TRANSFORMING IT SUPPORT FOR A DIGITAL AGE

- Essential for Survival
- We're all super users now
- Take Control: Self-serve serves the self
- The service desk is the shop window for IT
- Empowering the super user
- Enabling the Next Generation Service Desk
Helping users to help themselves

The IT service desk is at a crossroads, both in the UK and internationally. Users are demanding a new support experience that reflects the digital age. They want to log their own incidents. They want to solve their own problems. They want to build their own knowledge. They want to become super users.

A third of users say that IT departments are currently failing to deliver the support they need\(^1\). And that number is only going to increase as more mobile, social and cloud technologies become part of the corporate landscape. So how do you bridge the gap?

By enabling users to become super users, organisations can not only simplify and enrich IT support but also maximise staff productivity and increase business agility. To debate the rise of the super user, we asked four experienced thinkers from Computacenter to share their vision for the future of IT support, and to explain how organisations can become part of this vision.

IT support is not an obstacle but an opportunity. An opportunity to enrich, to engage and to enable. By encouraging self-service, organisations will be able to create not only a next generation service desk but also a next generation of super users. Today’s super users are tomorrow’s super employees: they work faster, they think smarter, they feel happier. All of which means they can deliver greater value to the business.

Steve Rayner, Group Service Innovation Director, Computacenter

\(^1\)Understanding Digital Natives research report, Computacenter, 2015
IT support is no longer just a service but an experience, with user satisfaction now a critical measure of success. Yet many organisations are struggling to make the full shift to user-centric IT support.

Due to budget and resource constraints, they are unable to open up the new digital channels that users want or implement the automated processes that the business needs. This not only has a negative impact on employee productivity, but also customer relationships, sales revenues and company reputations.

Reinventing IT support for the digital age doesn’t have to involve a big budget and a long project. Recruitment firm Hays deployed a Next Generation Service Desk in just two months.

What makes it next generation? Consumer-rich experience. Knowledge sharing. Online chat. Self-service. And, the users. We’ve all heard the phrase ‘work is no longer somewhere you go, but something you do’. A similar transformation is happening in IT support; instead of waiting for help, users want to help themselves.

According to the Service Desk Institute: “Ensuring that the service desk evolves with the changing demands and expectations of the consumer marketplace is essential for its survival.”

Making support more accessible to users is just the starting point: by enabling users to solve their own problems, they can become part of the IT support ecosystem. And they can become super users.

Digital novices and digital natives all have the potential to become super users and super employees. They just need the right knowledge, tools and support to help them. So where do you start?

*Evolving Your Service Desk, Service Desk Institute, February 2015*
WE’RE ALL SUPER USERS NOW

“You’ve got to start with the user – the employee, the partner, the customer,” says Steve Rayner. “They’ve changed radically over the last few years and the service desk has to keep pace with that change, and then get out in front of it so that it can anticipate changing needs instead of playing catch-up.”

Mark Peter agrees: “When I talk to our customers they’re telling me that the biggest change they’ve seen is ‘consumerisation’. That goes beyond just bringing personal devices to work, it has changed what users expect to happen when things go wrong. They expect the same kind of self-service support that they get from state-of-the-art consumer sites, such as Amazon. They also want the option to access knowledgeable, customer-centric support staff quickly when self-service doesn’t give them what they need. Those expectations are pushing IT departments to rethink their service desk functions.”

“People want a consumer-like experience; that’s the bottom-line. I don’t think there’s any argument about that, it’s a clear trend,” adds Pierre Hall. “If your IT support is sluggish, then the business slows down. And that has a big effect on productivity and, ultimately, customer service.”

All the market commentators agree that user support is not merely an IT function; it’s a vital business service that impacts revenue generation and competitive advantage.

