Driving IT help desk efficiency with customer-centric remote support

This white paper will examine key IT help desk challenges and reveal the many advantages of customer-centric remote support.
Instant gratification is an ideal rarely experienced at the IT help desk. With long queues of employees waiting for help, working the help desk is a lot like running triage in a crowded emergency room—with patients spread across the corporate campus and the country.

Help desk managers servicing large mobile workforces, such as remote employees and workers on the road, face significant challenges, including the need to shorten support calls, solve problems on the first attempt, reduce complaints and keep the team’s morale and productivity high.

The inability to see what an employee sees is a big barrier to improving help desk service. Support agents must guide the actions of each employee in a carefully orchestrated verbal dance that fails if both parties are not clearly communicating. As more employees cut their ties to the corporate office, the pressures facing support personnel will only increase.

How can the help desk quickly solve problems for mobile workers? Is there an easy way to improve employee service levels and the morale of the support team?

To meet these challenges, many companies are turning to customer-centric remote support. Designed to greatly speed the resolution of support calls, these solutions enable help desk personnel to securely view and control the desktop of any employee, anywhere. This white paper will examine key help desk challenges and reveal the many advantages of customer-centric remote support.

Help Desk Challenges Supporting Mobile Workers

Supporting mobile workers is like performing surgery blindfolded, with the doctor asking the patient, “What just happened?” When the help desk cannot see what is on an employee’s screen, the result is often a slow and frustrating path to resolution—for both the employee and the help desk agent.

Time is a precious resource for the help desk. An enormous amount of it is spent on the phone trying to understand problems, get configuration information, explain what employees must do to fix issues and wait to hear what happened. When support staff calls stretch to 10 or 20 minutes, service levels drop and mobile employees get frustrated.

Help desk consultant David Kay explains common situations where mobile employees often need to explain their situation to several people, are assigned homework—such as gathering up configuration files and data on behalf of the help desk—and finally need to wait for calls or emails while agents analyze problems.1 Whether the help desk resolves the issue in one long call or multiple short ones, the traditional process of supporting mobile employees is complex and cumbersome.

Fortunately, new technology is empowering help desk agents to greatly shorten mobile employee support calls.

Complaints about Quality Service

As more employees begin working outside the corporate campus, the help desk will be challenged with more remote-support calls. IDC predicts that by 2011, 73 percent of the U.S. workforce will be mobile.2

With the pressure of a growing mountain of support requests, IT support staff need to shorten calls. Often, agents are measured by the number of calls they take, making the desire to quickly wrap up calls an underlying motivator for agents. However, quickly resolving problems and helping employees return to work can be challenging when support agents cannot see the problems their callers are experiencing.

When employees are stuck in long call queues and their problems are not resolved during an agent’s session, support satisfaction drops. This problem may go unnoticed for some time, as many support departments have no easy way to gauge an employee’s satisfaction with a support call.

Help desk morale can also be a problem and is directly related to the volume of calls received and the ability to solve employee problems. Additionally, good help desk people are hard to find. “Finding qualified employees that can provide end user support services is a challenge that most organizations currently face. IDC believes that this challenge will become more significant in coming years. Further, the challenge associated with providing support will be exacerbated by the continuing trend toward remote employees. The new generation of ‘clientless’ remote support tool can help address these problems.” said Matt Healey, research manager, Software and Hardware Support Services, IDC.

Keeping the help desk morale high is essential to reducing employee turnover.

A new way to speed the diagnosis and resolution of employee problems is needed to improve service levels and enhance help desk morale. A brief examination of the history of remote-support tools provides further insight.

**Brief History of Remote Support**

Prior to the 1990s, the primary means of support for remote and traveling employees were phone support, remote visits by IT personnel or sending in their PCs. By the mid-1990s, basic screen-sharing utilities emerged, such as pcAnywhere™, that enabled IT to examine a remote worker’s computer from the help desk. The main goal was to eliminate the need for an IT staffer to travel to a remote location.

In the beginning, most remote employees were serviced over dial-up modems. These utilities were also eventually installed on local PCs within the firewall, empowering IT to remotely service local employees.

