

# UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR A HELP DESK SOLUTION

How to select the right help desk solution for your organization



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## INTRODUCTION

Every business, no matter which industry it serves, strives for growth, profitability, and long-term sustainability. Today, information technology (IT) plays a major role in this endeavor. So much so, that over time, IT has evolved from a business convenience to an actual business strategy enabler.

An organization's infrastructure is the platform for facilitating information and communication channels for employees. It also helps ensure that customers have uninterrupted access to the business. The primary job of the IT department is to support the company's IT infrastructure, particularly the help desk organization.

With technology's increasing influence, it is imperative that organizations arm their IT departments with the best tools possible to get the job done. This white paper is intended to convey the importance of this fact. It details many of the options you have when choosing the right solution to align your IT and business goals, manage your core business operations, and maintain profitability in the global marketplace.

## THE ROLE OF THE HELP DESK

For many businesses the help desk is the lifeblood of the organization. It:

- Promotes improved productivity, efficiency, and communication by enabling access to technologies, databases, and knowledge resources.
- Assists the enterprise in responding quickly to customer requests. In the global workplace, it's likely that your organization works around the clock, so your frontline employees often need access to IT resources 24/7. Your help desk department can respond to technical support requests as needed.
- Helps ensure that your business's day-to-day operations aren't hindered by IT performance issues.

However, without a proper tool in place to support this part of your organization, your team may be hard-pressed to deliver on any of these responsibilities.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT HELP DESK SOLUTION

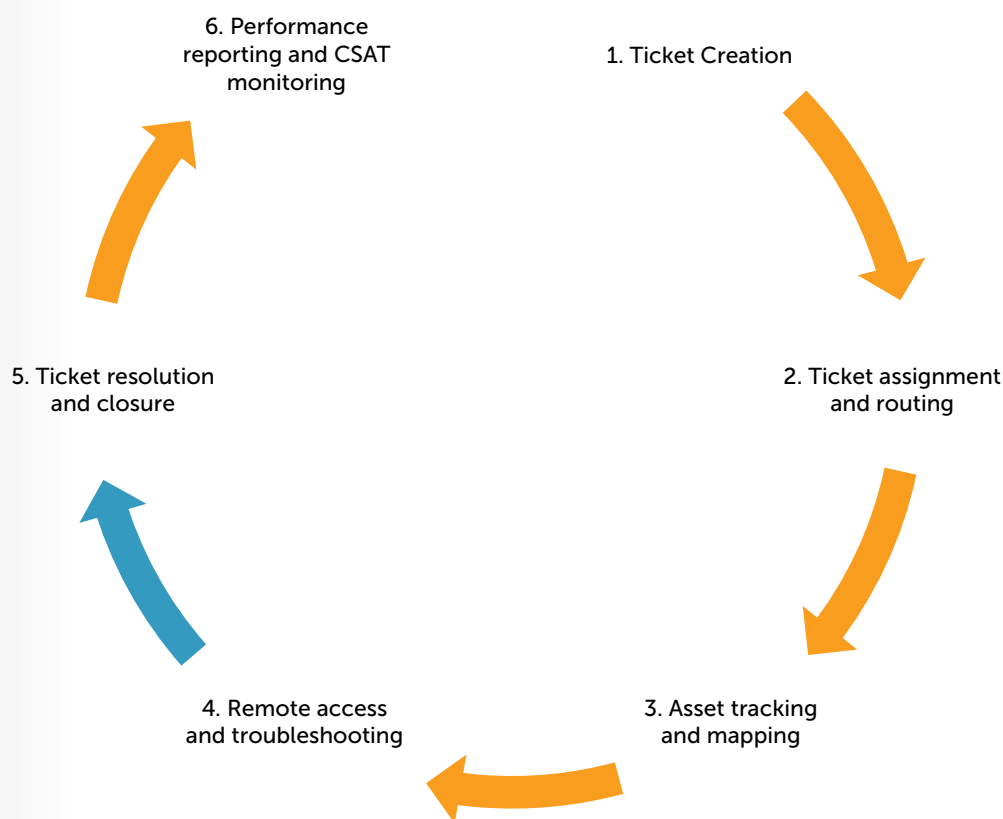
As you begin to evaluate your needs for a help desk solution, we encourage you to examine how you are processing IT requests today, that you understand the various models for running such systems, and that you consider some the essential components we believe should be included in the optimal solution.



