



Reinventing Support Economics Improving Service While Reducing Costs A Softlib White Paper

Executive Summary

Technical Support is expensive. Typically, the Cost per problem incident can be as high as ~\$1000. This is mainly due to the increasing technology complexity, which in turn requires larger teams to deal with incidents.

In recent years the majority of the industry focus was on bringing order in the form of ITIL compliant Service Desk offerings; however very little was done to provide an alternative to the large team approach. Very little progress was made in order to reduce escalations and increase Self Help usability or First Call Resolution, which are the main ways to dramatically reduce costs while improving the customer service.

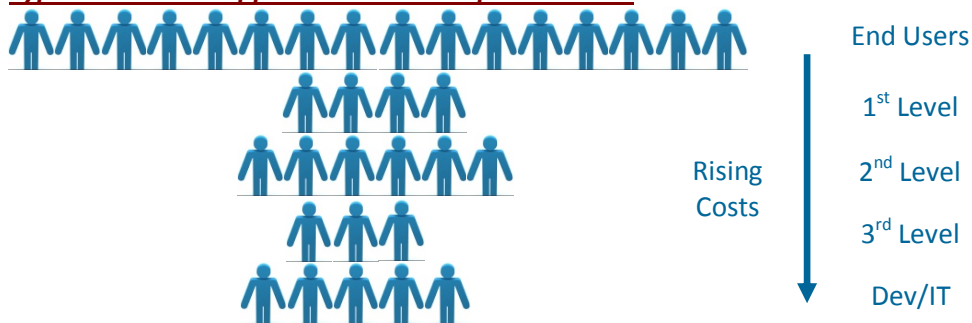
In this White Paper we will introduce the current market paradigm, as well as introducing recent technologies that can reinvent market economics, helping you to win the war for Service improvement and associated Service Cost. We will endeavour to show you; where's the promise...

The Existing Technical Support Paradigm

The current Technical Support paradigm is based on 3 key elements:

- Process
- People
- Information

Typical Problem Support: Personnel Representation



The process starts with Self Service or Self Help at the end user level and then escalates as per the associated level of expertise required until problem resolution concludes. In some cases problem resolution requires the involvement of personnel outside of the front-line Support process, such as the IT team or Development.

In terms of People the process involves many groups and associated personnel, starting from first contact Support or helpdesk team, going through 2nd level experts and ongoing to 3rd and sometimes 4th or 5th level (Typically when hardware is involved) experts until the incident is resolved.

Information is a key element in delivering Support. Technology becomes more complex and experts need to know more in order to deliver problem resolution. So they rely on more information sources, which in a typical environment can contain numerous information sources. The typical IT infrastructure keeps technical information in their Service Desk system, CRM, Email (discrete Email folders), file servers, group portals, Wikis, Knowledge Management systems, Content Management systems, et al. If the right information is not found in internal sources, then Vendor Documentation or the Internet are the next steps.

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When considering the typical IT support environment, comprising many personnel and even more information sources, which involves substantial turnover, sometimes shifts and sometimes geographically dispersed teams, it becomes obvious as to how challenging it is to maintain TCO for the Process/People/Information paradigm.

All of this accumulates to substantial costs as the business drivers to minimize downtime and maximize customer experience push the Support organization to deliver more with the existing building blocks.

Marketplace Cost Reduction Observations

In last few years the major innovations in and around the Problem Management process includes:

- ITIL
- SaaS
- Multi Channel support (Email, Chat/IM, Phone/VOIP)
- Web based FAQ and Knowledge Bases

Though these are important initiatives, they did not materially change the Process, People and Information equation. ITIL mainly focused on bringing order to the Process/People side but didn't reduce the number of people involved in Problem resolution. SaaS offered the promise to reduce the TCO of a Service Desk solution but not the cost of resolving the problem. Other innovations like Multi Channel still require substantial manual labour and thus are still very expensive to maintain.

Web based FAQ and Knowledge Bases are a step in the right direction, trying to provide an alternative option to an actual physical person. However these solutions rely on static content and poor Search capabilities, just a covering a fraction of the question and answer scenarios encountered, while typically being reactive in nature. Also, and arguably more importantly, they do not assist the technical specialist in Problem Resolution activities, typically providing simple help for End Users.

So Where Is The Promise – Is There a Better Way?

