

## Why do we need a Smart and Integrated Service Desk in the era of digital disruptions and cost pressures?

### Executive Summary

This article briefly presents the current challenges and emerging trends in Managed Service Desk function. Balbhas™, a leading Automation and Technology Services company, has a home-grown Service Desk platform, called, **B-1Desk™** which is made of an **industrialized solution around people, process and tool**. B-1Desk™, as a Service Desk as a Service, is designed to transform a Service Desk function into a value-adding entity, thru *a continuous improvement journey underpinned by automation, mobility and process simplification constructs*. This article also presents the usefulness and relevance of a **Self-Service System, a Service Catalogue and a controlled Knowledge Management process** – all of these are used to drive to (a) accelerate the support response & resolution; (b) enhance the end-user empowerment & experience and (c) make the IT support as lean, optimal & scientific.

#### Author

Dr. Arumugam Natesan, Director & Practice Head, heads the Managed Services BU at Balbhas. He comes with a rich experience of 22+ years in various sectors such as Application Maintenance, Production Support, Quality Management, IT Service Management, Managed Service Delivery & Service Support and IT Governance. As a thought leader, Dr. Arumugam has helped various customers transform their IT service delivery to the next levels, by means of advisory and implementation services.

#### About Balbhas

Balbhas is a Leader in Automation & Technology Services to IT customers of Small, Medium and enterprise businesses. Balbhas focuses on areas such as Development Process Automation, Support Process Automation and Performance Engineering, with an objective to accelerate customers business and optimize their IT spend through large scale automation, simplification and optimization strategies.

## 1 BACKGROUND

A service desk was traditionally seen as a *communications and contact centre* that provides a single point of contact for the IT end-users. With the advent of ITIL, Service Desk was elevated as a 'single' owner of support issues and requests, coming from users, to manage the services end-to-end. At present, with rapid pace of business development, the front-line support needs to be very quick and perfect and hence the technical ability of the Service Desk needs to be much more than what it was earlier.

Balbhas™, a technology services and automation solutions provider, strongly believes that the Service Desk should be a value-adding organization. It should resolve more volume of incidents and requests in order to influence the end-user experience and accelerate their business growth. Based on its experience, Balbhas™ lists the following challenges in the current IT support world:

- Many a times, the Service Desk does not become adaptive
- Service Desks work in pockets, lacks in centralization across one group or globally
- Less amount of collaboration is seen; no end-to-end service ownership is noticed
- Service Desk tends to work in the traditional method both technically and procedurally, not tuned to the modern life
- The synergy areas between Application and Infrastructure teams are not leveraged
- Although business and IT are getting more closure than before, the IT and Business users have a different level of support experience

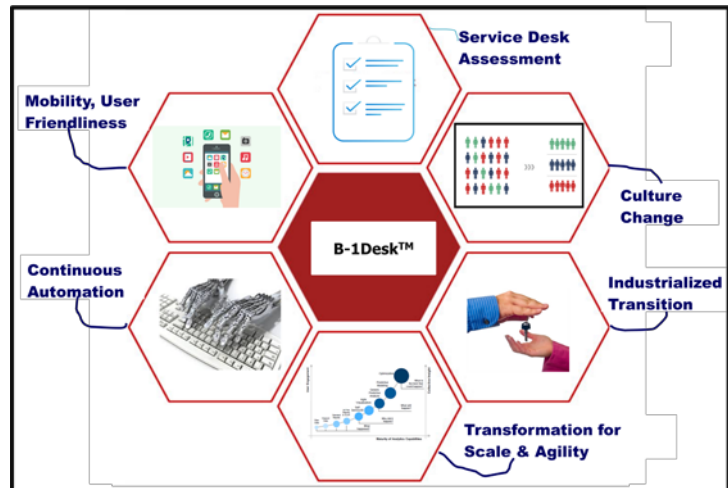
In this paper, Balbhas describes its unique Service Desk solution and shares certain thought leadership. Balbhas foresees a radical change in the way Service Desk would function, in the near future, in all people, process and technology aspects, with a vision of being *smart, efficient and effective*.