## THE IT SERVICE REQUEST LIFE CYCLE

Whether in support of end-users or customers, the process of logging and responding to IT issues follows the same course. However, depending on the tools at hand, the path one takes to bring a help desk issue to resolution can be very different, and the time it takes to resolve said issue can extend significantly.

When evaluating help desk solutions, it is imperative to keep these stages of the journey top of mind. Understanding your limitations as an organization will help you identify the gaps your help desk solution should fill. This will also help you weed out solutions that may actually hinder your ability to respond appropriately to IT issues.



**Ticket creation:** This is where the journey begins. No matter how a support issue is raised, whether via email, text, phone, or a help desk “walk in,” it must be logged in some manner to track its progress through the stages of the cycle. Without a system in place to facilitate this important step, the likelihood of lapsing on a Service Level Agreement (SLAs) increases significantly.

**Ticket assignment and routing:** Help desk departments are often organized on a tiered structure, dividing responsibilities among the team based on various members' specific areas of knowledge or experience. This allows them to respond appropriately and efficiently to even the most complex service issues. The ability to assign and route support tickets to the appropriate tech, is an essential step in resolving issues.

**Asset tracking and mapping:** IT asset management is a critical component of the IT department. It supports end-users from within the organization, tracks and maps assets, monitors software and hardware life cycles, optimizes budgeting and procurement, and helps increase accountability to help ensure auditing and compliance standards. This functionality helps IT pros expedite support requests, while managing several key functions of a business.

**Remote access and troubleshooting:** Being able to leverage remote control software to address advanced IT issues is highly advantageous. Among its many upsides, remote access helps limit time spent physically traveling to the source of IT issues, improves troubleshooting capabilities, and strengthens communication between end-users and IT pros.

**Ticket resolution and closure:** Operating in a silo is no way to run a help desk. You must know the status of every ticket submitted to meet SLAs and avoid issues involving the doubling-down of activities on the path to its resolution. Communication is a vital part of the process. A help desk solution creates a foundation for tracking ticket status, enabling certain automated actions that alert on the potential for SLA breaches, or simply strengthen that communication internally and externally to give the "all clear" that functionality has been restored, and that the issue has been resolved.

**Performance reporting and CSAT monitoring:** Tracking the performance of the help desk team is just as important as the other steps involved in the ticket resolution process. Gathering metrics about time to resolution, tracking SLA performance, and evaluating individual abilities is essential for the delivery of excellent end-user or customer support over time. Measuring performance, establishing benchmarks, and gradually enhancing support are all critical steps toward improving customer satisfaction.

IT admins and help desk technicians spend the majority of their time in the first half of the help desk life cycle, but they should be focusing more on the latter half, the part that drives results by returning end-users to productivity. When choosing a help desk solution, it's important to consider all stages of the IT service life cycle.



## HELP DESK MODELS

The help desk solution you choose must involve the alignment of IT needs and business goals. There is an abundance of help desk solutions in the marketplace today, so it is important that you understand the differences between the various delivery models.

Model	About Solution	Delivery Model	Pros	Cons
Cloud-based	Help desk resides in the cloud or on 3rd-party servers. This involves the provisioning of resources from a cloud service provider, which are operated by in-house IT departments, or involve fully managed deployments from an MSP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessed through internet or web</li> <li>• SaaS-based delivery model</li> <li>• Licensing is often subscription-based, requiring monthly fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessed through internet or web</li> <li>• SaaS-based delivery model</li> <li>• Licensing is often subscription-based, requiring monthly fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessed through internet or web</li> <li>• SaaS-based delivery model</li> <li>• Licensing is often subscription-based, requiring monthly fees</li> </ul>
On-premises	The traditional model of a help desk where the software resides within the network on a server maintained by an in-house IT department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installed and run on the company's servers and computers</li> <li>• Perpetual license with no monthly fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control over data, as the software is self-hosted on-premises</li> <li>• Total cost of ownership tends to be lower than solutions licensed on a SaaS-based delivery model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of maintaining the IT infrastructure to support the solution</li> </ul>

