ensure business continuity. And then there are the complexities of upgrades: Large product upgrades can result in a significant portion of the technicians' time being spent on troubleshooting issues. These requirements conspire to reduce the amount of time an IT team has to support users, to say nothing of the time they have to devote to strategic planning and development.

Traditional service desk deployments cannot fully support users anytime and anywhere
With organizations increasingly having a diverse user base and a distributed work force, a traditional on-premise IT support center infrastructure can become a significant constraint. If the infrastructure is too inflexible to enable help desk technicians to provide anytime, anywhere support, service delivery and user satisfaction decline. Important metrics on timeliness of response and resolution could take a hit. To support a mobile work force, an IT help desk team requires a help desk application that enables full service delivery at any time and from anyplace, without worries about VPN connectivity and the like.

Traditional service desk deployments and do not permit optimal use of resources
An IT service desk needs to be agile to meet the changing needs of business. Scaling up or down should be easy and should not involve cumbersome billing, operations, or support issues. With a traditional on-premise service desk infrastructure, though, cumbersome issues are the norm. Scalability may require the acquisition of new license files (not to mention hardware), which must be installed and maintained, and this may not be the fastest or easiest way to ensure that IT support keeps pace with business expansion. Moreover, as businesses go through different periods of expansion and contraction, there may be times when scaling down makes sense. In a traditional model of IT service delivery, though, such a contraction may

leave hardware and technician resources unused, wasting resources and expertise.

Traditional service desks seldom offer flexible pricing options

Traditional service desk software products often require an organization to pay for more than it actually uses. Help desk software providers that develop exclusively for on-premise deployments often take a one-size-fits-all approach. Companies using these products are locked into user licenses with long term contracts, huge up-front payments, and massive annual application license fees.

Traditional helpdesk software models do not provide power and control to customers

Traditional software licensing models can lock up an IT organization for years. If an organization is dissatisfied, it may be unable to switch vendors easily or without incurring substantial switching and migration costs.

A New Approach: On-Demand IT Service Desks

Since IT service desk applications became widely available almost two decades ago, we have seen functionality evolve, processes mature, and integration capabilities advance. For most of this period, the underlying model of on-premise service desk deployment remained unchanged.

Recently, though, the *software-as-a-service* (SaaS) delivery model has begun to offer help desk managers a viable alternative to the traditional on-premise model. In the SaaS delivery model, help desk software is hosted externally and delivered as a service to customers over the Internet. Customers can

sign up for an account and access the IT help desk through a browser.

Gartner, in a publication titled 'The IT Service Desk Market Is Ready for SaaS' (ID Number: G0016652)noted in 2009 that the IT service desk market was a prime candidate for significant growth in SaaS deployments and revenue—projecting that SaaS deployments of IT help desk services would account for 10% of the help desk market by 2012. "If you're evaluating new solutions," Gartner's analysts went on to advise, "then consider SaaS IT service desk tools as a viable alternative to traditional on-premise models."

The SaaS delivery model offers a variety of advantages over the traditional on-premise model:

- SaaS applications require minimal capital investment.
- They can be deployed and scaled on-demand and they require less intensive management.
- The initial ROI can be demonstrated easily, and the total cost of ownership (TCO) is very low.

These advantages are prompting IT managers to turn to SaaS solutions not just for help desk management but also for a wide range of other IT management functions.

Let us look at these advantages in more detail:

On-demand service desks require minimal up-front investments

With an on-demand service desk, up-front CAPEX costs are minimal. The solutions are

hosted by a vendor, on infrastructure residing in one or more secure data centers, so the organization subscribing to the service does not have to invest in servers, software licenses, and so forth. Acquiring access to the help desk service is a matter of subscribing to the service and accessing the application through a browser.

