THE ART OF ORGANIZING
AND SIMPLIFYING IT SUPPORT

Learn easy and effective ways for IT pros to manage help desk tickets and simplify the job of supporting end-users.

INTRODUCTION

Any operational business model relies heavily on IT support and the help desk to achieve maximum uptime for all IT systems. End-users depend on IT support to assist with various issues ranging from minor system errors to major IT problems that impact productivity. Whether IT teams face Level 1 issues, including basic support and troubleshooting, Level 2 issues, such as config problems or hardware/software repair, or Level 3 support, including network and server infrastructure troubleshooting, prioritizing and addressing each problem can be challenging for the support staff. As technicians try to deal with all these issues, there are challenges in terms of addressing growing volume of tickets, ticket prioritization, timely assignment and escalation, shorter SLA timeframes, diverse technology platforms to support, etc. – and all these to be handled with a lean support team. This white paper addresses ways for help desk analysts and IT support staff to easily and efficiently handle their workload by simplifying and automating processes to increase time and operational cost savings, enhance productivity, and boost customer satisfaction.

CREATING TROUBLE TICKETS

End-users who encounter IT-related issues, such as non-booting systems, no internet connectivity, or malfunctioning business software, usually contact IT support. Instead, a more efficient process would be to access the help desk system by submitting an IT repair and support request.

The help desk process begins with a support request, which is initiated by an end-user who creates a ticket and sends it via email to the help desk team. The ticket should clearly document the issue the end-user is having, including attaching or referring to files related to the request. Once the help desk staff receives the ticket, they determine which IT pro on the team is most suited to resolving the issue. Once the ticket has been assigned, the technician begins working on resolving the problem, making notes and documenting details, including the time of the repair. The help desk system allows IT pros to receive, prioritize and quickly respond to requests. By documenting the steps taken to resolve the issue, the help desk is able to track time to resolution and technician performance, and use that document to expedite similar issues in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGING TICKETS

When an end-user submits a trouble ticket, he or she often asks, "When will the issue be resolved?" End-users appreciate a confirmation that their tickets are received by the support team. The help desk not only acknowledges that tickets are received, but also updates the tickets with information, such as the nature of the issue and the estimated completion time. Conveniently, ticket acknowledgments and progress updates can be sent via email.

CATEGORIZING TICKETS

A valuable help desk feature is the ability to categorize tickets based on criticality, end-user priority, and technician expertise. Some of the priority categories include:

• **Issue**: Networking problem, system crash, hardware replacement, website errors, etc. This information makes it easy to assign the issue to the technician with the related skill set.

· **Service Level Agreement (SLA)**: For internal IT support, this often refers to turnaround times based on the priority of the task. For example, a webcam replacement can be a minor issue, but if this request is needed for a video conference with a major client, the priority changes.

· **Business impact**: Identifying the issues based on business impact is important. Highly knowledgeable and experienced technicians are commonly assigned to issues with a high business impact, such as a crashed website.

These classifications help technicians establish a workflow for trouble tickets.

ASSIGNING TECHNICIANS TO TASKS

A help desk tool can categorize trouble tickets based on type of issue and priority. It can then assign the ticket to the technician with related skills and expertise.

· **Service request**: System changes, password resets, laptop requests

· **Technical issues:** Network issues, alerts, system performance

· **Information**: Location of files, assistance with using applications

· **Faults**: Hardware and peripherals (mouse, printer, monitor)

· **New purchases**: New business-critical software, IT infrastructure equipment, network administration tools

Most of these requests can be handled by any help desk technician. However, the more technical issues should be assigned to technicians with related expertise.

DETERMINING THE TURNAROUND TIME

The time-to-resolution firefighting begins as soon as a ticket is assigned to a technician. Technical issues and system faults should be assigned to specific technicians that have related skills sets. Resolving the issue is up to the technician, but there are help desk features that help technicians achieve faster resolution. For example:

· **Remote support**: The ability to provide troubleshooting and support from a remote location is an important feature that provides technicians the ability to achieve timely resolution. This feature helps to save time and travel costs for the help desk department.

