

# EMA™ Advisory Note: Enterprise Trends in the Service Desk 2009

The help desk adoption began 20 or more years ago with the objective of ensuring that users were able to use technology to perform whatever was the nature of their own job function. Since then, the help desk has been part of the IT landscape albeit often unappreciated. Times have changed and for most organizations, the help desk has evolved toward a service desk operation where “support” for all kinds of business activities is focused. This can range from the basics of problem and incident management or change processes to requests for services that are often routed through the service catalog. Maturity in IT and the increasing adoption of the IT Infrastructure Library best practices have been prime drivers for this evolution. The service desk now looks much more like a “hub” of service management activity to touch on asset management, Configuration Management Systems, change management, knowledge management and more.

ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts recently delved into the “state of the state” of the service desk. In this research, EMA surveyed 158 respondents to better understand the current priorities and trends impacting service support organizations. In addition, we personally interviewed 14 different individuals responsible for service desk strategy to further drill into the details of his/her operation. One respondent summarized the definition of a service desk with the following sentiment:

*The service desk has a greater view/responsibility/control of the operations of an IT organization, and more greatly ... the company (business entity) as a whole. Help desks are predominately responsible for responding to incident/problem management, and serves as a function of a service desk.*

Another, more direct, response was expressed by stating that:

*Help desk=reactive; service desk=proactive.*

Clearly, IT professionals are seeing and understanding the differences between the help desk and the service desk. Priorities for new initiatives are reflective of this change despite today’s market drivers focused on cost reduction. EMA research shows that reducing costs is not the only priority on the minds of customer service and support teams. Priorities for service desk management goals in the enterprise include improving customer satisfaction (82%) followed by process deployment (72%) and then cost reduction (70%). Research also shows that there is a need for multi-language support and a smaller, but growing interest in financial metrics for the service desk (44%).

Consolidation of support operations is a significant priority. Many companies have experienced mergers and acquisitions as well as organic corporate evolution over time creating more than one operation geared to serve sub-sets of user populations. In recent EMA research, more than half of the respondents were currently supporting multiple service desks or planning to do so. Economies in efficiency as well as cost savings can be achieved by merging these support teams where it makes sense to the organization. Savings can be realized

## Key Findings

- **Service Desk Initiatives are Part of Overarching ITSM Strategy:** 62 percent of participants are either already making the help/service desk part of the company’s ITSM strategy or are planning to do so.
- **Use of Multiple Help/Service Desk Tools:** 56 percent of respondents from large enterprises are managing or planning to manage multiple help desks. The vast majority of organizations managing multiple help/service desks will consolidate their operations.
- **ITIL Disciplines Identified as Important:** 64 percent of respondents have deployed or are planning to deploy ITILv3. Incident, problem and change management are the most frequently-deployed ITIL disciplines and remain the most critical for help/service desk operations.

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through process standardization, utilization of the same service desk solution and training geared to improve the skill sets of support personnel.

Consolidating with customer service and/or relationship management is not high on the radar screen for most organizations. Roughly, 54% of the survey respondents indicated that they had no plans for such an initiative. A small percentage does have plans to move ahead with this integration. Much of it can be very vertical and product-specific. For some industries, it can make sense whereas others have such big differences between products and IT technology that there is little to be gained by managing them together as one.

For professionals choosing to replace a solution, beware of being too narrow in your considerations. Many times buyers choose a vendor or product simply based on cost factors at the time of purchase. In the long run, these choices may prove to be short-sighted. An evaluation of how extensible the product is—not only from a customization standpoint—but also from an extensibility perspective, looking at how much of the application can be used to fulfill the many ITSM needs of the organization. On-going training costs play a role as well, especially for companies that are continuing to maintain multiple service desk operations. The best way to approach this is by assessing the broader value equation beyond merely capital and operational expenses. One of Enterprise Management Associates' surveys said when asked about best practices for replacing a help desk deployment:

*You must have the appetite and management support to not only deploy a new service desk, but the appetite to resource it over the long haul in terms of on-going development and maintenance in order to meet your strategic goals.*

It is interesting to consider the time and effort that goes into scoping and choosing any given vendor's product. There is generally a team with a set of "ideal" requirements that must be part of the new solution. This process tends to look at what is needed by the organization now and also anticipated requirements in the future. Pragmatism is not always part of the buying decision. For instance, EMA heard over and over again how buyers wish they had considered using a solution out-of-the-box rather than to have it customized. These were all cases where customization could have been avoided if only there were a better understanding of product capabilities. Neither vendors nor buyers own this problem except together. The challenge here is more of a situation where budget is typically available early on and then more difficult to get once the purchase has been made. The reality is that these customization decisions often need to be considered over a period of time.

Service desk buyers should be looking for a broad ITSM solution that can be applied across the IT organization to meet many best practice and service quality needs. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents indicated a broad ITSM solution would best suit their needs. This bodes well for large IT management

## Service Desk Priorities

- **Service Catalog a Key Growth Area:** 56 percent of respondents have already deployed or are planning to deploy a service catalog. Clearly, there is value in putting IT service offerings front and center in the hands of managers and users via the service catalog.
- **Self-Service a Top Priority:** Self-service is a strong area of investment because of its ability to lower call volume and resolution time at the service desk. Surprisingly, only 32 percent of respondents indicated that they had already implemented password reset technology while 41 percent are planning to do so.
- **Knowledge management:** Will also show growth in the coming years as a key corporate resource. Effective access of that knowledge is critical.

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technology vendors that have many interconnected service management components. There are also a number of “suite” products that can address everything from problem and incident management to change, service level management and knowledge management. In short, IT buyers have many choices in today’s service desk market.