“All organisations are heavily reliant on digital technology, whether it’s delivering omnichannel experiences to customers or enabling employees with cloud-based productivity tools,” says Steve. “Without digital technologies, people can’t function. If users can’t get the support they need to carry out simple tasks, report and resolve issues, or set-up services quickly and accurately, then they can’t work. And if they can’t work, well, I don’t need to explain that!”
“The way you design, provision and deliver IT support is a message of intent,” states Uwe Schweigart. “It sends a signal to the organisation about how you’re going to support the people on the frontline both locally and internationally. Offer a complex, unresponsive, and impersonal approach, and the message is: you’re a nuisance, go away.”

“This prompts people to go elsewhere. They move to ‘shadow IT’,” says Mark, “Although this can relieve some pressure, it can also lead people to unreliable alternatives which can have a detrimental impact on the organisation. Using applications, devices and cloud services that haven’t been internally approved or tested opens up a whole world of risk, which, of course, organisations don’t want. Additionally, it’s disruptive to users’ productivity, because they are spending time thinking about IT when they should be focusing on their core job function.”

Users expect quick solutions to their problems and the rapid provisioning of new services, like they experience in the consumer environment. If a user can’t contact the service desk, or there are no online tools to assist them, then the next stop is a public forum, or YouTube.

“We all want to be super users,” says Steve, “We don’t just want to self-serve, we like to self-serve. And IT service desks need to adapt to this new era in user support. It doesn’t just make sense in terms of user satisfaction, it also increases business, agility and productivity and decreases costs.”

The rise of the super user doesn’t mean the decline of the service desk – in-depth IT expertise still needs to be part of the support offering. The point is to understand what to self-serve and what to support through human contact.”
“Self-empowerment works,” says Steve, “Think about when you book a flight; you make the booking, choose your seat, add extra luggage, download a mobile boarding pass; some airlines are even letting you print your own luggage tags and load your bags onto the conveyor belt! That results in a faster service. Some people might not like it, but most do - all the evidence shows that. It’s the same with IT.”

“It’s a good feeling when you get a new device, and then get it to work simply and quickly by yourself,” says Uwe. “But we only want to do that up to a point,” cautions Mark, “If it starts to take too long, then we want to be able to seek help. A service desk has to be responsive to that.”

Many consumer-facing companies are doing just that with their online services. For instance, banks monitor the activity of consumers as they interact with their accounts. If something is taking a long time, or there are actions that suggest the user is having some difficulty, then a web chat option appears offering the user real-time support.

“People want to do most of the simple stuff themselves. They don’t want to call someone; not because they expect a bad response, but because they don’t want to spend 20 minutes on the phone. That gets in the way of their work,” says Mark.

Self-empowerment enhances the user’s self-worth. And there’s research to prove it. In 2011, The Harvard Business School conducted a study on consumers visiting IKEA stores in the US. They tracked the items people bought and then asked them about their experiences as they took the furniture home and followed the self-assembly instructions. The researchers discovered that the majority of consumers experienced feelings of pride and competence after achieving a successful assembly. Self-serve, it turns out, serves the self.³

“Most problems are just irksome,” says Pierre, “like a printer that displays a strange error message when you’re trying to get a document out late on a Friday. You don’t want to have to get on the phone to find out what it means; you should just be able to look up the information via your organisation’s service desk app on your mobile or tablet. Then you can resolve it in under a minute, press print and go home. That is good customer service, and it makes you feel like you resolved the issue, not someone else.”

“Think about the diversity of what organisations have to support now: all the different devices people bring to work, all the applications they expect to use during each working day. That’s very complex,” continues Pierre. “You have to be able to respond to all the issues, small and large, across a wide range of technologies. Creating a global pool of knowledge that can be easily accessed online from anywhere and everywhere, boosts productivity and minimises disruption for the user. It also means the service desk analyst can focus on being a real expert instead of just doing password resets!”

³ Quoted in Shadow Work by Craig Lambert 2015
“The key word is ‘service,’” Uwe points out, “the ‘desk’ part suggests a barrier. There shouldn’t be any barriers. It’s about sharing knowledge, encouraging collaboration and enabling a great user experience of the IT itself. The service desk is the shop-window for the rest of the IT function. So it has to be a priority for all IT professionals if they’re to prove their worth and relevance.”