· **Connecting via mobile devices**: While some complex issues cannot be handled via mobile, there are many simple issues (i.e. server restarts) that can be handled via mobile devices.

· **Chat capability**: In some instances, remote end-users can't stay on a call for troubleshooting

sessions. To resolve this type of issue, a chat session can be utilized to instruct the end-user through troubleshooting tasks.

· **Connecting to unattended machines**: Technicians often face situations where end-users are unavailable for a remote session. A remote administration tool allows technicians to connect to and operate remote workstations.

All these features are valuable and help to reduce the time spent on troubleshooting and resolutions.

MANAGING IT ASSET INVENTORY

IT asset management (ITAM) can be a time-consuming task, especially when it comes to discovering hardware and software assets on end-users' computers. Then, there's maintaining the inventory of assets and tracking client assignment, warranty details and keeping a history of IT issues logged for a specific asset.

Help desk software, when it offers built-in IT asset management functionality, simplifies a ton of tasks for IT admins in terms of asset discovery, tracking, and reporting.

Benefits of using help desk software for IT asset management:

· Automatically discover IT assets and track their assignment and status

· Keep IT inventory up-to-date and schedule IT asset reporting

· Optimize IT inventory planning and procurement forecasts

· Link IT assets to problem tickets to track the problem history of assets

· Simplify parts, billing, and purchase order management

USING A KNOWLEDGE BASE

There should be a common platform where technicians can document the step-by-step processes they followed for resolving common issues. All new issues and their solutions should be updated in the knowledge base. Other technicians can make use of this knowledge base content when they troubleshoot the same or similar issues. A knowledge base also provides a central repository to create self-resolution tips to end-users as they are creating trouble tickets for commonly faced and easy-to-fix issues. This helps provide an option to resolve/troubleshoot the issue themselves and reduce the number of tickets for the IT task force.

IMPROVING HELP DESK PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Monitoring the performance of all technicians is relatively easy with a small team. However, as the team and work load grows, measuring performance and customer satisfaction is more challenging. A help desk that includes performance tracking functionality can make tracking metrics easier by providing the comprehensive performance data you need. Part of this functionality includes a customer satisfaction survey tool. The survey results help you track your overall performance and customer satisfaction.
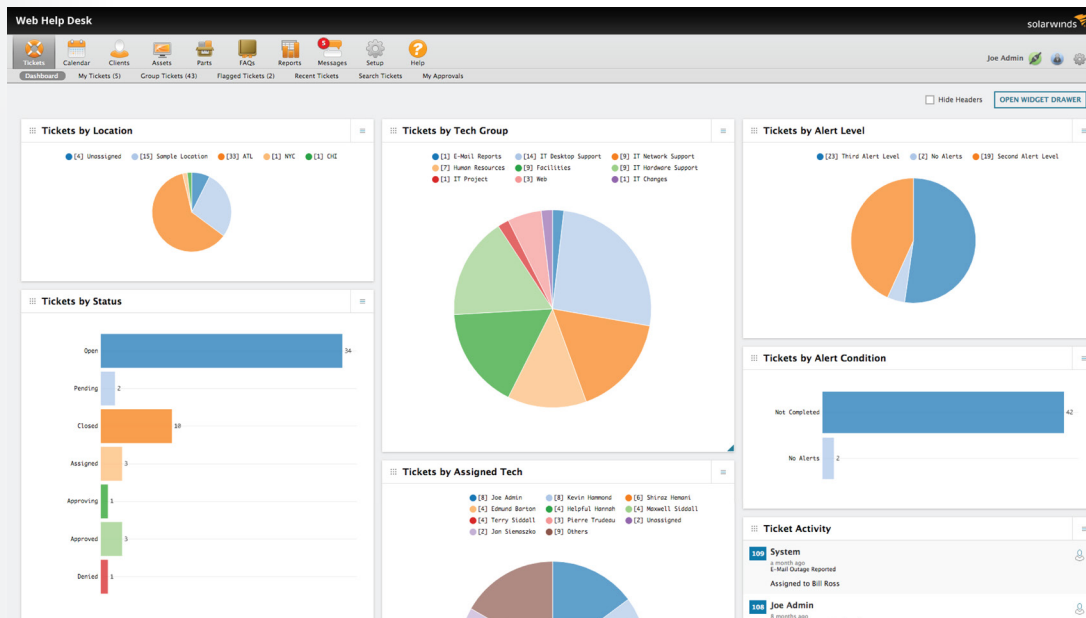
A help desk tool simplifies and streamlines all IT help desk processes from request to resolution. This includes an easier way for end-users to submit and track trouble tickets. Once a ticket is created, the help desk tool can reply with the estimated time to resolve the issue based on the type of ticket and priority of the issue. The help desk can reply with a default message with specific details about the issue and who it is assigned to. Based on the type of ticket, the help desk tool can auto-assign tickets to specific technicians. End-user details can be stored in the help desk tool, so integration with remote administration software will help technicians initiate remote control of the server or workstation. The help desk tool also has the option to save notes on the ticket to enter information into the knowledge base. Your help desk department handles numerous service and repair tasks. You need an easy-to-use, yet powerful help desk tool to help you support a smooth running operation.

