freshdesk

From Chaos to Control:
the move from email to a helpdesk

About

As a customer support manager, you have a lot going on. It's not just the happiness of your customers that weighs heavily on you but also agent productivity and satisfaction. How do you make sure that your agents have the knowledge and resources they need to make customers happy?

While a part of the responsibility lies with the structure of your support process (Do your agents have the right amount of freedom to make decisions for the benefit of your customers? Are your customers able to reach out to you whenever they have a problem?) the software you use has an equally important role to play. In fact, your customer support software is your secret ingredient. While the best tool can't make your support reps more empathetic or smarter, bad software can prevent your support champions from being the best they can be -- by causing them to be inefficient and unproductive.

You need the tool that's right for your business. Be well informed when you sit down at your desk to make this important decision.

The Helpdesk Advantage

A lot of businesses use email as their primary channel of customer communication. This is great except they insist on using an email client like Gmail or Outlook to support their customers.While email clients like Gmail and Outlook have a lot of advantages, they're simply not built for supporting customers.

Most businesses that use email to support customers, typically support them in this manner. Customers emails their query to an email address (or one of many, depending on the business) and agents log into the inbox and answer support queries as they come (if a lot have piled up, agents select and prioritize them subjectively). This is not a very scalable or efficient approach.

Email clients do not offer businesses some of the advantages that helpdesks can provide:

Accountability
the ability to figure out who's answered what

With Gmail, everyone logs into the inbox with the same email address or uses a couple of different email addresses to manage conversations. This approach breeds confusion and leaves room for conversations to get lost or ignored. There is little to no accountability and higher odds that customers will receive confusing or conflicting replies. Imagine, if you will, a world where you're a florist. A customer writes in, angry with the order you sent their mother - they're demanding a refund. Two of your support reps see the email and decide to act on it - they both decide a contrite bouquet should do the trick. The confused customer receives two bouquets and you're down two bouquets and up a lot of confusion. With a team inbox, all support conversations can be streamlined into one inbox that your agents can log into, with their separate accounts, and work on queries without overlapping.

Service Levels
the ability to set standards and stick to them

Set customer service response standards with Service Level Agreements (SLAs). In a helpdesk, SLAs alert agents when responses to a ticket are due, to insure that customers receive responses in a timely manner. The due-by time, of the ticket, is calculated based on the urgency of the ticket. This way, conversations are prioritized. This is not the case with Gmail where the only solution is to set reminders and Calendar events so that you can remember to reply. Most helpdesks allow for SLAs to be specified based on the requester, the source of the query, the type of query -- and so on.

Reporting
the ability to analyze data for actionable insights

Gmail doesn't allow for the kind of prescience that a helpdesk will provide. A helpdesk's reporting provides you with metrics and data that you can use to gain insights to set strategies and make informed decisions. For instance, a glance at helpdesk reports should be all that you need to discover how to distribute your team so that there's always enough manpower on deck.

Other Benefits of
a Dedicated Helpdesk System:

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Proactive Support

Support can pay thoughtful attention to the knowledge base and online forums. When 70% of customers prefer to use a company's website to get answers to their questions rather than use phone or email, it might just be time to step up self service.

Efficient support

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Smarter support

Support can be more efficient and smarter, thanks to automation rules in a helpdesk. Most helpdesks allow businesses to set up rules that trigger certain events (e.g., if a ticket is submitted through social media, the helpdesk is to notify the supervisor).. Automation can be something as simple as sending canned responses, or pre-formatted reply templates that can quickly replace your reply and be sent a dozen a minute. Scenario automations - a series of actions that can be deployed at the click of a button -- are also helpful..

Contextual support

With a helpdesk, you can integrate all your customer data systems so that your support agents always have access to all the context they need to understand an issue. Imagine a scenario where, when a customer emails a query, your helpdesk displays not just a list of recent conversations with a customer, but also their last purchase, the history of interactions with their account managers, the email campaigns they've opened, and more. All your customer information, in one place.

Advantages of a Cloud-Based (SaaS) Helpdesk Over On-Premise

On-premise software is installed on your servers and run using your computing infrastructure. We'd compare it to owning a car - you pay a fee for it and it's all yours, to do with as you please. A lot of on-premise is based on 20-year-old business models. A lot of on-premise software is also clunky, unwieldy, and feature bloated. With a cloud helpdesk, on the other hand, a business chooses a provider to handle all the technology, and they keep the product up to date and working properly. They handle the servers and the computing infrastructure, agilely.

