Fixing the disconnect between
IT and **Business**
with **Self Service**

Five mistakes you would want to avoid

freshservice
by freshworks

About Freshservice

Freshservice is an affordable cloud based service management software that currently serves more than 2000 mid-market and enterprise customers worldwide. Equipped with an intuitive UI and a powerful asset management module, Freshservice is effortlessly customisable and built on top of ITIL processes.

Freshservice is integrated with a number of popular cloud services like Google Apps, Dropbox and LogMeIn and is designed to help IT organizations focus on what is most important - exceptional service delivery and customer satisfaction.

Freshservice is from the makers of leading customer support software Freshdesk, which has more than 35000 customers worldwide like Cisco, Honda, 3M, The Atlantic and QuizUp.

Introduction

It's time to face the facts. IT's got a problem - the severe disconnect it experiences with the business side of the organisation. According to a recent **Gartner and IBM survey** of 456 senior business executives, **only 17% of finance executives agreed with the statement "Our investments in IT are delivering business value."**

This is obviously a ubiquitous and worrisome misconception that needs to be fixed. In any organisation, IT support is a thankless job. **The same ticket queue that floods with incident tickets when there's one faulty printer, doesn't exactly overflow with thank you notes when everything is running smoothly**. The relationship between IT and the rest of the organisation usually turns out to be one where IT is viewed merely as a place to approach at problematic times and then completely ignore until the next problem crops up. This apparent imbalance causes a basic issue with trust and respect amongst the business departments and the service desk. This general, widespread misalignment within an organisation can be traced back to a few key challenges faced by IT. The major part of the issue is rooted in the IT department's difficulty in adequately showcasing and demonstrating the value of their services to the rest of the organisation.

In most cases, the members of the organisation - both business executives and end users alike - have no knowledge about the role of the IT department or the services offered by it. However, the business executives do know that the IT department takes a considerable chunk out of the budget, and the end users know that it it takes much too long to fix problems. In fact, **according to a TNS National Omnibus Survey, 43% of employees were found to be dissatisfied with the responsiveness of IT service delivery.**

With numbers like these at the forefront, fixing this basic disconnect and distrust between IT and the rest of the business is of paramount importance for the success and even the sustenance of an organisation.

Why self service is the key to fixing this

The principles of self service naturally lend themselves to the realm of customer support. It's quite simple really : helping your customers help themselves is the easiest way to empower them, keep them happy and retain them. Deploying self service in your service desk doesn't just make your users more autonomous, but also takes a huge load off your service desk and exponentially cuts costs on the long run. It can also help increase the quality of support in your service desk. When empowered with self service, your users will be able to troubleshoot the minor issues that are usually delegated to L1 support. This frees up L1 support to tackle more complex issues, thus gradually improving the support capabilities of all the levels of your service desk.

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Aside from these cost cutting, support, efficiency, and morale boosting perks, self service is also the way to go if you wish to fix the disconnect between business and IT.

Let's look at the bigger picture here. The challenge you face now is to define and establish the value of the service desk and its services to the rest of the business.Self service works on a mantra of transparency and user-friendliness and can act as a trustworthy source of information in the organisation. And when you apply that to the

interdepartmental communication issues we've been talking about, you empower your users with a surefire system to discover the value of IT all by themselves.

So why hasn't everyone done it already?

The misconception that self service doesn't qualify as a 'priority'

Clearly, processes like incident and asset management have a more urgent, serious connotation in a service desk context. They help avoid interruptions to services, track valuable assets in the organisation and keep the cogs turning. It's quite understandable that these are the areas that get the most attention and dedicated effort in organisations. As a result, it's also quite natural that deploying self service gets constantly passed up in the favour of 'higher priority' projects. After all, the general perception about self service is that all it does is help cut down on a few redundant tickets and give a little boost in customer satisfaction.

However, the mere presence of a self service portal can help your users discover solutions, make incident management easier for your team, streamline the request fulfilment process, and help provide valuable metrics about CIs and users, and even proactively solve uncountable problems. For example, just a little investigation into the most requested CIs in your service catalog could help you bridge the crucial demand-supply gap and even plan ahead financially. A look at the most searched for knowledge base could help you understand which problems most frequently plague your users.