“IT becomes even more relevant to the user when they don’t have to think about it. It just works. It’s all about confidence. The confidence that the individual has in the IT they are using and the support function that sits behind it,” says Mark.

“Simplicity is vital. Everything has to be clearly set out, without any jargon that could restrict understanding or intimidate users when they’re looking for answers,” stresses Steve. “You’ve got to change every part of the support function, so that it’s easy to self-log incidents, escalate them, track them, resolve them, and get feedback too. It’s a technological transformation and a cultural one. Users want to be able to add images when reporting an issue and they want to use mobile devices as part of the support process. For example, push notifications can be used to provide real-time updates on system outages and incident resolutions while location services can help simplify the reporting of issues.”

“It’s also important to understand the value that a service desk provides in terms of analytics,” adds Steve, “For instance, at Computacenter we discovered we had an emerging issue with our VPN when we saw a spike in queries relating to it. We realised it was about to get critical – and we acted before there was an outage. Analytics can provide insights which are valuable to user satisfaction, productivity and the prioritisation of support resources and requests.”

“Because many organisations now operate seven days a week, and all hours of the day and night, with people travelling in different time zones, the service desk has to be available 24/7,” says Uwe. “The analytics help in this regard too. You can use them to ensure that the support function enables the business to monitor and manage key systems and for problem prevention and resolution. It’s vital for most enterprises to keep..."
their systems and networks running 24/7 – and that’s an important part of delivering the kind of experience the users want.”

Mark stresses the increasingly multi-national nature of business and the need for support that transcends borders and time zones. “Users get a lot of confidence from knowing that, should they have a problem in New York at 6pm their time, there’s still an online solution or an analyst available - even though it’s 11pm in the UK. It makes them more productive,” he says. “That’s why I think a lot of organisations are looking to outsource their IT support, because it means they can provide this type of global support without the need for significant investment. It still delivers that ‘shop-window’ for IT because the support is there, and the devices keep working for the people who use them. It’s also part of building up that customer-oriented culture within IT – the commitment to deliver excellence to the user wherever they are.”

“Talent is vital to any organisation,” says Steve, “you’ve got to attract the right people to work in all areas of your business, and retain them. The right IT and the right support helps you do that both locally and globally. It’s true of users and it’s true of the analysts, who provide the support once an issue has got to the stage where you need a real person to sort it out.”

“Agents are very important, of course,” agrees Mark, “Self-serve is great, but, in the end, most of us don’t find IT that interesting. If we can’t get to the source of the issue quickly, then we like to get help from a human being who is both knowledgeable and sympathetic. I’d say 90 per cent of the issues that arise can be resolved through self-serve. That doesn’t reduce the importance of the agents; on the contrary, it makes them even more important. That’s because they’re dealing with issues that are stopping people from doing their jobs and causing them massive disruption and, in some cases, distress.”

The best agents understand that sharing their knowledge through forums and encouraging self-service will free them up to provide more technical support to users that really need it,” says Uwe. “This helps agents build the culture of customer service which is so important.”

“Because agents aren’t spending all their time sweating the small stuff, they can be more available to deal with the real problems, and that improves the effectiveness of the service desk no end,” says Mark.

“Agents want to be known for their expertise, and to be appreciated for it,” says Pierre, “enabling them to realise this ambition boosts the service desk’s reputation, which in turn instils confidence in the users. The whole organisation can take pride in its IT and how it is used to drive value. Everyone wins.”

The theory is clear – and compelling, but how do you put it into practice?
“We knew that we couldn’t offer our customers a new generation of service desk if we hadn’t put it to the test ourselves,” says Steve. “We started with a simple but powerful vision: deliver the best user experience possible.”

“That vision was the foundation of our Next Generation Service Desk (NGSD). We went out and asked our users to define what the experience should look like,” Steve adds.