## 2 BALBHAS APPROACH

In the context of service support and delivery, the 3Ps (people-process-platform) are to change quite a lot and often. Changing is to improve; it is not an option but is a must to be perfect and matured. Before a change is blueprinted, it is of paramount importance to address the 5Ws that leadership will ask the change maker – who, what, why, where, when. To provide a compelling story as to why Service Desk needs to be transformed, Balbhas has an assessment methodology, which is one of the core components of the Balbhas Service Desk solution called "**B-1Desk™**" model. This model is centric towards innovative User Engagement, IT & Business Service Management and Continuous Improvements. This model is an advocacy model, consisting of initial assessment, intervention planning, service desk transformation, people re-organization, change control, continuous improvement thru simplification, optimization and automation. This model, while giving importance to reducing the run cost to achieve 'Better for Less' ('Run the Business'), pays greater attention to enable faster, cheaper, innovative business-impacting transformation ('Change the Business').

### 3 CRUX OF “B-1DESK™” MODEL

“B-1Desk™” is architected such that it would enhance any Service Desk, to be a technology & domain agnostic support centre. Cultural change is needed to transform the people to the new way of working. Futuristically, Balbhas envisions an intelligent, automation-embedded, efficient, centralized, elastic & learning service desk, on an on-going basis.

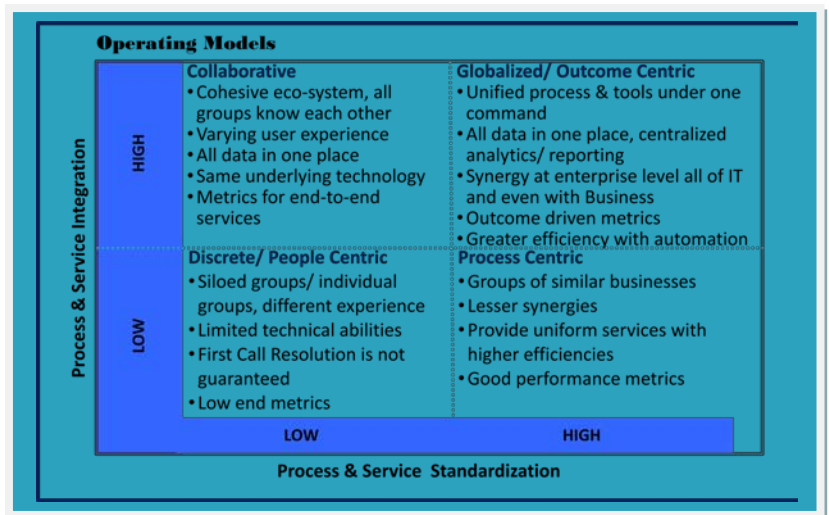


#### 3.1 SERVICE DESK ASSESSMENT

Some Service Desks exist in a matured state while most customers wouldn't have elevated their Service Desk to a value-adding position. Hence, regardless of the customer maturity, it is extremely critical to perform a formal assessment on Service Desk function end-to-end. Ideally, this assessment, carried out by a Process Champion (with ITIL & service support background), ascertains the current state of the union, using a robust questionnaire. To provide a gist of this methodology, a few focus areas of the assessment are:

- Degree of centralization & homogeneity
- Extent of automation done and the effects experienced
- Effectiveness of the Self-Service Systems
- Protocols used for end-user communications
- Mobile friendliness of Service Desk process and function
- Agent productivity & workload optimization

This assessment is run with a Service Desk Lead, agents with access to the Service Desk tools, existing reports, document repository. From process & service maturity dimension, with underlying technology, the Service Desk might fall in one of the quadrants, as shown in the figure. B1-Desk™ solution drives to ensure a highly standardized and integrated, value-adding & outcome-aligned service desk. The assessment generates a list of solid recommendations and improvement plan.

