Help desk software tools

A help desk is a resource that a majority of companies use today. Help desks are designed to provide users with information and assistance for technical support of hardware or software. Many help desks involve a support person working to assist customers to solve a problem directly or forward the problem to someone else. Often, services are provided by call centers or over the Internet.

This paper will review three help desk software packages: Aegis Service Desk, which is local software, CRMdesk, which is remotely hosted, and, ReadyDesk which is completely web based. Local help desk software is software that requires local installation on each server or every workstation. Local help desk software is good for smaller offices that do not require much maintenance. Aegis Service Desk is developed by Abacus Systems. Aegis is designed specifically for tracking general incidents and responses, clients and contacts and assets.

It's suited for any company or individual that needs to track customer problems, queries, requests, assets, and responses to clients. It fully supports the ITIL standard within an IT service environment. Comprehensive service management processes are fully integrated in the single application. Many of the features in this software will make the support person's job much easier. Aegis Service Desk has an automatic notification which allows the user to notify clients and internal users of any changes.

Aegis has two levels of notifications; record level and field level. Record level is based on changes to a record and allows the user to define which clients to notify when an incident is added, edited, deleted, or copied. Field level

allows users to also define which clients to notify when a field is changed or when that field is equal to a defined value. Another feature of Aegis is called Workflow.

One can use workflow to automatically assign or reassign calls to a support consultant or a user group. For example, if the Call Type is a Network Problem, you can assign it to the Network Resolver Group. If the Call Type is an Application Problem, one can assign it to another group. Aegis Service Desk has a Management Report feature that prints a variety of reports. For example, how long it took to resolve an incident, how old an incident is, and when is the last response date for the incident.

Aegis allows you to graph your data to look at how calls are distributed and analyze trends. It allows you to easily e-mail reports, and you can use the Call Queue to quickly view who is working on what in tabular and graphical form. Aegis is fully customizable. One can use the program as supplied or change it to work in ways specifically for their task.

Each field is fully configurable and there are several optional add-ons available. CRMdesk which is remotely hosted software, is a help desk service provided by another company. Often with remotely hosted software, only a web browser is needed. This may be convenient for smaller offices that do not have an IT department.

CRMdesk automates online customer support, helpdesk and knowledge base management via the Internet. The system is deployed as a highly efficient and cost-effective hosted solution for companies looking to dramatically improve quality and reduce costs of Internet-based customer support.

CRMdesk consists of two Web-based applications: Customer Desk and Support Desk. The customer desk, or " front office" system, is a Web-based application specially designed and developed for customers. The customer desk pages are browser-independent.

Each Web page contains detailed instructions on how to navigate through the site and how to use any particular feature. Customer Desk pages may be completely customized to have your corporate Website's look and feel. Support Desk, or " back office" system, is used by customer service representatives to handle customer requests. Both the Customer Desk and Support desk have Standard and Professional Editions available. The Standard Edition is a fully functional, low-cost solution for small businesses with relatively simple support service processes, in which customer service reps do not have to handle many customer accounts/product areas simultaneously. It possesses a number of powerful interfaces, integration and processing automation features to improve your support staffs performance and speed up reaction and processing times for customer inquiries.

The Professional Edition is the best option for medium-size and large companies with complex customer service and support processes. Since CRMdesk is remotely hosted, meaning it is provided by another company, physical security should be of concern to all. CRMdesk is hosted on highly reliable, secure and redundant DELL PowerEdge servers. In reference to application security, all servers are running Windows 2003 Server operating system and sit behind electronic firewalls, all the drives use NTFS partitions, all Microsoft patches, hot fixes and updates are installed on a weekly basis,

and the most critical are installed immediately upon release. Our final software is completely web-based. Its name is ReadyDesk.

It is installed on your web server, and only a web browser is needed to use it and no plug-ins or other files need to be downloaded. ReadyDesk is simple to use because web browsers can be used to operate troubleshooting procedures. ReadyDesk features include: Remote Desktop, automated assignments and notifications, automated e-mail alerts, user customizable interface, customizable workflow, live support chat, creation of tickets from incoming e-mails, knowledge base, and an advanced administration console. ReadyDesk allows you to open, view, edit, and resolve support tickets all on the same screen, increasing productivity and response time. You can even view a ticket's complete history without leaving the main interface.

The pop-up search system will return the selected ticket details back to the main screen for easy viewing and modification. There are two editions of ReadyDesk. The first is written ASP, and the other in PHP. The ASP edition requires a computer running a Windows server OS (WinNT, Windows 2000, Windows 2003) and IIS (which is built in to all Windows server OS's). The . Net framework is also required for POP3 e-mail retrieval.

The PHP edition will work on Windows and other server operating systems such as Linux, UNIX and Macintosh that support PHP. The server just needs to have the PHP version 4. 3 or above, MySQL and a web server such as IIS or Apache. In closing, as organizations increase their dependence on technology-enabled business strategies and adopt new applications to

support mission-critical functions, service desk operations will play an important role in maintaining high levels of productivity.

Managers and executives who adopt a strategic approach to their service desk operations will not only leverage a greater return on their technology investments, the cost savings and new process efficiencies will free up resources that can be applied for innovative initiatives that can help differentiate their organizations in competitive markets. Researching and deciding on a help desk software program can be a daunting task. You should first decide what specific issues your company needs help with and then consider what will best support your customers accordingly. A free help desk software package might be a good option, or one can take a look at the many online help desk software reviews that are available to help in your search. Reading consumer reviews of the various products can give you a better idea of whether the particular program will be a good fit for your company and your customers needs.

Help desk software can increase your customers' satisfaction and their desire to continue business with you. Without such a program, staff can be easily overwhelmed with support calls and emails. Customer support should be the top priority on any business' agenda. Without a loyal customer base, a company simply will not thrive.

A better help desk experience for a customer requires two strategic things; people and technology. The key to improving customer loyalty is in understanding their needs and the ability to address their concerns. Help desk personnel must be professionals who are skilled empathetic

communicators. Customers judge companies by the experiences they have when speaking with help desk personnel. Companies take a lot of time interviewing prospects to fill their vacancies within their companies, the same care should be taken with their selection in help desk software. Bibliography Abacus Systems.

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