“It was like experimenting on ourselves,” says Pierre. “Actually, it was more of an evolution than an experiment. We wanted to learn from creating and then deploying NGSD to our own users, so that we could make sure it was ready for customers. We didn’t want to practice on them. We wanted them to get all the benefits.”

“We identified what we already had, documented it, and then changed what needed to be changed,” says Mark. “That’s important: some customers don’t have to change a lot in terms of technology, but they do have to change their culture. And we did just that.”

“We created a hothouse environment at our Hatfield HQ and brought together 170 people from across Computacenter to help define not only how the service and NGSD portal interface should look and work, but also the processes that would ensure the digital solution delivered what users needed and wanted,” says Steve.

A user experience specialist contributed to an intense period of discovery, debate and development, enabling Computacenter to benefit from the best aspects of consumer-driven sites such as eBay, TripAdvisor and Facebook. Thanks to Computacenter’s vendor-agnostic approach, it only selected and integrated those solutions that would benefit its ultimate vision.

“We were rigorous about staying close to what our users needed,” says Uwe. “We surveyed them, interviewed them, and assessed different job roles and geographies. This enabled us to create five core profiles that we used to tailor communications according to specific behaviours.”

“There was a time imperative – we wanted to get it right, but also up and running quickly. And we did. We went from the idea to the implementation in just nine months,” says Mark. “And our people love it.”

The NGSD online portal and mobile app offers a range of features, which deliver a consumer-inspired experience across different devices and platforms. “You can use the intuitive interface to find...
what you need and self-serve a lot of issues that would otherwise take time to resolve, for example password resets. There’s online chat – which people love – and users’ ratings, as well as traffic light dashboards,” says Steve.

User feedback is essential in a digital world. By enabling people to rate and collaborate on knowledge articles, the overall user experience is enhanced.

“The agents were a priority too,” adds Pierre. “We wanted to make sure that our agents adopted to a totally customer-focused culture and were as professional as possible. We armed them with all the skills they needed – not just technical, but emotional too.”

Agents helped promote the self-service options available to Computacenter’s staff, encouraging them not to call but to act on their own behalf and become super users. And it worked: within four months of NGSD going live, 89 per cent of possible password resets were managed online.

“Before the deployment,” says Steve, “only nine per cent of service desk interactions with our users happened online – that number is now an impressive 60 per cent.”

“Once we’d proved that NGSD delivered the goods, we were ready to go live with a real customer,” says Uwe.

Enter Hays.
“We need to make IT as reliable as possible and our support services as responsive as possible,” comments Simon Gerhardt, IT Production Services Director at Hays. “When there’s a problem, our sales consultants want it resolved fast.”

Hays signed up to Computacenter’s Next Generation Service Desk solution as part of an existing managed services contract. Business champions, tailored internal communications and a development hothouse helped keep the two-month implementation timeline on track and maximise user adoption.

Via an online portal, 5,500 users in 21 countries can now choose from a range of digitised support features – from logging their own incidents and initiating online chats to searching knowledge articles.

Online chats have proved particularly popular, with around 1,180 being initiated every month. As Simon explains: “Sales consultants can continue working while participating in an online chat in the background. We want to give people a choice about how and when they log an issue.”

In less than three months, NGSD has transformed IT support and the user experience at Hays. Sixty per cent of transactions now happen online, which is well above the original target of 50 per cent.

By giving sales consultants and other members of staff access to relevant and responsive support 24x7, Hays can maximise the time spent on revenue generating activities.

“NGSD has streamlined the support experience for our staff, freeing them up to focus on their day job. It has opened up new engagement channels, providing staff with not only greater choice but also better outcomes,” confirms Simon.
NEXT GENERATION SERVICE DESK STRATEGIES

The lessons learnt from Computacenter’s development and deployment of NGSD helped to make the Hays project a success.