As you can see from the chart above, the decision to adopt a new help desk solution should not be focused on features alone. Your options should be viewed from financial, operational, and even data security perspectives to help ensure the critical alignment of business functionality and sustainability. Fortunately, some providers offer flexible options across a multitude of delivery models to help customers balance capabilities, price, data security, and more.

## THE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF HELP DESK SOFTWARE

Now that you've been introduced to the basics of help desk roles, solutions, and models, it's time to discuss some of the essential elements of a help desk solution, no matter the size of the organization or the industry it serves.

**Simplified and Automated Ticketing Management:** The primary purpose of the help desk is to provide technical support to end-users and resolve technology issues. Because streamlined ticket management directly impacts resolution time, it is important to choose a solution that simplifies manual tasks, such as ticket creation, assignment, escalation, and management. Automating the basic functionalities of a help desk makes an IT admin's job easier. For example, an automated ticketing process assists with categorizing, prioritizing, and assigning tickets to the right technicians. Automating communication between the help desk and end-users is equally important.



**Streamlined IT Asset Management:** It's important for IT admins and help desk technicians to know what hardware and software assets are currently in use, and the specifics about them. Help desk tools with ITAM capabilities help technicians discover assets spread across the network, while supporting more complex actions, such as associating assets with end-users.

**Better IT Change Management:** If an organization changes its hardware or software, or changes any processes, technology, or configurations, its IT infrastructure can be impacted. Managing how these changes are applied helps ensure that they align with processes and procedures. This must occur while maintaining a proper balance of the need for change and the potential impact of that change. IT admins and help desk technicians need solutions to assist with this important function.

**Empowering Knowledge Base:** A knowledge base complements a help desk solution by providing end-users with FAQ and tech-tip resources for self-service and resolution.

**Robust Performance Reporting:** Understanding and analyzing help desk and staff performance metrics helps you identify areas for improvement and unrealized efficiencies. A robust performance reporting system helps you track problem trends, technician performance levels, call trends, average time taken on service issues, and proper cost-per-incident analysis.

**Intuitive User Interface:** Help desk staff should be able to create tickets, prioritize tasks, and communicate with end-users from an easy-to-use interface. An intuitive help desk tool interface requires less ramp-up time, and is easier to use because it enables the help desk support staff to execute administrative tasks from a single management console.

## COMPATIBILITY AND SECURITY CUSTOMIZATIONS

**Compatibility with Mixed-OS Environments:** A help desk solution should have the ability to support mixed-OS environments (Windows®, Linux®, Mac®) and support all key infrastructure technologies, including Active Directory® (AD), Backup/Sync, VMware®, Exchange™, etc.

**Security:** Passwords and login credentials are often shared through help desk tickets. Safeguarding this sensitive data is a top priority for all organizations. This can be achieved through integrations with AD, as well as with built-in permissions settings. Further, by enabling FIPS 140-2-compliant SSL connections for a variety of protocols, you can help ensure that your help desk solution transmits data securely to meet internal governance policies and maintain compliance.

## HOW SOLARWINDS WEB HELP DESK CAN HELP

SolarWinds® Web Help Desk® is an easy-to-use and affordable help desk software that simplifies ticketing management from ticket creation to resolution. Automating manual tasks, the Web Help Desk software allows IT pros to leverage customizable business rules to build ticket assignment, routing, and escalation criteria so that the right technician gets the ticket at the right time. With built-in ticket management dashboards and reporting Web Help Desk allows help desk teams to track ticket status and SLAs, and monitor technician performance. Web Help Desk also includes built-in IT asset management functionality to discover, manage, and report on hardware and software assets in your IT infrastructure.

Ready to take your help desk organization to the next level? Try a 30-day free trial of Web Help Desk today.

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## 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 on 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/>.

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