

Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

by Jenny Rains, Senior Research Analyst, HDI

Technical support in the healthcare industry is fast-paced and multifaceted. Support analysts are taking calls about mobile workstations, denied access of nurses and staff, physicians' tablet troubles, and patients who want to share digital pictures of their

newest bundle of joy. But more importantly, the technical support team is a crucial part of providing patient care and saving lives. In this day and age, when the healthcare industry relies heavily on smooth running technology and the end-user's experience with that technology, it was a bit surprising to learn at a recent meeting of support professionals in the healthcare industry that, technical support centers in healthcare are currently feeling significant pressure to prove their value to the business.

Not only are these teams searching for the best ways to market their services internally, they are pressured to show that they are providing a valuable, one-of-a-kind, service to their customers. For many, the challenge lies in the variety of customers; Doctors, nurses, administrative staff, executives, and even patients all have different needs and expectations to be met.

Survey Results

This report outlines some of the opportunities for the healthcare support centers facing the current pressure to prove their value to the business. The data shared in this *HDI Research Brief* were collected as part of the *HDI 2014 Support Center Practices & Salary Report* (All Industries: N=873 ; Healthcare: N=110) and the joint research by HDI and itSMF USA, *Service Management: Not Just for IT Anymore* (All Industries: N=1,197 ; Healthcare: N=146), and analyzed for the healthcare vertical for this report.

Be Prepared

By learning from other similar organizations, professionals managing technical support centers can be prepared to provide stellar service even in times of change. For instance, knowing when additional staffing will be needed and being able to justify that increase in staffing with actual industry data has made the difference for many organizations.

Most (65%) technical support centers in healthcare saw a rise in their ticket volume from the previous year. The re-



65%

of healthcare support centers have seen an increase in ticket volume. Why? #1 reason: New applications or systems.

search identified the main cause of this rise in ticket volume as new applications and systems. This is actually the top contributor to ticket increases for the technical support industry as a whole, as well. Implementing new applications and systems is necessary for businesses to stay current and productive, but organizations need to proactively address ticket volumes by knowing about and anticipating possible end-user issues and by being prepared for the tickets that do come in to the support center.

Know Your Customer Preferences

Because the end-users supported by healthcare support centers are varied and unique, the inbound communication channels differ for healthcare compared to the support industry as a whole. Knowing not only the preferences of end-users, but also the reality of what works in an organization is crucial.

The chart below illustrates the percentage of organizations that offer various channels of support for healthcare, compared to the industry as a whole. Healthcare support centers are more likely than the rest of the industry to use autologging for ticket creation, as well as phone and web

Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

Support channels used to contact support:		Healthcare	All Industries
	Autologging	34%	22%
	Chat	26%	32%
	Email	77%	89%
	Fax	8%	10%
	Mobile app	6%	6%
	Phone	96%	90%
	Social media	3%	6%
	Text message	6%	7%
	Walk-up	45%	48%
	Web form	58%	45%

Percentage of organizations receiving tickets through each channel

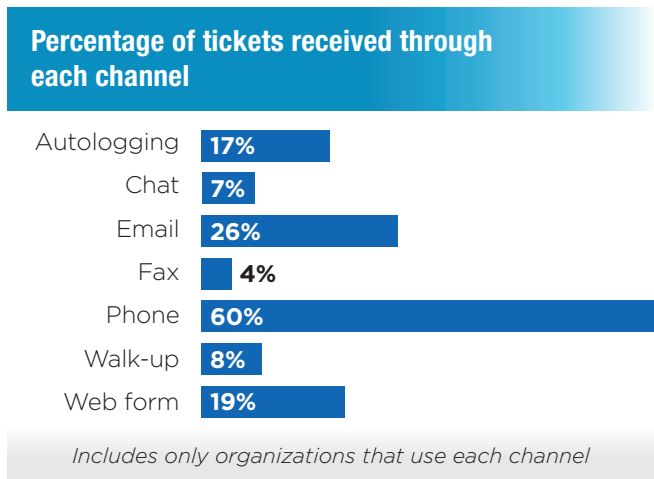
forms (online ticket creation), while channels such as chat and email are used less.

Some organizations have decided against specific support channels for various reasons. Becky Ryan, Senior Manager, Enterprise Customer Support Center of HealthPartners shares that their organization “...no longer provide[s] email support. Instead, customers are asked to go to our portal to log the ticket. The portal allows us to get the ticket logged directly into our ticketing system and we are able to ask for specific (required) information that we often don’t get in emails. This eliminates the back-and-forth emails and phone calls that we were making in order to get the ticket logged appropriately for the customer’s issue.”

