



The Art of Organizing & Simplifying IT Support

Find out how IT pros can save time handling help desk tickets and support tasks

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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 serious productivity-impacting major IT problems. Whatever types of issues IT teams face, whether it's level 1 (basic support & troubleshooting), level 2 (config issues, hardware/software repair, etc.) or level 3 support (network and server infrastructure troubleshooting), it's not so easy for the support staff to address all of these with the same priority and in the same time. 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 some of the major tasks performed by help desk analysts and IT support staff and discusses how to simplify, automate and deal with them easily and efficiently, with clear benefits in terms of:

- Time savings
- Operational cost savings
- Higher productivity and efficiency of support
- Increased customer satisfaction

Creating Trouble Tickets

End-users that encounter IT-related issues such as non-booting systems, no Internet connectivity, or malfunctioning business software, usually contact IT support. Some end-users envision the support technician's desk as a counter to drop off computers to be fixed while they wait. Actually, there is a more efficient process for submitting IT repair and support requests—the help desk system.

From the end-users' perspective, the help desk actually makes it easier for them to request IT assistance. Once the end-user has described the issue on the help desk, the IT technician takes over and resolves the issue. The help desk covers all the bases. There is a documented statement about the issue accompanied by the technician's notes and time of repair. End-users are able to create tickets online or via email. They can also attach, store, or refer to files that are related to their request. This provides the information technicians need to make their job of troubleshooting and resolving issues easier. The help desk also aligns the ticket with the right technician for the issue.

From the technician's point of view, the help desk helps with receiving, organizing, and quickly responding to requests. The tool helps track how fast issues are resolved and the technicians' performance. The technicians have a centralized view of the requests and can easily sort issues based on priority.

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. 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, Web site errors, etc. This information makes it easy to assign the issue to the technician with the related skills 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 it 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 then assigns 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 resolutions:

- **Remote support:** The ability to provide troubleshooting and support from a remote location is an important feature that enables technicians to achieve timely resolutions. This feature saves time and travel costs for the help desk department.
- **Connecting via mobile devices:** Some complex issues cannot be handled via mobile. However, there are many simple issues (i.e. server restarts) that can be handled via mobile device.
- **Chat capability:** It's not always possible for remote end-users to stay on a call for troubleshooting sessions. In these cases, a chat session is useful for instructing the end-user through troubleshooting tasks.
- **Connecting to unattended machines:** Technicians often face situations where end-users are away during a remote session. A [remote support software](#) allows technicians to connect to and operate remote workstations.

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

Managing IT Asset Inventory

[IT asset management](#) (ITAM) is 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 IT asset management from a help desk software:

- 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 & procurement forecasts
- Link IT assets to problem tickets to track the problem history of assets
- Simplify parts, billing, and purchase order management