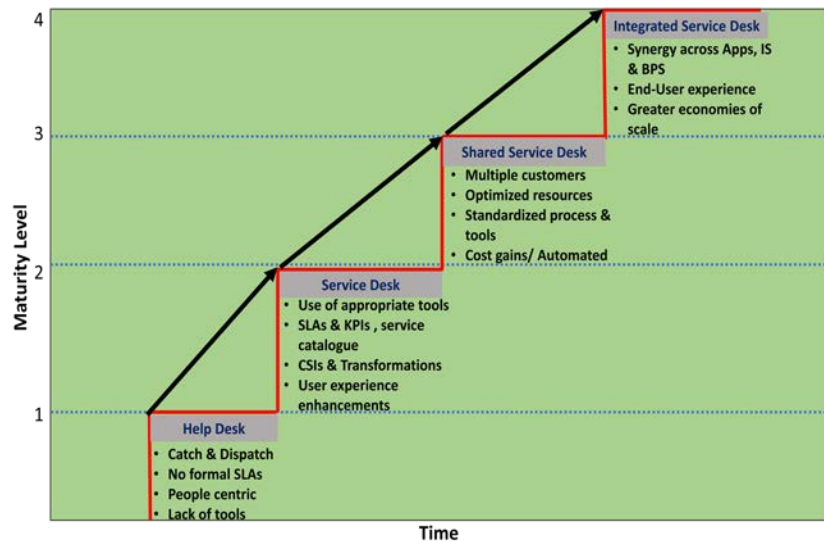


#### 3.2 SERVICE DESK TRANSFORMATION

Balbhas advises that transforming a service desk of a customer is a journey, as the change doesn't happen overnight.

**“71% of IT organizations believe that perception of IT is dependent on Service Desk” - Gartner**

Appropriate interventions, actions, changes are to be done to enhance the maturity. To move from one level to next, the changes are to be deployed with a great degree of steer and rigor so that such changes do not collapse, after certain time period. As a best practice, Balbhas insists on certain controls to be included in the internal audit so that such implemented controls are always verified for their existence, continuity and effectiveness.



### 3.2.1 Transformation to Level-2 Service Desk

For transforming from Level 1 to Level 2, major changes are required for tools, service levels, and user interface. While there are a plethora of tools available in the market, with varying levels of dynamics, one should apply due diligence to choose an appropriate tool considering its scalability for the enterprise, fitment for shared services, greater flexibility for continuous automation and integration with self-service systems. A comprehensive service catalogue is needed to enable more self-help features for the end-users. A culture of continual improvements is embedded to *up the ante* continually.

### 3.2.2 Transformation to Shared Service Desk

In the world of cost efficiency, any dollar that is saved, will be a great gain for the customers. The “**B-1Desk™**” model strongly suggests a **shared Service Desk** function for SMB customers, where cost control is a major thrust. With ITSM tools having multi-tenancy characteristics and in-built data security, the ITSM tool should on-board ‘*multiple*’ customers into the same instance seamlessly. The “**One Process-One Tool**” solution ensures a homogenous support culture for not only the Service Desk but also for the other support layers (L2/L3). The key benefits of a shared service desk are:

- Significant cost reduction in terms of tools, licenses
- Easy means of propagating the best practices concurrently to multiple customers
- Consistent, repeatable processes for multiple customers in an uniform manner
- Higher optimization of Service Desk resources – lean/ flat organization
- Freedom from customer controls

### 3.2.3 Transformation to Integrated Service Desk

With both Application Support and Infra Support are congruent, Balbhas sees that a **common Service Desk** would bring in greater *economies of scale* and efficiency. This set-up would bring-in a perfect consistency of service support across the entire enterprise, globally. The Service Desk should also support business-IT alignments. Business can mandate their IT

organization to be an engine for minimizing business disruptions, reducing costs, increasing revenue, and improving public image. IT and Business can possibly outsource most of these mandates to one Integrated Service Desk. In this set-up, the Integrated Service Desk becomes “*One single gateway*” to all services, whether they are IT services or business services. The key benefits of an integrated service desk are:

- Streamlined service delivery and support processes across the board
- Better capacity and higher resource utilization, greater reduction in duplications
- Improved effectiveness and speed of resolution at all levels, influencing the image of both IT and business
- Consistency in service levels across the enterprise and the same user experience
- Greater ability for service integration on an on-going basis

### 3.3 CONTINUOUS KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management solution plays a key part in maximizing the value of the Service Desk (whether it is shared services desk or integrated service desk). One of the building blocks to make service delivery and support markedly different at the first level is the existence of the documented knowledge in a more formal, contextualized, digital way. While the knowledge can persist in many forms, fundamentally, it needs to be more structured, authentic, time-bound and experiential. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Known Error Data Base (KEDB) centrally make bulk of the Knowledge Base at the enterprise level. Also, care should be applied to ensure that certain pockets of knowledge are diffused externally to facilitate self-help for end-users. The entire KM process needs to be tight and controlled so that any addition, removal, reuse of knowledge assets are effectively managed. Also, the consistency, currency, security of information is vital to take care.

### 3.4 SERVICE DESK AUTOMATION

Although automation appears to be a buzz word in every industry, Balbhas views that Service Desk is a larger area for cost efficiency and process simplification, in the overall IT service support.

*A use case taken from the literature: One customer had a pain point related to numerous tickets when passwords are lost. This customer put a piece of automation in place to handle password reset/unlock requests. This use case accounted for 22 percent of their total service desk ticket volume or, about 46,000 requests per year that were previously handled manually. In fact, this is million dollars of cost avoidance, considering a Level-1 engineer’s cost of \$22 per ticket.*

*Another example to quote: Whenever an end-user has a visitor/ guest for some specialised service on-premise, the end-user’s organization needs to provide the internet access for a better service by the visitor. Conventionally, there was a form which the end-user is required to populate and click submit and wait for certain approvals/ several hours, making the visitor wait unnecessarily. In contrast, if such requests are all automated, the visitor can get the quest access codes, within two minutes. Automations like this will always ensure increased productivity for all stakeholders, including the service desk agents.*

In the past, it took more than 24 hours to fulfil a simple request (ex: software deployment). In the current context, if automation is effected from both requestor end and end-user end, the entire workflow can be simplified/ mechanized. This means, automated configuration management tools can push software on demand. So why does the user need to wait day-long to get such IT-related requests fulfilled?

Balbhas advises to leverage the “**B-Bots™**” framework to run automation as an on-going improvement program. This framework comprises of an *automation catalogue* which provides a complete list of automatable activities for service desk function and other support layers.



### 3.5 COLLABORATIVE & SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

B1-Desk™ advises to deploy meaningful collaborative ways to help the customer's end-users for working together. It should drive the customer's global objectives and break thru the cultural and language barriers.

Balbhas believes that social media can change the face of the Service Desk, especially to utilize social media for service desk communications. The ITSM software should incorporate social media-like Q&A and commentary between users and the Service Desk, as well as across users (user to user).

Social media customer service can be a strategy for providing customer service through social channels like Facebook and Twitter. Due to the potential for high engagement between brands and customers, social media and customer service, when handled properly, could work very well together.

Assume scenario – an employee has an important presentation in the conference room, but the projector doesn't work for some reasons. He has no time to raise a ticket, but he decides to tweet; he gets a quicker help from a Service Desk-assigned person or a co-worker, whoever is earlier available. A Service Desk can easily monitor these kinds of situations, especially with in-house social media.

If the ITSM tool is connected with social media, the users get information faster via social media channels and it certainly takes a workload off of the Service Desk.