Drew Corbett, Director of IT Operations at Nemours, shares his organization’s decisions to not include chat as an option, “We decided to not go with a chat solution after a trial run. Due to the nature of the clinical environment, chat typically requires someone sitting at a desk communicating back and forth on their issue over a period of time.” Tiffany Leonard, Support Center Team Lead, Carolinas Healthcare System, adds that “In a hectic clinical setting, clinicians want either an immediate answer or to inform the support center of their issue and go on to the next patient. Most often logging into a computer is an extra step whereas the phone option is readily available. This is unlike

a typical business environment where users would be more patient with the back and forth dialog in a chat session.”

For those organizations that do provide chat as a means of contacting the support team, only 7 percent of their tickets are received through the channel; this is lower than the 15 percent for the whole support industry. In contrast, 60 percent of tickets come through the phone, for the 96 percent that provide support via phone. This is much higher than the 48 percent of tickets that come through the phone in the rest of the technical support industry.



Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

Benchmark

Identifying the metrics that are important to stakeholders, and communicating the support team's efforts to shine in those areas is one way a support team can prove its un-

derstanding of what is important to its customers. Where is the current focus for technical support in healthcare? The table below shares the percentage of organizations currently measuring each metric.

Metrics Measured by Healthcare Support Centers


	% measuring
Customer satisfaction with ticket resolution	59%
Customer satisfaction with support center overall	36%
Cost per ticket by channel	14%
Cost per ticket by escalation level	8%
Cost of downtime	6%
Impacted user minutes	7%
Reopened ticket rate	28%
Average time to resolve	53%
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved without hierarchical escalation (i.e., First level resolution rate)	29%
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved by the initial person who opens the ticket (i.e., First contact resolution rate)	45%
Phone	
Average speed to answer	57%
Abandonment rate	60%
Average talk time	51%
Average handle time	44%
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved by any level as long as they are resolved on the initial call (i.e., First call resolution rate)	38%
Voicemail	
Time to respond	6%
Email	
Time to respond	16%
Tickets transferred to another channel	6%
Average handle time	9%
Chat	
Time to respond	5%
Tickets transferred to another channel	3%
Average handle time	3%
Web Form (i.e., Web Request)	
Time to respond	16%
Tickets transferred to another channel	6%



Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

Organizations can also utilize the data shared in this report to get a sense of where their organization stands against other similar organizations in the healthcare

industry. A summary of the most commonly measured metrics for the healthcare industry are listed below:

Healthcare Support Center Performance on Metrics				
Customer satisfaction with ticket resolution	87% of customers are satisfied with ticket resolution			
Customer satisfaction with support center overall	81% of customers are satisfied with support center			
Reopened ticket rate	4%	Median		
Time to respond to Email	15 minutes to 1 hour	Median		
Time to respond to Chat	60-90 seconds	Median		
Time to respond to Web Form (i.e., Web Request)	1-4 hours	Median		
Average speed to answer the phone	31-59 seconds	Median		
Phone Abandonment rate	6%	Median		
	Incidents			Service requests
Average time to resolve	8 - 24 hours	Median		1-2 days
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved without hierarchical escalation (i.e., First level resolution rate)	67%	Average	52%	
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved by the initial person who opens the ticket (i.e., First contact resolution rate)	67%	Average	49%	
Average talk time (phone)	5-8 minutes	Median	5-8 minutes	
Average handle time (phone)	5-8 minutes	Median	5-8 minutes	
Percentage (%) of tickets resolved by any level as long as they are resolved on the initial phone call (i.e., First call resolution rate)	66%	Average	55%	

Technology Improvements

Technical support centers are the face of IT. Customer experience is not only made up of the human interaction, but also the ease and efficiency of the whole support experience. This means that it is important for organizations to make investments in technology where it counts. Many healthcare support centers are currently upgrading and adding new technology to provide support. Corbett shares his recent experience at Nemours, "With increasing reliance on clinical technical solutions along with EMR becoming the norm in the health care arena, IT organizations must adapt to the increasing demand for IT services. Consolidated platforms that provide ease of access to IT services is very much in demand."

Leonard of Carolinas Healthcare System adds that, "Because of reduced revenue in the healthcare industry, we were forced to encourage the use of BYOD instead of providing hardware to our customers. In an effort to keep up, we needed to offer self-service solutions and that could not be achieved using our current ITSM."

