



Helping you piece IT together

Achieving Support Excellence



Copyright Notice

© 2005 BH Consulting IT Ltd. trading as BH Consulting, All rights reserved. This whitepaper is protected by copyright. Any reproduction of material of this whitepaper must be requested and authorised in writing from BH Consulting. Authorised reproduction of material must include all copyright and proprietary notices in the same form and manner as the original, and must not be modified in any way. Acknowledgement of the source of the material must also be included in all references. BH Consulting reserves the right to revoke such authorisation at any time, and any such use must be discontinued immediately upon notice from BH Consulting.

Disclaimer:

BH Consulting has made every reasonable effort to ensure that information contained within this document is accurate. However no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is given by BH Consulting as to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this document or any information supplied. Recommendations outlined in this document are based on accepted industry best practises.

The information contained in this document has been provided by BH Consulting for information purposes only. This information does not constitute legal, professional or commercial advice. While every care has been taken to ensure that the content is useful and accurate BH Consulting gives no guarantees, undertakings or warranties in this regard, and does not accept any legal liability or responsibility for the content or the accuracy of the information so provided, or, for any loss or damage caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with reliance on the use of such information. Any errors or omissions brought to the attention of BH Consulting will be corrected as soon as possible.

Any views, opinions and guidance set out in this document are provided for information purposes only, and do not purport to be legal and/or professional advice or a definitive interpretation of any law. Anyone contemplating action in respect of matters set out in this document should obtain advice from a suitably qualified professional adviser based on their unique requirements.

The information in this document may contain technical inaccuracies and typographical errors. The information in this document may be updated from time to time and may at times be out of date. BH Consulting accepts no responsibility for keeping the information in this document up to date or any liability whatsoever for any failure to do so.

BH Consulting are under no obligation to update this document or correct any inaccuracies or omissions in it which may exist or become apparent.

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Proactively Managing the Customer Experience.....	5
2.1	Support Desk Skills	5
2.2	Customer Training.....	5
2.3	Skill up the Support Desk.....	5
2.4	Focus on the Customer.....	5
2.5	Redesign Work Processes.....	6
2.6	Make Customer Support Everyone's Responsibility.....	6
3.	Contact Us	7

1. Introduction

When customers contact a support desk, be that an internal support desk or a customer support desk, they are looking for three key things during their engagement:

- **Responsiveness**
Responsiveness means that when a customer calls into a support centre, they will get directly through to a qualified support person who will understand their issue.
- **Quick resolution to problems**
Resolution means the customer is given a satisfactory solution to their reported problem. This could be in the form of accurate answers to a question, a work around or a software code fix.
- **Timely status on open problems.**
Status means that the customer is provided regular and timely status information on the open problem right up until the time the issue is resolved.

The key to keeping the customer satisfied is ensuring that each and every one of their experiences with the support desk meets all the above three requirements. If the customer experiences, or perceives they experience, an inappropriate response to any of the above criteria they will then view their whole engagement in a negative light. No matter how good the people on the support desk are, how good the tools they employ or how well tested their processes are, in the customer's opinion if they perceive the support desk is bad then that perception becomes the customer's reality.

It is therefore essential when achieving support excellence that the customer's experience is handled and managed throughout the lifecycle of their engagement with the support desk to such an extent that the customer's perception of receiving a good service is matched by the reality.

With the ever increasing complexity of today's computing environment the average customer is no longer sure where the problems they are experiencing lie. Is it with the software application, the network, the operating system or the hardware? The customer relies on the support desk to be able to diagnose the source of the problem and provide the support regardless of where the problem lies.

This paper will briefly discuss some ways of managing the customer's experience in this complex environment so that the three key things they are looking for are met.

2. Proactively Managing the Customer Experience

2.1 Support Desk Skills

The first challenge to overcome is the inherently negative view of the support desk, which results from the fact that it is, by its nature, associated with things going wrong. Ironically, however, most of the problems a support desk has to solve are actually the fault of the customer, in that the problem has arisen because the customer does not know how to do something. For that reason, handholding is essential, which means that each member of the support desk needs to be well trained in how to coach the end-customers and in how to communicate well with them. In today's environment it is essential that support desk staff have a mix of technical and interpersonal skills and, in some cases, it is also just as important the call handler is skilled at defusing stress.

2.2 Customer Training

Industry research shows that about 50% to 70% of most support desk calls relate to lack of customer training as the support desk explains how to perform a specific computer operation. Unfortunately, the support desk procedures may have been designed to take the form of quick fixes in dealing with customer queries. However, the support desk should use this opportunity to educate customers and minimise the negative aspects of their ongoing support desk experience. Identifying recurring customer training needs and ensuring those needs are met via the training organisation will result in less calls to the support desk and a more satisfied customer.

2.3 Skill up the Support Desk

The increasing complexity of today's problems has lengthened average times to resolve calls and resulting support desk costs have been seen to increase dramatically. One of the key productivity measurement tools used to measure the performance of the support desk is the "first call closure rate", that is, the number of calls resolved by the support desk without escalating to other teams. Industry figures show that 80% of all calls are known issues, yet most support centres still transfer these calls to second and third level teams. By ensuring the support desk has been trained, cross skilled and provided with the necessary tools the number of calls resolved within the support desk will increase dramatically and thereby improve the customers' experiences. This strategy also has the benefits of reducing the support costs associated with engaging expensive second and third level teams to troubleshoot issues as they now deal with less calls, can deal with any escalated calls quicker as the quality of the information gathered at the support desk is better, and these resources are also now freer to deal with more strategic issues.

2.4 Focus on the Customer

Make the customer the starting point for change. Organisations that re-engineer their support desk often start to rebuild themselves from the inside out, without taking into consideration how they "normally" operate. That means, first identifying what the customers want most and then creating the kind of roles, organisational structures, and technologies that can fully satisfy those expectations. This builds stronger relationships with customers and helps staff better understand customer needs.

2.5 Redesign Work Processes

Design the support desk work processes in light of the support desk goals. To become more customer focused, support desks that re-engineer often make drastic changes in existing roles by integrating work procedures or tasks and empowering staff with more authority and responsibility. When looking at the work processes it is important to ask "What is the real value to the customer of the work that we do?" In almost every case, the application of this principle results in more positive customer attitudes.

2.6 Make Customer Support Everyone's Responsibility.

Positive customer experiences should not be solely dependant on the support desk. While the support desk may be the primary contact point, customers may also end up contacting other people in the organisation. It is essential that everyone is trained in how to properly deal with customers and are made aware that they work in a customer focused environment. The application of this principle almost always results in better customer experiences with increased staff accountability and a clear a customer focus. Just as important, it usually fosters stronger feelings of professionalism among staff, which means less need for hands-on management.

3. Contact Us



Helping you piece IT together

If you wish to contact us or provide any feedback on this whitepaper you may do so using the following contact details.

Telephone : +353-(0)1- 4404065
Website : <http://www.bhconsulting.ie>
Email : info@bhconsulting.ie