There were many downsides to these utilities for help desks servicing mobile employees. First, special software needed to be installed on the mobile worker’s PC. If the software was not preinstalled, the support was not possible. Second, these solutions were much more functional over high bandwidth connections and would often drop connections to mobile employees. Finally, communication took place over proprietary ports, essentially punching a hole in the firewall.

Around 2000, Microsoft Windows® 2000 Professional introduced Remote Desktop to help IT quickly view the settings on a PC. This eliminated the need for IT to install special software as it was bundled with the OS. Now IT could perform screen sharing easily. However, it did not function with computers that were outside the corporate network, leaving mobile workers without any new options.

Eventually, open source alternatives emerged. However, they also required preinstalled software on mobile workers PCs. This required configuration and setup by the mobile employee, which could easily consume 5 to 10 minutes on a support call. As more and more employees were leaving the building and traveling more expansively, the help desk needed an easier way to ensure mobile employees could be quickly serviced.

**The Solution: Customer-Centric Remote Support**

Customer-centric remote-support solutions are designed to greatly speed the resolution of support calls for any mobile worker, reducing the time agents spend on the phone and ensuring high levels of satisfaction among mobile workers and help desk personnel. Now the help desk is empowered to keep mobile workers productive.

These solutions are Web-based software as a service (SaaS) applications that manage incoming remote-support requests and allow help desk agents to connect to, view and control the desktop of remote employees.
mobile workers without any preinstalled applications or client agents. Instead, these solutions allow an agent to view a remote PC in seconds. Offered as third-party hosted services, customer-centric remote support does not require any system installation or maintenance for the help desk. In addition, these solutions do not require any firewall reconfiguration.

Figure 1: The help desk agent (above right) is able to see and control the desktop of the mobile employee and immediately begin troubleshooting.

Going beyond desktop sharing, customer-centric remote-support solutions assist with service requests, incident resolution, team collaboration, reporting, agent training, manager observation, session transfers, remote application installation, support feedback and more.

How a Remote Session Works

A support request can be submitted via a chat session, email or phone. For online requests, a thin-client is downloaded to the employee’s PC—with the employee’s permission—while he or she is waiting in queue. If the support request is by phone, the employee can be directed to a portal by the agent and provided a numeric key to establish a secure connection and begin a remote-support session.

In seconds, an agent can be examining an employee’s desktop and diagnose, troubleshoot and resolve the incident using a variety of incident-resolution tools, including:

- Remote viewing and control
- Remote diagnostics
- File transfers for patches or updates
- System rebooting and reconnection
- Chat sessions during screen sharing
- Help desk team collaboration
- Seamless agent session transfer

Managers can silently monitor help desk agents, watching live sessions or reviewing recorded sessions. At the end of each support session, mobile workers are provided a survey to rate the quality of service. This immediate feedback can be examined at the individual agent level or at the department level.
Benefits of Customer-Centric Remote Support

Customer-centric remote-support solutions provide the following important benefits:

- Improves first contact resolution by allowing agents to see what mobile employees see.
- Provides immediate support to mobile employees.
- Reduces call length by enabling agents to quickly connect to employees’ PCs.
- Eliminates travel to mobile employees by allowing agents to fully control a PC remotely.
- Enhances employee perception of the help desk by transferring the burden of fixing the problem to the help desk agent.
- Allows agents to connect to and resolve problems with a PC without the employee remaining on the phone.
- Eliminates repeat calls for recurring problems by enabling the help desk agent to show employees how to fix basic problems.
- Simplifies agent training by allowing a second agent to watch and participate in a remote session.
- Aids the help desk in proving its value to the company by demonstrating high levels of service and satisfaction in collected survey results.
- Eliminates security threats to the enterprise by operating via port 80, without any firewall reconfiguration.
- Provides securely encrypted connections between the help desk and the remote PC.

What to Look for in a Remote-Support Solution

When seeking a remote-support solution, consider the following important requirements:

- **Rapid entry into sessions:** Look for a solution that allows an agent to open a session with any mobile employee in less than 30 seconds.