HOW SOLARWINDS CAN HELP

SolarWinds offers easy-to-use tools for IT admins and help desk technicians to simplify the process of delivering IT support to end-users. Whether you have an IT team to support internal end-users, or offering managed services to different clients, SolarWinds provides affordable and easy-to-use tools to automate manual support and help desk management tasks, and improve operational efficient for the support task force.

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SolarWinds® Web Help Desk™ (WHD) is a web-based help desk and IT asset management software that delivers simplicity and automation to make your help desk management process a lot easier. With a centralized ticketing management interface the for technicians, and a user-friendly Web portal for end-users to create service requests, Web Help Desk allows you to manage help desk tasks from ticket creation, assignment, routing, escalation, status tracking, to resolution.

LEARN MORE   **TRY IT FREE**

DameWare® Remote Support (DRS) is an extremely affordable remote control and remote support software that provides one-click remote access to Windows®, Linux® and Mac OS X® systems. DameWare Remote Support provides built-in tools and utilities to manage and troubleshoot Windows computers and Active Directory® domains. In addition, it saves IT admins significant time and effort, while eliminating the need to physically travel to end-users' workstations for IT administration. Now, you can do IT remotely!

LEARN MORE   **TRY IT FREE**

The integration of Web Help Desk and DameWare Remote Control allows IT pros to directly initiate remote session with end-user systems from a help desk trouble ticket or the IT asset inventory list in Web Help Desk. Take a look at the chart below and see how Web Help Desk and DameWare Remote Support together can help you simplify IT service request fulfillment process from ticketing management tasks to actual problem resolution.