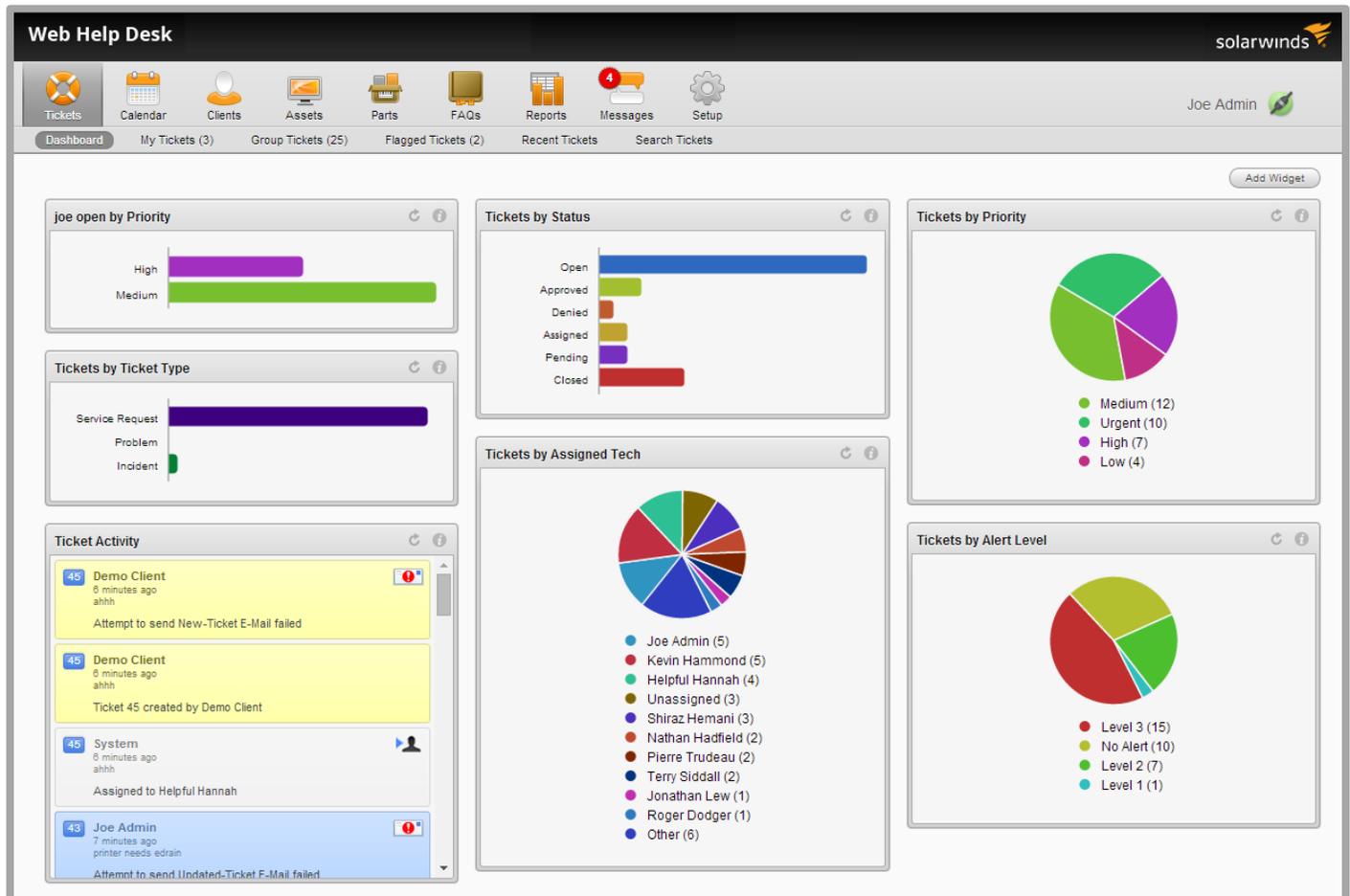
Using a Knowledge Base

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 a similar issue.

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 will help them get 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 specified 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. The end-users' 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 analysts 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.