Of course, there are many benefits of social media integration, however, there are also risks. Hence, it is very critical to develop the right policies and procedures to make it as a favourable, risk-free platform. Care should be applied to ensure that only rightful and authentic information is disseminated via social media, whether it's internal or external.

### 3.6 MOBILE FRIENDLINESS AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

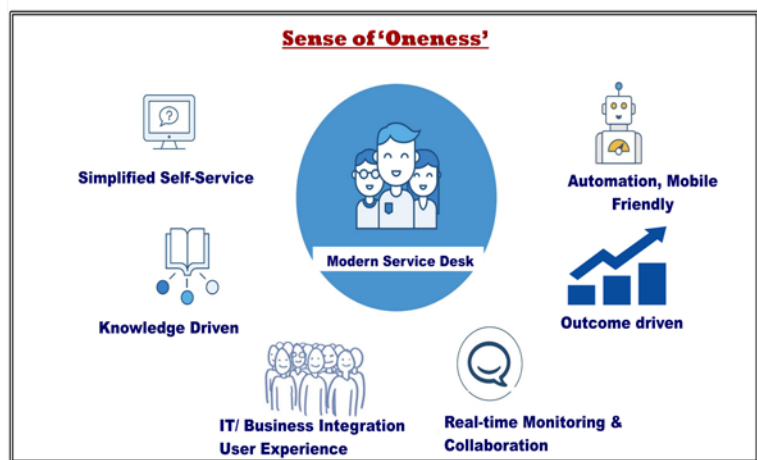
- With mobile friendly processes and tools, the Service Desk itself can work as a mobile team.
- The ITSM tool should be mobile friendly to improve the efficiency and productivity of Service Desk and other Support teams. In simple words, it should provide the ability to instantly access their requests while they are away from their desk through their mobile devices.
- A Service Desk Lead can monitor the health of operations anywhere from the globe, by looking at the virtual, real-time dashboard on his/her mobile device.
- How does the mobile solution improve the productivity of a Service Desk agent and the user?
  - The user creates a ticket on the fly, using any device, anywhere, anytime
  - The ticket will be automatically formatted
  - Agents can see tickets wherever they are, if they have access to a device
  - Agents can close and look up new tickets wherever they are
  - Agents can catch up with their tickets offline, clean up their queue, and free up their workflow
  - Useful notifications help the users to know the current status instantly
- The mobile solution also accelerates the approval process, as approvals often become bottlenecks that cause unnecessary delays in the fulfilment of service requests.

Typically, the approvers don't spend quality time to look at such approval requests in their inbox. Their approval tasks will be made easier thru instant alerts/ notifications in a matter of seconds.

- *Look at the type of digital experiences we observe these days. The end-users are always connected to mobile devices and expect rapid responses, given the power of mobility. Let us visualise a situation wherein an end-user gets message "you will need to log into network to access this table", definitely this will irritate him.*
- *Let us discuss another scenario - If a printer, copier or projector is having problems, the users can possibly press an icon in their mobile device and potentially get new pop-ups like "call your service desk" or "get information about this device" automatically. All such information is controlled so that there are no security breaches.*

## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a simple view of the end-state, the "B-1Desk™" model leads to a modern service desk. Our philosophy is to maintain and run a complete integrated service desk at enterprise level by linking the 3 dots: *Applications, Infrastructure and Business Process Services*. The model creates a single gateway for the services for both IT users and business users, regardless of the nature/ origin of the issue. Such a model ensures the globalization of processes with underlying tools.



With a vast amount of digital disruptions happening and cost control is of greater emphasis, the model ingrains the user self-service, mobility concepts and automation components into service desk eco-system. The prime benefits from such a modern/ intelligent service desk are:

- Enhanced control over the complete ecosystem, even if there are multiple suppliers
- Reduced operational costs & improved service desk staff productivity
- Shortened Time to Value
- Increased Flexibility and Agility
- Enhanced responsiveness and user experience