

5 TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE THE ENTERPRISE IT SERVICE DESK IN 2016



Long before enterprise IT environments became as complex as they are today, the good old service desk was a simple point of contact for users to log incidents. When businesses began moving to email as their primary communications channel twenty years ago, 'service requests' were made via phones, in-person or interoffice mail (read: requests made on paper). Needless to say, the service desk of the past focused more on solving tactical IT-related issues rather than delivering a seamless user experience.

Today, the consumerization of IT has put increased pressure on organizations to rethink the concept of the service desk as one that could efficiently support the needs of a distributed and growing workforce. The active adoption of cloud and mobile technologies has changed the way people live, work, transact and communicate. This has also set the tone for how sustainable, flexible and agile the modern service desk needs to become as technological advancements continue, systems become more accessible and processes mature.

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Let's take a look at some trends that are shaping the way forward for enterprise service desks.

1 The Internet of Things (IoT)

According to a 2015 Gartner, Inc. forecast, 6.4 billion connected things will be in use worldwide in 2016, up 30 percent from the previous year. The number is expected to reach 20.8 billion by 2020¹.

What does this remarkable and explosive growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) phenomenon mean for service desks? First, it must act as a central repository for collecting, monitoring and securely storing real-time as well as sensor-supplied data that is generated by these numerous connected devices. Next, these devices also need to be maintained, updated and patched on a regular basis. According to Information Age, "core networking, unified communications and security are key opportunities for service desks as they become core components of the infrastructure and systems that make up the Internet of Things"².

Facilitating this centralized responsibility is difficult without technology, intelligent connected devices, cloud-based software and innovative approaches to licensing, pricing and packaging. Therefore, an enterprise IT department must leverage an integrated, agile and flexible service desk, enabling it to cater to needs across the organization's IT spectrum while simultaneously providing an open architecture that could enable the organization to adapt to the changing landscape.

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¹Gartner Says 6.4 Billion Connected "Things" Will Be in Use in 2016, Up 30 Percent From 2015 (Press Release)

²How to ensure your service desk is ready for the Internet of Things (Information Age)

2 Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

This rise in connected devices has a natural impact on device preferences at the workplace. According to a study by Cisco, “more than 3 in 5 IT decision makers (61 percent) believe the rise of BYOD heralds the move to a “new model of IT”, where barriers between the individual and workplace dissolve and everything is linked together by the corporate network”³. This means IT managers around the globe need to ensure that BYOD policies and associated security concerns are comprehensively handled by their IT environments. The time for believing that personal devices should not be managed by the organization has long passed, given that employees who use their personal devices for work (whether permitted to or not) are using their devices to:

- Read work emails (86 percent)
- Access the internet for work purposes (81 percent)
- Access work files from company servers (59 percent)
- Using public apps (such as Twitter) for work purposes (51 percent)

Despite the conveniences though, there are significant challenges. Modern day service desks now have to offer support across a number of devices – often to employees who may not be within the same office, city or even country. With a number of organizations adopting BYOD policies, the service desk shouldn't just fix a problem, but become a proactive and critical enabler of business performance and employee productivity. Modern day service desks that enable knowledge management, for instance, can help solve BYOD-related issues faster. With so many devices and platforms in the fray, some problems can be new for technicians. When a solution is found, the technician should be able to save it as a template, which will enable other technicians to achieve faster resolution when they face a similar issue.

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³BT and Cisco 'Beyond Your Research'

3 Millennial expectations of IT service support

It is impossible to talk about BYOD policies without discussing who demands them. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that millennials will constitute 44 per cent of the workforce by 2020. Tie this in with CompTIA's research findings, which indicate that millennials are "more open to using a variety of emerging means to get the IT support they need. Instant messaging (71%), video chat (54%), and the use of mobile apps to resolve IT issues (54%) are most popular"⁴. These statistics show that millennial employees will not be content with access to limited interfaces and simple features, and will demand wider access to support channels customized for their devices. The ability to access a service desk 'on the go' will be the expected norm.

Interestingly, employees across generations (millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers) all expect faster turnaround when it comes to IT support. 45 percent of millennials particularly place emphasis on proactive maintenance to address issues before problems arise⁵, and the modern service desk must be able to meet these demands. As employee demands of service desks soar every day, having an enterprise service desk that can seek feedback and pre-empt issues will then become key to offering effective support.

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4 Self-service

This emphasis on taking a proactive approach extends to finding solutions – 65 percent of millennials will attempt to fix issues themselves, based on past experience. Many tech users tap into continuous and consistent flows of information thanks to the prevalence of online communities, FAQs and online knowledge repositories. The expectations are no different for IT service desk support. According to Gartner, “end users require an IT self-service portal where knowledge is readily available, where passwords are easy to reset, and that is very intuitive to use”. This expectation becomes even more important in light of the fact that “by 2017, half of IT organizations will offer IT self-service to business users as an alternative method of contact to phone and email, up from a third in 2014”⁶.

Frequently, support requirements center around how-to requests, technical support, IT equipment ordering and password reset requests. Resolving the latter issue with self-service information on automated password reset tools, for example, can save organizations the costs of supporting this type of request via more expensive channels. This can be enabled by a fully integrated and agile enterprise service desk that is aligned with business objectives, yet also caters to a mix of personalities, expectations and cultural preferences in organizations.

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⁶Your IT Self-Service Strategy Must Be Driven by Your Business Culture by Gartner (2015)

5 Integrated measurement of service-level agreements (SLAs)

The impact of the IoT, BYOD and millennial expectations, as well as self-service on the modern day service desk brings us to perhaps the most important trend: integrating SLA measurement into the service desk solution. As an organization's dependence on IT increases, so does the demand for improved quality of service to optimize employee productivity, enhance operational efficacy, and fine-tune business performance. This implies that services within an enterprise-relevant context need to be identified, defined, and 'productized' as SLAs. These extend to service types, business applications, operational services and external services, and function as documentary evidence of service commitments for an enterprise.

SLAs today help enterprise IT departments identify and monitor problem areas, requests, and processes correlated to the delivery of services. According to Gartner, with the right SLAs in place, organizations can measure areas such as incident support, effective day-to-day contact between the organization and end users, as well as the management of IT service quality, LAN monitoring and data center operations. An enterprise service desk solution with intuitively designed dashboards can then provide role-based (from the agent to the C-suite) view of important metrics including time to first response, number of requests resolved through use of knowledge base, time to resolution and more.

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Conclusion

The enterprise service desk of 2016 must adapt itself to these trends in order to provide organizations agility, flexibility and sustainability when it comes to aligning with business goals and objectives. A practical ready-to-use, configurable and affordable solution that can fulfill requirements that stem from these trends can offer a 'unified service desk, unified experience' to organizations and their service desk employees alike.





About Wolken

Wolken Service Desk improves productivity and organizational processes in the workplace by delivering a broad range of business applications. Based on a SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) model and deployable both on the cloud and on-premise, Wolken provides a scalable and adaptable ITSM solution, built on ITIL best standards and practices.

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