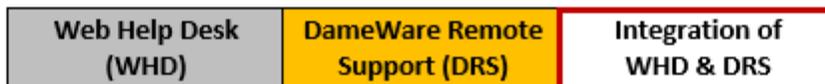
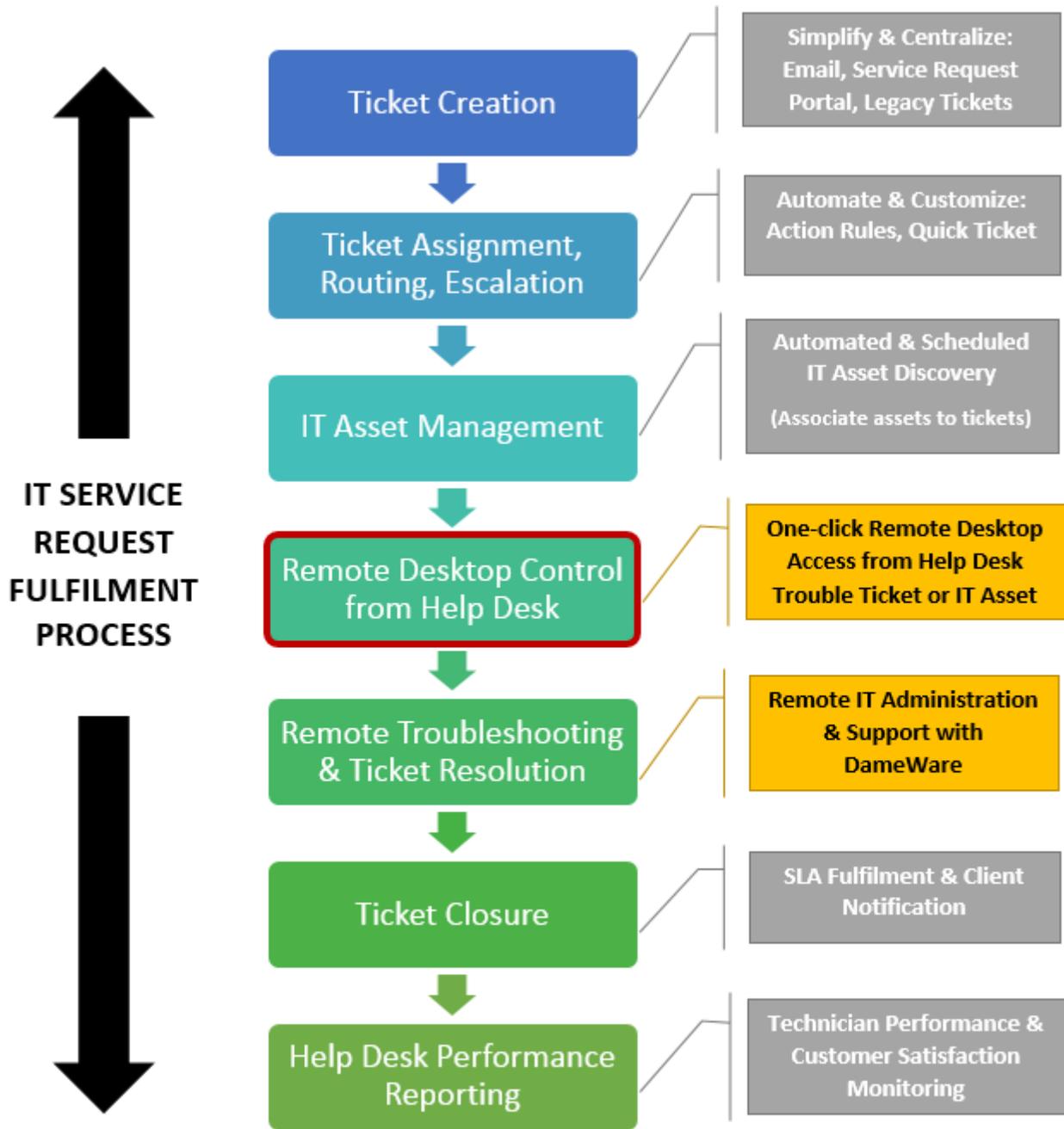
SolarWinds Web Help Desk® (WHD) is a web-based help desk and IT asset management software that delivers simplicity and automation to make your help desk management process a lot easier. With a centralized ticketing management interface the for technicians, and a user-friendly Web portal for end-users 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](#)

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. With built-in tools and utilities to manage and troubleshoot Windows computers and Active Directory® domains, DameWare Remote Support could save IT admins a ton of time and efforts and eliminate the need to physically travel to end-users' workstations for IT administration. Now, you can do IT remotely!

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The [integration of Web Help Desk and DameWare Remote Control](#) allows IT pros to directly initiate remote session with end-user systems from trouble tickets 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.



About SolarWinds

[SolarWinds](#) (NYSE: SWI) provides powerful and affordable IT management software to customers worldwide. Focused exclusively on IT Pros, we strive to eliminate the complexity in IT management software that many have been forced to accept from traditional enterprise software vendors. SolarWinds delivers on this commitment with unexpected simplicity through products that are easy to find, buy, use, and maintain, while providing the power to address any IT management problem on any scale. Our solutions are rooted in our deep connection to our user base, which interacts in our online community, [thwack®](#), to solve problems, share technology and best practices, and directly participate in our product development process. Learn more at <http://www.solarwinds.com>.