



by **PeterMcG**ARAHAN

The **Top 10** Service and Support

I just completed a four month project for a customer where I was asked to replace the service desk manager, assess the team's performance, and implement recommendations for continuous improvement. It was a wonderful experience to be able to practice what I preach and gain further insights into team and organizational dynamics. There were a few basic components missing from the way this service desk operated. To sum it up:

- They were not a team.
- They had not embraced industry best practices.
- They were lacking trust, communication, and shared goals.
- They were individual contributors, all doing their job their way with little concern for all doing it the same right way.

I started my assignment by observing, interviewing, communicating, and building trust by leading by example. To me, establishing what is important to you in terms of performance and professionalism is the first step. You have to tell the team what matters most to you, what you care about, and what they should care about and then be relentless in your pursuit to ensure it is engrained in their daily behavior. You also have to show them by providing them with one-on-one and team training as well as linking their new and improved actions to results/consequences. The team had become reliant on the manager to make all of their decisions for them and I believed it was holding them back. We implemented daily fifteen minute team meetings to rebuild the trust and open up the communication channels. I 'pushed' back on making decisions for them when I knew they could make them on their own or by consulting their teammates.



1 Attitude is Everything

Go into every situation with a positive attitude and the intent on doing the right thing for the customer and everyone will benefit.

2 No Excuses, Just Solutions

Never dead-end your customer or assume you know the details of their issue/request without "seeking to understand," asking the right questions, and actively listening.

3 Team Work

Empowering the team to make frontline decisions and coordinate best practice processes is the only way service desks can survive and thrive in today's ever demanding role as the customer advocate and single point of contact for all customer issues and requests.

4 Customer Advocate

You represent the 'voice of the customer' which means the customer trusts you to represent them and their issue/request to the other support teams, coordinate timely resolutions and eliminate reoccurring issues.

5 Total Contact Ownership

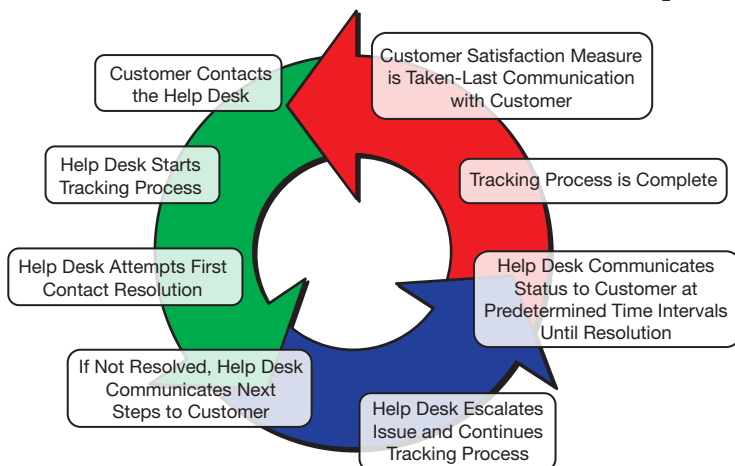
Is built upon the premise that the service desk will continue to address a customer's issue/request and follow up until the issue or question is resolved to the customer's satisfaction. The entire team must diligently and relentlessly follow-up on ALL of their un-resolved tickets (especially the ones not recently statuses), no matter who is currently assigned to work on it.

6 Quality Ticket Documentation

Research, diagnose, prioritize, and document thoroughly (it did not happen if it's not documented in the ticket). Always ask yourself, "If I was sending this to myself—would I have the right information to begin resolving the issue from the last troubleshooting step attempted by the service desk?"

Best Practices

Total Contact Ownership



7 Fun

Having fun is a key component of successful teams. It is up to all of you to make your environment and service desk culture a place that is supportive, respectful, hard-working, focused, and fun. Fun will be much more “fun” when all of you all agree that you have earned and deserve it.

8 Being Proactive

Spotting trends, related issues, and reoccurring issues and working to ensure that we minimize business impact, communicate appropriately, and work to learn from the situation. Provide assistance in bringing visibility to the issue and its impact and what we need to do to identify the root cause and long-term resolution—eliminating the reoccurrence of these problems.

9 First Contact Resolution

You should use all available resources (team members, training, tools, documentation, past incidents, etc.) to facilitate solving a customer’s issue on the first contact. It leads to a higher level of customer satisfaction, improves the service desk image, allows Level-2 teams to be more responsive, and improves productivity. Research issues in-depth or resolved and only escalate when you have exhausted all avenues to resolve at the service desk. If you don’t know the answer—find out by research or asking someone—the collection of learning in the process will better prepare you for the next time this issue is reported. Always Know!

10 Solve the Business Problem First

Then address the technical or policy issues. Always ask yourself and then document it in the ticket—who is the customer, what are they trying to do, what can’t they do, and how critical is it in terms of productivity, impact, and patient care.

The natural leaders quickly rose to the challenge and helped the other team members who were struggling with the new directive aimed at harnessing the power of the team. We used examples and scenarios to clearly communicate to the team the difference between unacceptable, expected, and over-and-above performance. The team agreed to police their own performance using a daily scorecard and work with other team members who needed coaching on the newly focused best practices of service and support. I think the greatest satisfaction for me with this team was restoring their pride in themselves, their work, and their team. Service desk pride is a key component of success. The professional and the team must take pride in their professionalism, customer service and their attitude and approach towards the customer and their peers in supporting the business. Then, and only then, will the organization respect them and treat them for the customer service professionals they are and their ability to work their issues to resolution in a timely manner.

After transitioning my responsibilities to a permanent service desk manager who I interviewed and recommended for the position, I sent this Top Ten list to the team in place of a messy, “tearful” goodbye. I asked them to keep this list top-of-mind as they engaged with customers, teammates, and peers on a daily basis. I promised that if they focused on these Top Ten best practices, they would be rewarded in more ways than they could possibly imagine.



Peter McGarahan is the founder and president of McGarahan & Associates. Pete’s value to the service and support industry is his thought leadership. As a practitioner, product manager, and support industry analyst and expert, he has influenced the maturity of the service and support industry. His passion for customer service led the Taco Bell support organization to achieve the Help Desk Institute Team Excellence Award. IT Support News also named him one of the “Top 25 Professionals in the Service and Support Industry” in 1999. Support professionals voted McGarahan “The Legend of the Year” in 2002 and again in 2004 at the Help Desk Professionals conference for his endless energy, mentoring, and coaching and his valuable contribution to the support industry and community. You can reach Peter McGarahan at pete@mcgarahan.com or 714.694.1158.



Peter