Easy to Set Up

With on-premise software, you are responsible for the complicated implementation of software and support processes. This could take days or weeks. On the other hand, with a cloud helpdesk, typically, you can sign up for an account and get started immediately. Typically, when the technology is handled by a provider, extra programming and system changes are not necessary for your support software to fit your workflow. Additionally, your provider is responsible for upgrades and maintenance.

Data for a Lower Cost

Managing data means acquiring, installing, maintaining, and repairing all the equipment, plus taking on the tasks associated with processing and analyzing the data itself. Moving the helpdesk into the cloud means transferring all of that responsibility for equipment and data management onto the provider.

Scale Securely

With on-premise software, the job of securing more servers and acquiring more technology (as your customer base grows) falls to you. With a cloud helpdesk, your provider is the one who handles that infrastructure. When you need to scale up, all you need to do is buy more seats for your agents. When you need to scale down, all you have to do is remove seats from the system.

Disaster recovery

If the unthinkable were to happen, your provider is responsible for making sure that data and applications remain secure. You can focus on your employees and not worry about anything else. Most of the time, that's backup, security, and disaster recovery, without the price tag for enterprise software. Plus, the more careful you are about your provider, the fewer the downtimes/outages you'll have to deal with.

Accessibility

A cloud-based system lets your agents access your helpdesk, no matter where they are -- in a coffee shop or on a beach -- as long as they have access to Internet. An on-premise helpdesk, on the other hand, requires your employees to be in the office. And, if you move offices, you'll have to account for moving the system as well. That's an agile workforce, at a fraction of the cost.

Flexible payment options

Most on-premise software have heavy up-front costs -- the software, the infrastructure, server costs, and ongoing custom programming. However, cloud helpdesks typically use subscription-based payment methods and do not require you to pay a fee upfront to begin using the software. These costs might be monthly, quarterly, or annual.

A Green Choice

Another advantage of cloud solutions is a reduced energy footprint -- you're not footing the energy bill keeping all those server mainframes and data centers as cool as cucumbers, all through the year. By getting a cloud helpdesk, over an on-premise software, you're literally making the world a better place.

Use Case:

Hired goes the hosted helpdesk route

Hired is a new kind of career marketplace for the world's knowledge workers, one where job candidates showcase their profiles and résumés privately to more than 2,000 vetted companies who use Hired to find the right employees. Like all growing companies, Hired began by managing customer support in a "low-tech" way -- through email. Candidates or companies would write to their Talent Advocate or their Client Executive with a problem, and the issue would be forwarded to the person who could best address it.

Fast forward a year and employees involved in service and support numbered in the dozens. Hired recognized the need to create a more structured support model to handle both internal and customer issues—and use a more robust platform.As the business grew, there came a need for a professional help desk solution that could collate and streamline all their communication, as well as tie into the existing Google Apps infrastructure. Not to mention, the long phone calls and extensive emails that needed to be documented properly for reference. The team was also spending a lot of time and resources manually tracking time spent for each project-related requests from their clients and then entering information into Quickbooks as they resolved the request. They had to find a better way to do it, no matter how cumbersome or resource-consuming it was, as the timesheets acted as a reference for all invoices billed to clients.

Nate Clark, Hired's Director of Engineering, spearheaded the customer support tool selection. The selection team wanted a process that differed dramatically from the traditional customer service model. Instead of a broad base of customer service reps, with smaller tiers of employees handling escalated issues, they wanted to enable a "whole company support" culture that made it easy and cost effective for everyone in the company to demonstrate their customer-first culture.

A Freshdesk customer for almost two years to date, this story has a happy ending.

22% ↑	8% ↑	32% ↓
FIRST RESPONSE SLA	SLA RESOLUTION	AVG RESPONSE TIME
64% to 86%	87% to 96%	4hr 4mins to 2hr 47min

""What's the ROI for the ability to use Freshdesk both as a customer service tool and as an inter-departmental collaboration tool? It saves us time; it saves us thousands of dollars per month. We've found that it adds redundancy, and virtually eliminates backlog. Freshdesk is just the right tool for us—the number of employees we can inexpensively involve in customer support is a real business asset. And the ability of Freshdesk to grow with our company makes us feel very confident."

NATE CLARK
Director of Engineering, Hired

Try a Helpdesk Platform Built for Today's Support Environment

If you're a growing business, we'd recommend that you look no further than a cloud-based customer support solution. We feel strongly that a light, pocket-friendly platform -- one that allows businesses to get up and running quickly without having to spend time deploying a complex system -- is your best bet. Please write to **support@freshdesk.com** with feedback, questions, or just to say hi. We love email.

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