The service desk is expected to continue its role as a central component in any service support and delivery strategy. Wise CIOs and other IT strategists will look at how to leverage the service desk to meet corporate expectations for IT service functions. Much can be achieved with the right solution and the well-designed processes to support related disciplines. Forward momentum can continue even as budgets are reduced. Some organizations will choose to move ahead with purchases of new solutions knowing that the long-term value will more than remunerate the investment. For others, progress can be made by streamlining workflow, consolidation of operations, incremental implementation of additional best practice components and even planning for consolidating customer service with the IT help desk are all potential actions that can be taken in addition to product replacements. Any and all of these steps will position IT for greater growth when budget dollars are easier to come by. The groundwork will have been completed to move ahead.

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## IBM Tivoli Case Study

### Automotive Manufacturer—Merging Operations for Cost Control

Enterprise Management Associates interviewed a large automotive manufacturing company involved with many aspects of the automotive industry on behalf of IBM Tivoli, coincident with the research for *The Aging Help Desk: Migrating to a Modern Service Desk*. The company has made several acquisitions resulting in repetitive operational functions. Business activities involve manufacturing, on-line and retail sales operations and warranty processing, in addition to a very large parts operation. The goal for this company is to streamline operations in order to save on IT expenses.

### Environment/Background

The IT manager explained that today its service desk is functioning on a basic level. IBM Tivoli Service Request Manager will be used to implement the handling of automatic ticketing and servicing its manufacturing plants, streamlining incident submission and management. The company uses a tree capability for properly routing tickets to the appropriate support analyst.

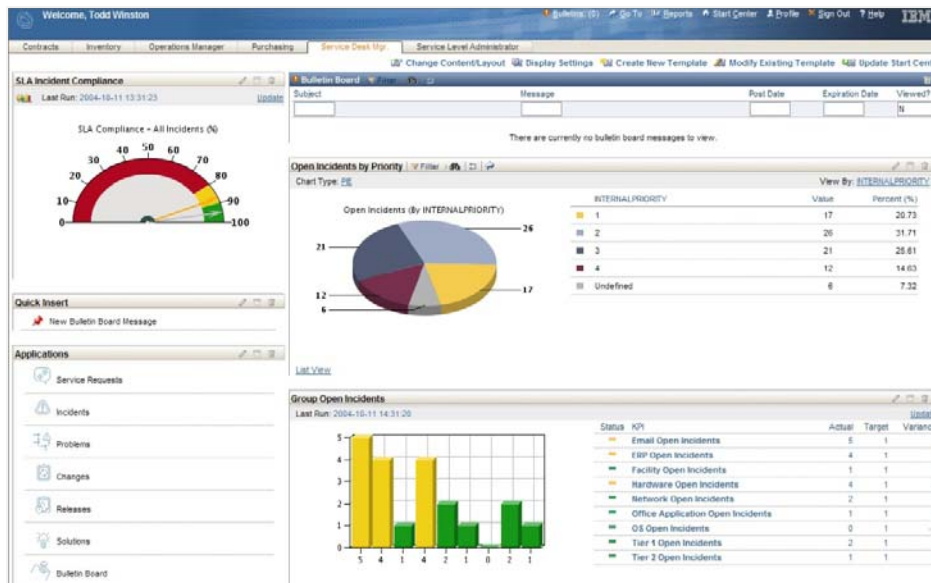


Figure 1: IBM Tivoli Service Request Manager

### Size/Scope

There are approximately 600 IT staff members. The volume of tickets is roughly 3000 - 4000 tickets in a month. The most critical operations for this company involve manufacturing plant operations. Tickets from this area must be addressed promptly to keep production moving.

There are five different service desks in place, with each operation using a different tool set to support the segment of the corporate community it is responsible for. This inhibits the company from seeing the totality of incidents it is managing across the entire corporation.

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## Product Deployed

Many products are deployed in this environment, creating no ability to streamline operations or achieve cost savings. The goal is to completely replace all service desk products by the end of the year with IBM Tivoli Service Request Manager. The company has plans to integrate and automate asset and configuration management processes along with the service desk, providing broader and deeper visualization of what is happening in their environment and capabilities to automate management and reduce the cost of supporting it. IBM Tivoli components to be used will be IBM Tivoli Service Request Manager, Tivoli Asset Management for IT and the Change and Configuration Management Database (CCMDB). Clarity will be used as a reporting tool.

## ITIL Experiences

This automotive manufacturer has adopted ITIL and is spending resources to develop necessary processes. It has defined a process group to address this need. Today it has a limited service catalog that will be targeted for later expansion. The CCMDDB is a part of the broader service support strategy providing the visibility of the configuration items and the business services they support, enhancing the ability to make changes thru the change process while reducing incidents thru proper planning. The CCMDDB strategy is currently under development.

## Challenges, Goals, Priorities and Learnings

The key challenge for this company is the magnitude of different toolsets that are used to address service desk requirements.

A significant effort is being made to integrate asset and configuration management with the service desk toolset. A goal has been set to complete this process by year's end. Doing so will enable the company to automate the on-boarding process for new employees.

Cost reduction is the major objective currently before the IT team. An ROI has been completed that shows the potential for saving well over \$1M in software maintenance fees alone. Due to this cost savings potential, consolidating service desks and replacing some of the solutions involved is an obvious step.

## About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that specializes in going "beyond the surface" to provide deep insight across the full spectrum of IT management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise IT professionals and IT vendors at [www.enterprisemanagement.com](http://www.enterprisemanagement.com) or follow EMA on Twitter ([http://twitter.com/ema\\_research](http://twitter.com/ema_research)).

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