Help desk support

Science, Computer Science

The Customer is King and how does one service him better? Use help desks that are friendly, efficient and problem-free. One of the foremost issues impacting Information Systems Management (ISM) is resolving the help desk crisis. Helpdesk was originally developed as a tool to support an efficient, single-threadedenvironmentof IBM 3270 terminals; critical elements of today's help desk strategies have not kept pace with changing desktop technologies. PCs and distributed computing have evolved and now present a new level of sophistication in which corporate employees perform their jobs.

(BPD, 2001) Anecdote I recently purchased Flat Panel LCD Monitor and when powered on, the video display was horribly distorted. What I was seeing looked like a single line of pixels stretched vertically to the point that they consume the entire display. Attaching a real video source (VGA or DVI) fails to rectify the problem. There was no help from the on-line manual that confirmed to have attempted all the troubleshooting ideas they've published. I then found the help desk phone number and on the first try, I navigated the annoyingly stupid IVR system.

It starts by making me press buttons on the phone and then strangely transitions to using voice response, which is slower, less accurate, and more frustrating. I was eventually put into a holding queue where I waited about 10 minutes before simply being disconnected. I called back and repeated the previous steps. But this time I found myself patched through to a phone in a different call center where, nobody was actually talking to me. I somehow ended up on the phone of a person who was talking to someone else.

I got to overhear bits of several office conversations before the representative said something like " thanks for holding. I'll transfer you to technical desk" they then hanged up on me. They wasted my time and made me regret purchasing the product from them. Although today's corporate user still sits in front of a monitor stroking away at a keyboard, technical equipments and a shelf full of applications software and documentation now complicate his or her desktop.

With the increasing complexity of the technological environment, help desk personnel are taking much longer to provide solutions as end users are routinely calling with more and more sophisticated usage questions. In some cases, the customer knows more about their desktop applications than the help desk professional attempting to resolve their problem. (Alter, 2006) This paper will address the customer services that need to be improved in setting up and managing user support helpdesk mainly: staffing, strategies, technology, emails and flexibility.

Staffing One major element of crisis confronting IS Management is staffing. Because the help desk has been historically considered a thankless, glamour less back office job, many technically competent people will not consider rotating through the help desk, or cannot wait until they leave the support role. With the lack of quality people resources to choose from, IS managers are forced to staff the help desk with lesser skilled personnel. They simply fail to provide adequate support service to an increasingly complex technical environment. Strategy

Delays responding to customers' e-mail, customers' dissatisfaction with call-center representatives and the length of time the customers are kept on hold is due to lack of strategy. From the very start, IS managers must embrace a newphilosophy, which proactively seeks to eliminate problems from occurring in the first place. In essence, a proactive versus reactive mindset andcultureshould be the core competency of the help desk. At the " helpless desk", the staff fixes, and fixes and fixes. At the strategic help desk, the staff constantly searches for new ways to solve and prevent.

Technology Customers' problems are not diminishing because technological worth is valued higher for problem prevention than for crisis problem management, as much as possible, help desk personnel should be taken off of the phones and placed on technology projects and systems that will keep the customer from needing to call in the first place. (C3i, 1993) Help desk personnel should utilize the help desk database not only to log and recall problems for fixes, but to also analyze which problems are recurring and indicate a " root" problem.

At the end of the day, these people should then strive to review the database so that fixes can be put on a voice response system that the customer can listen to while they are in queue. The help desk should naturally use the database to communicate known " bugs" to application developers instead of waiting for an end user revolt. If problems are anticipated across the network, then customers should be contacted proactively before the problem is experienced. This also increases user productivity and substantially reduces support costs.

(BPD, 2001) E-mail Slow e-mail response and difficulties in reaching a customer to discuss a problem can be overcome if the remote connectivity and proactive network management tools are used they are the instruments of success for a strategic help desk. As desktop applications are mission critical to company success, they are also a frequent source of problems. It is absolutely necessary for staff to have the ability to " takeover" and manage the PC or file server from the help desk.

In many cases, it reduces problem-solving time by more than 50 per cent and increases first call problem resolution by more than 65 per cent. (Robertson, 2000) Flexibility The help desk must focus on making life easier for the customer. IS managers should empower staff to break rules if necessary to achieve customer satisfaction, as opposed to having to adhere to rigid operating procedures that are strictly enforced in the name of consistency. In a mainframe environment, this could be efficient. In a distributed environment where PCs are mission critical, operating procedures should allow flexibility.

Employees who are frequently recognized for superior achievement are the employees who are allowed rule bending or rule modifications to bring about a creative solution for their customers. (Help Desk Survival, n. d.) Conclusion The new generation of user-support software elevates the internal help desk into the realm of so called " infrastructure management" That is the term industry analysts use to describe a growing trend in user-support software that is changing corporate help desks into control centers for all the assets of a large organization.

From managing computers to cars, telephones to trucks, software to security systems, the internal help desk is moving out of IT and into the mainstream. The support centers of the future, unlike those of today, will be capable of managing, tracking and responding to issues that impact all of the day-to-day activities of a business.

When constructing the new help desk strategy, IS managers should consider several important factors, including: the interpersonal, technological and judgmental qualities of the help desk personnel; the technical tools required to solve and prevent problems; the relationship between the help desk and staff and management; and the location of the help desk. (BPD, 2001)

References:

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