Problem Resolution time can reduce substantially with intelligent solutions, either delivering solutions directly to end users through Self Help or delivering solutions to Support Experts dealing with complex issues. The goal would be to have the solution do a lot of the “heavy lifting” for you, eradicating the need to engage more experts for escalation, scanning multiple information repositories, providing you with the relevant information for Problem Resolution in an intuitive and timely manner. To achieve this Problem resolution utopia, solutions require the following capabilities:

- ***Dynamic Content Delivery:*** You can't spend time and manual labour on crafting FAQs and moving information around from emails to portals, et al. It's too costly and you are always reacting to problems instead of dealing with new ones. There must be an automated way to harvest the knowledge from internal information sources and other external sources, for example, Internet, et al.
- ***Information Presentation as per User Credentials:*** So all types of users see dynamic content that is right for them in terms of their level of expertise and permissions.
- ***Too much data, not enough information:*** Too much content is confusing and unproductive. Typical Internet Search functions are good, but have their limitations. Information delivery should be the shortest list of highly qualified information.
- ***Centralized Expansive Information Provision:*** In today's age there is just too much information. Hence the Enterprise Search market. Everybody has Email, portal, server, application, knowledge base, content management systems, technical manuals, Internet sources, et al! Why settle for scanning them all one by one or through conversations with different groups in the organizations, when such information can be automatically scanned and presented, where appropriate permissions exist, so each user can only access the information they're allowed to access.

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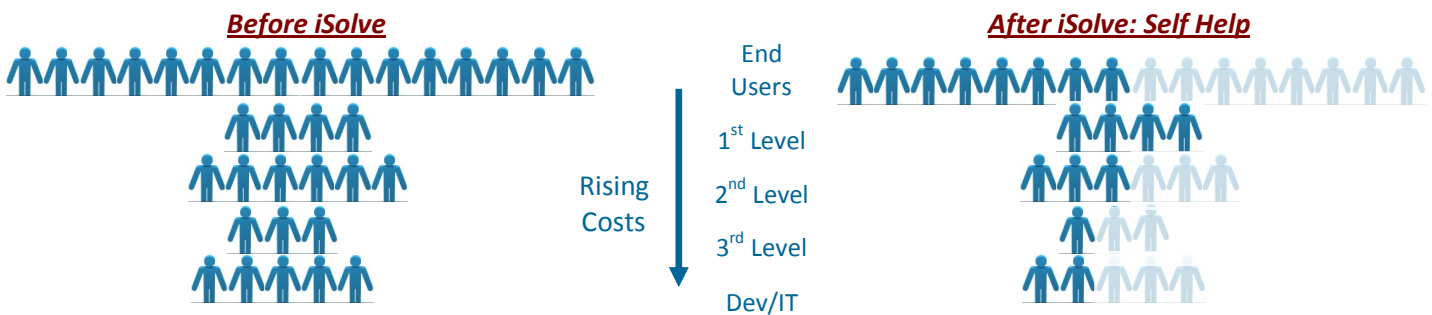
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- **Knowledge customization and expansion, irrespective of location:** If a problem resolution is identified, and is based on information from one data source, but requires a follow-on instruction or linking with another data source, then provide a solution that allows such a problem resolution information chain. For example; Do I now need to figure out how to add/change content on the SharePoint? What if it's managed by another group? What if it's not SharePoint but it's the CMS and I do not have permissions? There must be a way to add "virtual sticky notes" on top of all relevant solutions and share them with all personnel, so everybody wins!

With such solutions the fundamental economics of the Technical Support industry will evolve. End Users will enjoy Self Help that empowers them to resolve problems. Agents and experts will increase call resolution rates and will reduce more expertise through escalations. Hopefully the typical shift in the "expertise" workload will evolve as per:



Problem resolution TCO reduction via intelligent & timely information provision, enabling user based self help!

Conclusion

The Technical Support and Helpdesk industry are labour intensive due to the growing complexity of our information age coupled with limited funding and associate TCO optimization (E.g. "do more with less"). Reinventing the underlying economics requires solutions that can minimize expert time, allowing less experienced members or end users to resolve most issues at a substantially higher resolution rate than the one existing today. Fortunately, the technologies and solutions to do so are emerging...

About Softlib

Softlib is a leading provider of Solution Identification software, enabling our customers to reduce costs substantially while improving service to end users and customers. We bring innovative solutions to the marketplace that revolutionizes the way technical support is delivered. Softlib products are used on thousands of computers worldwide. Among our customers are financial institutions, telecom companies, technology vendors and government agencies. Softlib has offices in the USA, Belgium and Israel. For more information, please visit www.softlibsw.com.

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