If you know what you're doing and where to look, deploying self service can help you gain some amazing insights about your organization from an IT perspective and radically increase the productivity of your service desk. So, before you set out to fix the disconnect, boost efficiency and everything in between, here's the cheat sheet on the five self service missteps that you'll wish you'd known about.

1. Neglecting the completely different needs of end users and business executives.

End Users and Business executives have completely different expectations from IT. They've got completely different complaints about it, as well.

	BUSINESS EXECUTIVES	END USERS
What they want from IT	Returns on their investment	A reliable problem solving service
What matters most to them	Transparency	Speed and efficiency
What they worry about	Why does IT cost so much? Is IT actually doing a good job?	Why does it take so long for IT to take take care of a simple problem
What they're unsure of	How the IT budget is being put to use?	What is the full range of services that is actually offered by IT?
What this could result in	Basic distrust with IT, that could even lead to outsourcing, if unresolved.	Poor business efficiency, unverified workarounds that result in poor business efficiency or sometimes even facilitate shadow IT.

A service catalog has the ability to provide both transparency and efficiency - deploying one in your service desk could be an easy fix for the issues on both ends.

But to fulfil two sets of wildly different expectations, the key is to take a dual view approach when designing your service catalog. Equip your service catalog with two different views that can be accessed by different hierarchies : one, a **service portfolio** view for the business executives which gives a broader, business oriented view of available IT services, the budget, expenses and associated metrics. This would be the ideal aid for executives to forecast demand, monitor performance, and clearly understand where their money is going.

The second view, could be the standard **shopping cart - like service catalog** for the end users, so they can view and acquire the IT services they are entitled to from a familiar e-commerce website experience.

2. Underestimating the importance of defining services

Unambiguously and clearly defining the services in your service catalog is what helps define IT's role and scope to the rest of your organisation. Clearly, this requires a lot of thought and effort. It's not something that you just check off your list and forget about. The two main challenges that IT faces when writing effective service descriptions are

- defining the value of the service
- keeping the jargon to a minimum.

Business executives and end users would certainly like to know the features and cost of a service. But more than anything, what pushes them to actually purchase a service is the value and benefits it could give them. This is the angle that needs to be addressed by the service descriptions in your catalog. Aside from simply furnishing general stats about the service, you will need to create **value propositions** that tie the services to actual business outcomes.

These value propositions have to be to-the-point and written strictly in business terms. One of the major reasons for the disconnect between business and IT is inescapable jargon that is associated with IT processes.A Gartner study from 2014, states that " (the) attempts to define IT services often fail because service definitions are too technical and there are far too many." Creating a service catalog and populating it with value propositions that are not written in business terms would be extremely counter intuitive and would actually do more damage than no service catalog at all.

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IT departments might even resist service catalogs altogether because they view them as precursors to outsourcing. However, IT actually has a higher chance of being outsourced if they don't clearly define what they do and what they offer. Ambiguity and a lack of transparency might actually be what convinces executives into believing they could get a better deal elsewhere.

3. Disregarding the need for collaboration

Designing self service process cannot be a solely IT undertaking. If your goal is to align IT better with the business self service is certainly the best way to do it. However, you can maximize on all this potential only if the design process is a collaborative effort.

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Apart from providing valuable insight into their expectations from a self service portal, this could

also be one of the very few opportunities that IT gets to actually sit down with business and discuss what concrete business process requirements, such as service levels, prioritising IT services and understanding supply and demand. Self service is built to bridge the disconnect between IT and Business can never truly succeed until it is business oriented.

4. Deploying and forgetting

Once your self service processes have been designed, think of them as just another product or service that needs to be launched and marketed the right way. Extending the same analogy, if you deploy self service and expect people to unquestioningly adopt it with no persuasion, you might end up a little disappointed.