On-demand service desks can be up and running almost immediately

Without the need to provision hardware or install software on-premise, IT departments can effectively deploy an operational service desk in very little time. The service desk application can be configured to match the business process workflows of the organization. The administrator then sends out email invites to technicians and users in the organization to sign up for the service, much as it is done for services such as Gmail. All this can be done in a matter of days, effectively reducing time-to-service delivery and effectively delivering a rapid return on investment.

On-demand service desks are maintenance-free and reduce support costs

In addition to the elimination of the major up-front CAPEX, IT organizations subscribing to a SaaS help desk offering need not hire or train technicians to maintain the help desk infrastructure or worry about managing software updates or upgrades. Day-to-day maintenance of both the hardware and the software is the responsibility of the hosted service provider, as are operating system patches, application updates, and upgrades. Subscribers can always take advantage of the latest version of the ITSM product without having to manage the upgrades themselves, ensuring that personnel in the IT organization

can focus on delivering services to the organization rather than having to service the underlying help desk infrastructure.

On-demand service desks accelerate response times and offer wider coverage of support

The on-demand help desk can be accessed from any place that has Internet connectivity. Technicians can offer 24X7 support via phone call, remote access, and more. On-demand help desk software that offers social features such as integrated chat and screen-sharing can helps technicians get to the bottom of issues and solve problems quickly from any location. This can reduce the time it takes to respond to a user request as well as the average time to resolve an incident, both of which can reduce the cost of a service call while improving customer satisfaction.

On-demand service desks maximize the optimal use of resources

Organizations relying on hosted infrastructure and services can scale their use of services up—and down—in response to rapidly changing business demands just by clicking a button. Because the service provider owns and maintains the infrastructure, the organization subscribing to the service avoids the costs of underutilizing hardware as demands change.

On-demand service desks offer flexible pay-as-you-go pricing

On-demand service desk pricing models are based on the number of technicians and/or users accessing the system, effectively enabling an organization to pay only for the services they use. The pricing is usually "per technician" and the term of a subscription contract could be annual, quarterly, or even monthly, depending on the customer's

preference. Even if the anticipated usage is overestimated, IT service desk managers may have the flexibility to alter payment options and pay only for active users. Costs become predictable and the risk of budget over-runs is minimized.

On-demand service desks reduce the risk of vendor lock-in

SaaS service desks are typically offered on a subscription basis. If an organization is not satisfied with the service desk offering, it can cancel the subscription and switch to another SaaS vendor. Comparatively, switching out on-premise help desk offerings is a much costlier and more complex undertaking than switching between hosted help desk offerings.

What to Look for in an On-Demand IT Service Desk Provider

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Finding the right on-demand service desk vendor involves due diligence. It organizations should consider the following points:

Vendor Reputation

Verify that the SaaS vendor has a proven record for delivering a hosted IT service desk offering. Only an established vendor can offer a reliable infrastructure that can scale to accommodate spikes and steady growth.

Completeness of Solution

Verify that the IT service desk solution offered on-demand includes all the functionality required for complete end-to-end IT service desk operations, including:

- Automated ticket management

- Multi-channel support
- Self-service portal
- Knowledge management
- Service level management
- Asset management
- Incident management
- Problem management
- Change management
- Release management
- Real time reports and dashboards

Ease of Implementation

Verify that you can sign up, create user accounts, configure the application to suit your organization's workflows, and be up and running quickly. If implementing a SaaS solution takes more than a few days, the solution may not prove very flexible over time.

Integration

Determine whether the on-demand IT service desk offering integrates seamlessly with in-house infrastructure (such as Active Directory) as well as other hosted services, such as CRM, analytics, and other IT management applications in the cloud.

Usability

Determine whether the IT service desk offering is sufficiently intuitive. It should be as simple as any email or social networking application you use every day. This is important in terms of user adoption, and faster mastery of the service desk solution results in greater ROI.

Data ownership and migration

Verify that your organization retains exclusive ownership of your data. Since data in a SaaS service desk offering resides on storage systems owned by a vendor, it is important

that the vendor acknowledges your ownership of that data and provides you with exclusive access to retrieve it. Your vendor should agree to provide you with all your data, in the format you specify, should you decide to move to another service desk solution at some future point.