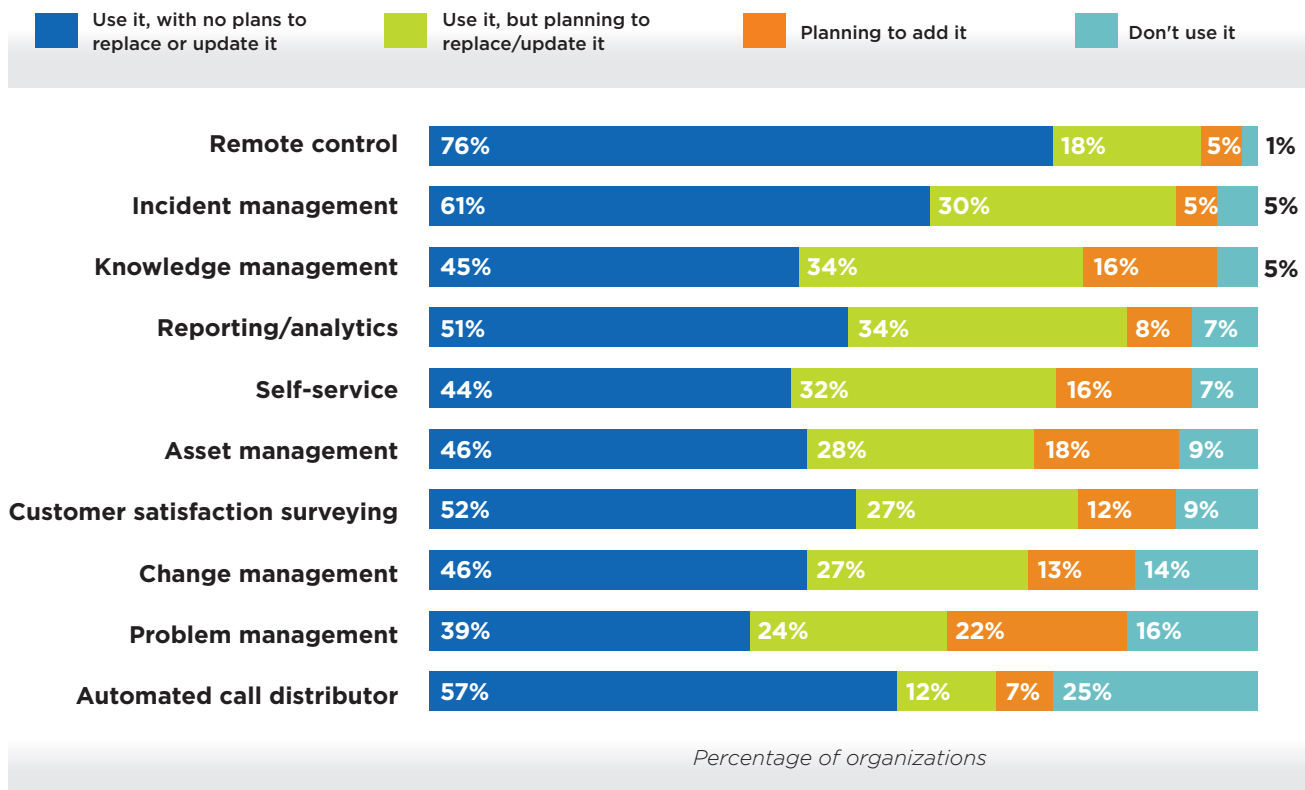
Shane Juedes, IS Help Desk Manager of UW Health, acknowledges that technology investments are a necessary part of maturing and improving services, "In our case, I believe this move was acknowledgement that we had grown out of our ticketing system, and the only way we could continue to mature from a best practice/ITIL standpoint was to move to a new solution."

Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

The most shopped for technology in 2014 for health-care technical support has been a knowledge management solution, with 50 percent either looking to add a new solution or replace/upgrade a current solution. Also in high demand are new or improved self-service

solutions (48%), asset management solutions (46%), and problem management solutions (46%). "The chart below illustrates the use of technology in healthcare technical support, and the plans to upgrade or add each technology."