The shorthand to ensure sustainability are the three E's
- **Engage**
- **Evaluate and**
- **Evolve**

Engage users in meaningful conversation through your internal communities and social networks. Inform them about new developments and establish the value delivered by the new processes.

Once you've got those engaged users, it's time to start evaluating where exactly you fall short and begin improving upon these problem areas. Beta testing your self service processes on an early adopter user group would be the best source for some informed, constructive feedback. But here's the thing. To ensure that your processes are sustained over time, you're going to need a little more legwork than that.

This process of soliciting and collecting feedback never ends quite ends because, your service desk is about the journey and not the destination. This continual

improvement is the only way to ensure that your service desk is always evolving and stays relevant.

And when you've finally gotten your users on board for real, it is your responsibility to demonstrate the value of the self service portal to the non - IT areas of your organisation - such as HR, Finance and Sales - and encourage them to utilize it for showcasing and delivering their own services. You could even take a page out of e-commerce vendors, and display the 'most requested items' or employ cross selling - a.k.a ' the people who bought this also bought this' strategy. When a user, say your UI designer, is requesting a new computer, he probably also requires the latest version of Photoshop and some additional storage. However, too much of a good thing can still be detrimental. Hint: Think of those incessant credit cards marketers. **Cross selling works, just as long as the suggestions stay helpful and relevant without being obtrusive.**

5. Expecting self service to be the one stop answer to all your support problems.

Let's get this out in the open: Despite all the undeniable perks that come with it, self service is just another efficiency boosting service desk process. It's great at solving and reducing the occurrence of a particular type of problem. It is, however, not a superpower.

Self service can be great at handling those recurring password resets, simple how-to's and FAQ's. It will undoubtedly help you cut down costs and reduce the load on your service desk. However, when a customer faces a major issue - in other words, anything more serious than a password

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reset - they will still definitely need actual customer support and human interaction.

Truly brilliant customer support happens when self service and support are implemented in a balanced mix. And depending on your workforce, budget constraints and the kind of requests that are primarily handled by your service desk, that perfect mix will undoubtedly differ from organisation to organisation. The same attributes that make self service so invaluable, can just as easily backfire. Unstandardised processes that are designed without taking customer requirements into account could actually cause more damage than the even the absence of a self service portal, jeopardising exactly what you set out to achieve.

Which is why the first thing to take into account when you're designing self service processes is to define what you want to achieve using self service. This can help you weigh the pros and cons of deploying self service in your service desk. When you evaluate the costs, it is essential to check if the investment that goes into deploying self service is actually lower than the returns you would get from reducing support costs. And if the scales tip the other way, you shouldn't hesitate to look for other alternatives that are better suited to your requirements.
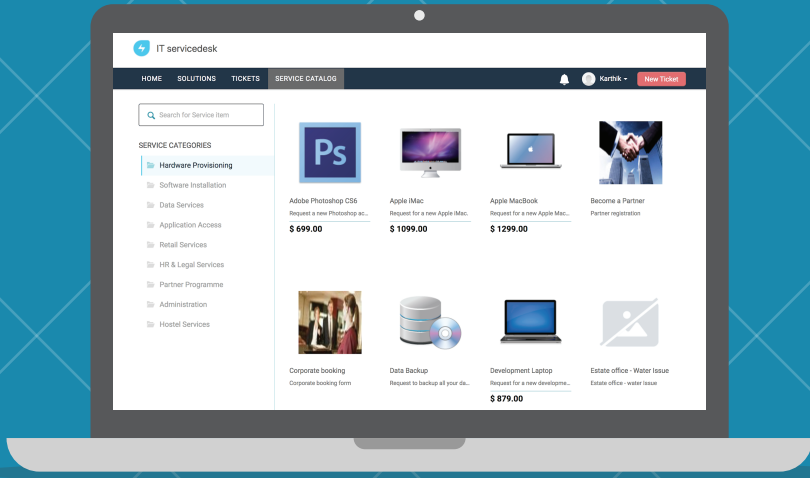
"Freshservice's Service Catalog really puts self service and power in our users' hands to request what they want and automate the process completely."

- Ben Greeno

IT Operations Manager, Judson University

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