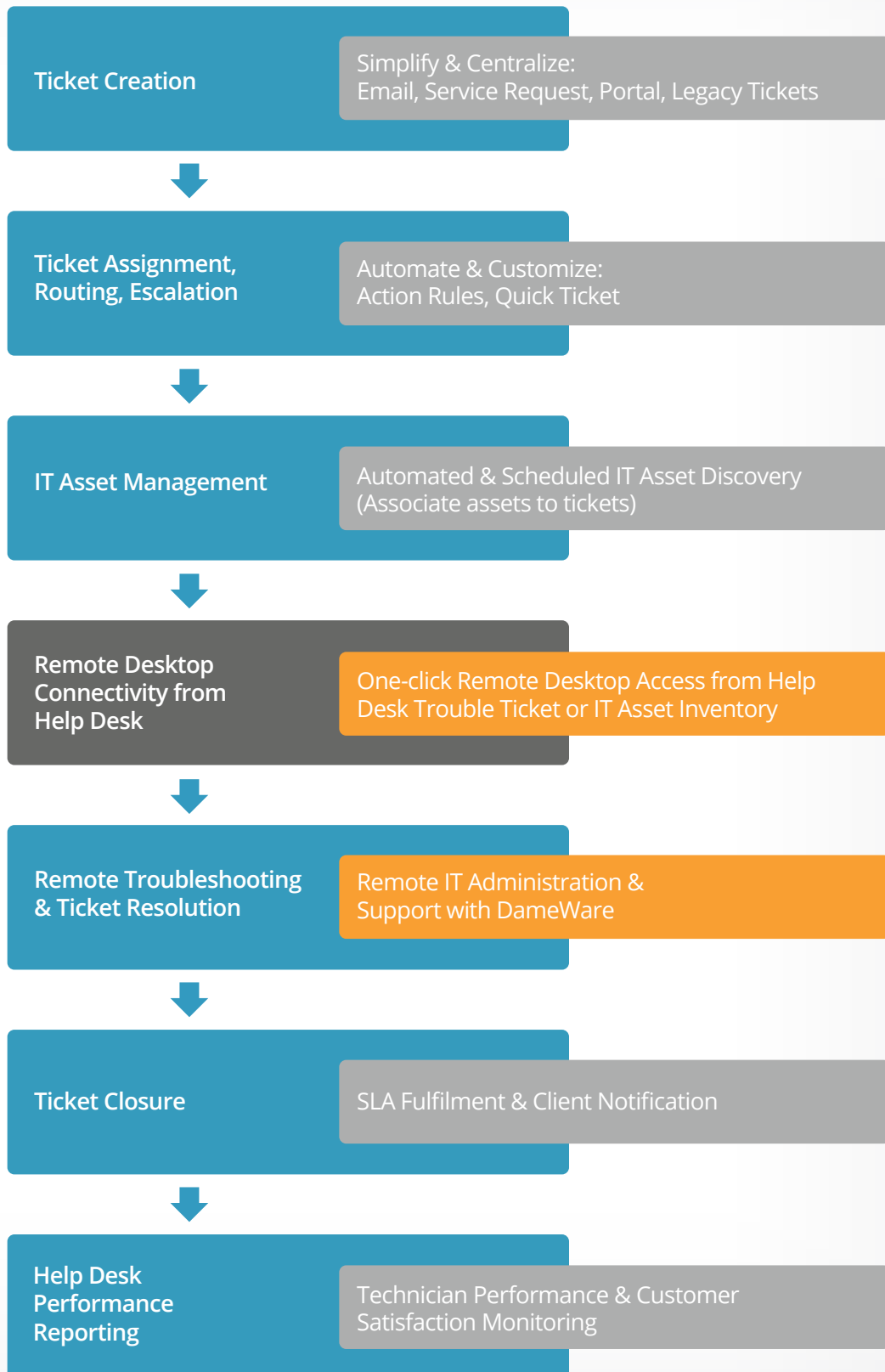
HELP DESK ESSENTIALS FREE TRIAL

SOLARWINDS
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IT SERVICE REQUEST FULFILLMENT PROCESS

LEGEND

Web Help Desk

DameWare

Integration of Web Help Desk and DameWare

Ticket Creation

Simplify & Centralize:
Email, Service Request, Portal, Legacy Tickets

Ticket Assignment, Routing, Escalation

Automate & Customize:
Action Rules, Quick Ticket

IT Asset Management

Automated & Scheduled IT Asset Discovery
(Associate assets to tickets)

Remote Desktop Connectivity from Help Desk

One-click Remote Desktop Access from Help Desk Trouble Ticket or IT Asset Inventory

Remote Troubleshooting & Ticket Resolution

Remote IT Administration & Support with DameWare

Ticket Closure

SLA Fulfilment & Client Notification

Help Desk Performance Reporting

Technician Performance & Customer Satisfaction Monitoring

ABOUT SOLARWINDS

SolarWinds provides powerful and affordable IT management software to customers worldwide from Fortune 500® enterprises to small businesses, government agencies and educational institutions. We are committed to focusing exclusively on IT Pros, and strive to eliminate the complexity that they have been forced to accept from traditional enterprise software vendors. Regardless of where the IT asset or user sits, SolarWinds delivers products that are easy to find, buy, use, maintain, and scale while providing the power to address all key areas of the infrastructure from on premises to the Cloud. Our solutions are rooted in our deep connection to our user base, which interacts in our THWACK® online community to solve problems, share technology and best practices, and participate in our product development process. Learn more today at http://www.solarwinds.com/.