Service level agreements

Review the service level agreements (SLAs) offered by on-demand service providers and determine whether the promised levels of application uptime and availability are sufficient for your business. In an on-demand service desk, there are no *partial* outages. The service desk is either available or not. You should check the average uptime of your vendor in the last few years, keeping an eye out for the frequency of *unscheduled* outages. Uptime and availability levels should be clearly defined, as should be the associated penalties if these agreements are not maintained—and all this should be clear up front, before you sign a contract.

Security and disaster recovery

Review the vendor's network security provisions and disaster recovery plans. Your connection to the hosted offering should be 128/256 bit SSL encrypted and should provide for intrusion prevention and detection. The vendor's infrastructure should provide load balancing, redundancy, and fault tolerance. Your data should be backed up regularly and stored in a separate geographic location for disaster recovery and business continuity purposes. You should also ask about failover to a remote data center in the event of a catastrophic failure of the data center housing the servers supporting your service desk offering.

Product upgrades

Understand the vendor's policies on product updates and upgrades. The SaaS service desk functionality should be enhanced as new features become available, and the vendor should have a clear roadmap and schedule for fixes and upgrades. Upgrades should be automatic and should not cause any downtime that would impact service desk operations at the customer end.

Flexible contract

Verify that you can scale your subscription up and down as needed and that you pay only for what you use as you go.

Customer Support

Verify that you can access the hosted service provider's on-call or email-based expert help for product support. Ideally, the vendor will offer service escalation paths and guarantee response and resolution times according to well-definition issue severity levels.

The ServiceDesk Plus On-Demand Advantage

ManageEngine, the IT management division of Zoho Corporation, whose SaaS offerings are used by more than 4 million subscribers around the world, offers an on-line help desk solution that has been designed to meet the needs of organizations that want to deliver optimal service at an optimized price. **ServiceDesk Plus On-Demand** is a complete, SaaS-based, ITIL-compatible help desk system for businesses of all sizes. It delivers offers all the key features a help desk requires, including:

- Automated ticket management
- Configurable business rules and SLA
- User self-service portal
- Integrated knowledge base
- Asset management, purchases & contracts
- ITIL workflows for incidents, problems and changes
- Extensive reporting and dashboard capability

ServiceDesk Plus On-Demand is based on Service Desk Plus, a mature, on-premise help desk solution from ManageEngine that more than 15,000 organizations around the world rely on. This SaaS offering enables an IT organization to deliver comprehensive anytime, anywhere help desk services and best-in-class support to users without the burden of on-premise hardware and software to install or manage. With attractive pay-as-you-go pricing, ServiceDesk Plus On-Demand is a full-featured help desk offering that delivers the rapid time-to-service, rapid ROI, flexibility, and scalability that IT help desk managers need in a world where doing more with less is the rule of the day.

Next Steps

For more information on how ServiceDesk Plus On-Demand can help you with your IT service management needs, please visit http://ondemand.manageengine.com/service-desk/index.html.

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About ManageEngine

ManageEngine is the leading provider of cost-effective enterprise IT management software and the only one making the 90-10 promise – to provide 90 percent of the capabilities offered by the Big 4 at just 10 percent of the price. The ManageEngine suite offers enterprise IT management solutions including Network Management, HelpDesk ITIL, Bandwidth Monitoring, Application Management, Desktop Management, Security Management, Password Management, Active Directory reporting, and a Managed Services (MSP) platform. ManageEngine products are easy to install, setup and use, and offer extensive support, consultation, and training. More than 50,000 organizations in 200 countries, from different verticals, industries, and sizes use ManageEngine to take care of their IT management needs cost effectively. ManageEngine is a division of ZOHO Corporation. For more information on ManageEngine, please visit www.manageengine.com.