- **Experience in remote support:** Only work with a company that has at least 5 years experience with remote-support solutions, ensuring a robust and proven solution.

- **Training included:** The ideal solution should not charge extra for help desk agent training, ensuring the entire team is properly using the solution.

- **Dedicated support personnel:** Ask if the company provides live no-cost access to a dedicated advocate who is not located in an overseas call center. Providing ongoing access to the same person helps improve the return on investment.

- **Multi-agent collaboration:** Multiple agents should be able to share a single session with a mobile worker to help address more challenging problems.

- **Silent monitoring:** Seek a solution that allows managers to examine live sessions, unseen by agents or mobile employees, to help ensure high levels of service.

- **Comprehensive reporting:** Look for a solution that can provide management insight into service calls, including length of sessions and mobile employee resolution satisfaction.
Scalability and volume: Seek a solution that can quickly add agent seats and can accommodate millions of sessions monthly without any hardware or software installation.

Shared control of employee PC: Make sure the solution allows the employee and the agent to both control the PC rather than passing control back and forth. This makes it easier for the employee to implement the recommendations of the agent and learn.

Session storage: Look for the ability to record sessions for multiple months, allowing easy review of agent activities and patterns among employees.

The GoToAssist® Corporate Advantage

Citrix® GoToAssist Corporate empowers the help desk to greatly improve its service for mobile employees by shortening call times, ensuring problems are resolved on the first call and boosting morale of IT. As a premier customer-centric remote-support solution, GoToAssist Corporate brings a full suite of support capabilities to the help desk.

Built to meet all the requirements outlined in this paper, GoToAssist Corporate includes added capabilities, such as:

- Rebooting and reconnecting a remote PC
- Sending and installing files
- Zooming and panning the view of remote desktops
- Running remote sessions as a service on employees’ PCs
- Remote diagnostics
- Post-session employee surveys
- Assigning help desk notes to a recorded session

For help desk managers, GoToAssist Corporate includes a wide range of helpful features. Dashboards provide real-time insight into all current activity, such as who’s conducting remote support and the length of sessions. Extensive reports provide access to details such as employee satisfaction survey reports at the individual level or as a team, dating back 90 days. In addition, sessions can be reviewed while they are occurring or revisited within a 3-month window. All activity can be viewed, including actions taken, chat dialog windows and diagnostics.

GoToAssist Corporate in Action

BigBand networks, a leading provider of broadband multimedia services for video, voice and data in the telecom industry, has hundreds of employees working from remote locations spanning the United States, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. “Because we have such a distributed organization, it became a challenge to provide a high level of support to all of our employees. Previously, something that should take 15 minutes to solve might end up taking an hour and a half,” recalled Eugene Alfaro, director of Global IT Services.

Alfaro implemented the GoToAssist Corporate customer-centric remote-support solution. Now, the help desk can service an employee in Europe as if he or she was in the same building. Being able to see mobile workers’ desktops allows employees to begin working again rapidly. “Our employees get an immediate benefit from GoToAssist Corporate because they can be productive again in a couple of minutes. It also allows us to educate the employees to further empower them for self-service,” said Alfaro. The final results: decreased call times and lower call volumes. “Not only do we solve their problem, but we transfer knowledge. We’re minimizing our call volume because we don’t have repeat questions,” stated Alfaro.
With GoToAssist Corporate, the help desk can:

- Keep up with growing call volume and complexity
- Efficiently resolve issues for non-technical end users
- Reduce talk time and escalations
- Improve end-user uptime and productivity
- Leverage expertise by enabling collaboration
- Avoid the financial and environmental costs of travel
- Support business- and mission-critical applications and infrastructure
- Exceed customer expectations to gain a competitive edge

Take your help desk service to the next level with GoToAssist Corporate.

For a demonstration of GoToAssist Corporate or to learn more about customer-centric remote support, please call 1-800-549-8541 or visit www.GoToAssist.com. If you’re calling outside the United States, please call +1-805-690-5729.