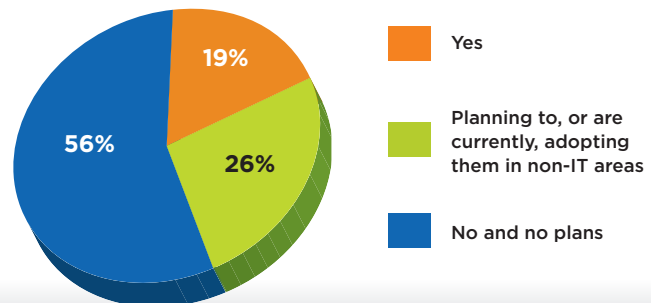
Technology used to provide technical support in healthcare:



Shine with IT Service Management

Technical support teams in any industry have an opportunity to shine right now. Recent research revealed that IT service management principles are being applied outside of IT. Of the healthcare organizations that participated in the study, 19 percent are currently applying service management to non-IT areas, and an additional 26 percent plan to do so. This is an opportunity for IT and the support center, specifically, to showcase its process expertise and be a trusted advisor for other business areas. This is an opportunity to prove that there are practices in place that are not only working for IT, but can be applied to the broader organization.

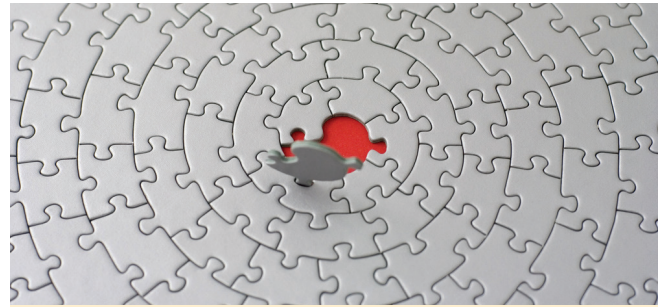
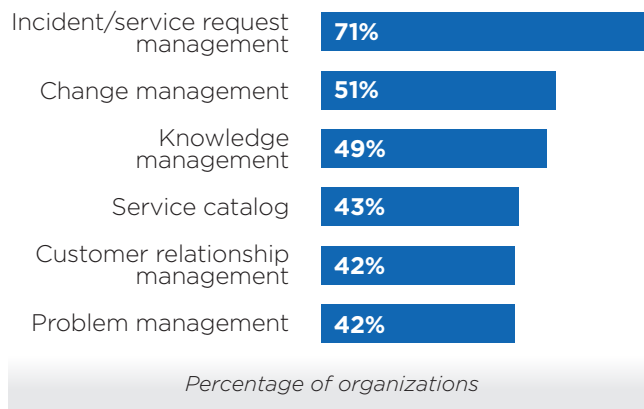
The principles of IT service management (ITSM) are being applied outside of IT in healthcare



Opportunities for Healthcare Support Centers to Prove Their Value

Incident/service request management principles are most commonly applied in non-IT areas. For those using service management outside of IT, 71% are applying these principles, followed by change management (51%) and knowledge management (49%).

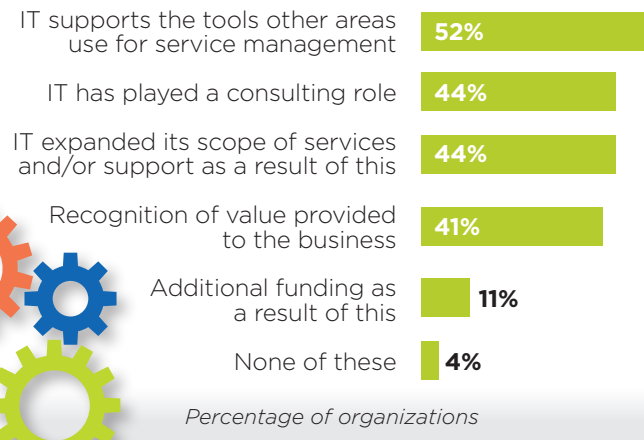
Most common ITSM principles applied outside of IT in healthcare



41% of healthcare IT organizations say they gained recognition of the value they provide to the business when ITSM was adopted in non-IT areas.

For many organizations that are currently applying service management outside of IT, positive opportunities to gain visibility are prove their value have already been realized. For instance, non-IT areas of the business are using service management solutions that are supported by IT. In addition, IT is playing a consulting role for the areas of the business that are currently learning service management processes and solutions. And most notable, 41 percent of respondents adopting ITSM in non-IT areas report that this has helped IT gain recognition of its value to the business.

Impact on IT



Conclusion

Even though technical support organizations in the healthcare industry are so closely related to the daily business of providing care and even saving lives, they are not immune to the current pressure across the industry of fighting for survival. Proving their value, their worth, to the business is a common thread across healthcare support centers. Leaders in these support centers are not alone in searching for ways to showcase their value to stakeholders. Reviewing the current information about others in this unique industry assures that there are opportunities to do so.

Sponsored by:

For all available HDI Research Briefs, visit www.ThinkHDI.com/Research.
 Copyright © 2014 UBM LLC. All rights reserved.