So, what are they? Steve, Mark, Pierre and Uwe agree that the list looks something like this:

- Start with a vision of a user-centric service that’s based on the best of the consumer sites that we use every day
- The technology is important, but the business enablement culture is even more critical – you have to build a culture where the user experience comes first, and where they’re seen as consumers not just employees
- It is also important to change the user’s mindset, and talk to them about how the new engagement channels work and how they can improve their access to IT support
- Look at what you have now – find out what works and what doesn’t, and then invest in new technology only if it powers the vision of a user-centric service
- Hothouse ideas about how NGSD can fit the specific needs of your people and your organisation
- Self-serve as much as possible and make the processes intuitive and rewarding – users like to do things for themselves and feel proud when they do
- Ensure you share knowledge by collecting experiences and views that enable users to find fixes from their peers as well as experts
- Communicate the benefits and opportunities that NGSD can offer to maximise user take-up and engagement
- Deploy NGSD carefully so that it enables users without disrupting them – the imperative is to avoid any impact on your end-customers, even for a short time
- Explore integration options with established support tools. NGSD is platform and tool agnostic, which means existing investments can be leveraged
- Learn from what users do and say, and use that feedback positively to ensure a culture of constant improvement
- Think about 24/7 access to expertise for a mobile workforce, and any requirements for multi-lingual support

We have proven that we are a completely user-focused organisation. The lessons we learnt developing and deploying NGSD first are now proving invaluable for our customers.

Mark Peter, International Service Development Director
WHY COMPUTACENTER?

Why engage with Computacenter to enable your service desk and create a new generation of super users? Our team have the answers:

STEVE RAYNER,
GROUP SERVICE INNOVATION DIRECTOR

We practice what we preach. That’s why we developed NGSD and deployed it to our users first. We are vendor-agnostic, so we focus on the user experience. Rather than trying to fit technologies into the vision we had, we let users dictate how we built NGSD. We believe in simplicity – that underpins the improvements in user experience and productivity. NGSD offers customers an international user-centric service that is off-the-shelf and can be fully integrated into existing technologies, for instance, current ticketing systems.

ABOUT STEVE
Steve has over 20 years’ industry experience in delivering user-centric service innovation. He’s committed to different approach to technology, focused on delivering the simplest and most efficient user experience so that organisations achieve the specific business outcomes they want.

PIERRE HALL,
DIRECTOR OF SOLUTIONS, UK

We don’t start with the products or technology, we start with users. We invest in people. We enable customers to deal with what Gartner defined as ‘the nexus of forces’ – coming together and mutual strengthening of social media, mobility, cloud computing and information patterns. It’s our aim to use that momentum to enable customers to make the most of the opportunities that arise from it. NGSD plays a big part in that.

ABOUT PIERRE
Pierre’s responsibilities as the UK Director of Solutions include strategy, sales, marketing, vendor alignment and the implementation of Computacenter’s portfolio of solutions and services. Forming part of Computacenter’s UK Executive, Pierre leads a number of board-sponsored investment initiatives across the Group.
We have proved that we are a completely user-focused organisation, and the lessons we learnt from developing and deploying NGSD on ourselves first are now valuable to customers. We have the experience to minimise business disruption while we transform the service desk into something users want and need. We're continuing to develop capabilities, which means customers can be secure in the knowledge that their service desk will always be at the cutting-edge in today's digital age.

ABOUT MARK
Since 1999, Mark has been helping to manage and support the needs of global customers, using his first-hand experience of the challenges they face in providing services to widely distributed user bases. Mark is also responsible for developing capability and coverage across Computacenter’s Global Service Desks.

We are able to offer standardised functions based on market-leading technologies, and we have a mature offering. We run 27 service desks around the world, which means we can offer local expertise to ensure that NGSD meets the demands of different markets. We have the experience and knowledge to offer the best approach to transformation that minimises risk. We work diligently to create a comprehensive plan and then deliver it.

ABOUT UWE
Uwe and his team are responsible for Managed Services engagements with customers in Germany. He used his deep knowledge of customers’ service strategies and requirements to ensure the customer’s view was integral to the development of the Next Generation Service Desk.
To discover more about how Computacenter can support your digital transformation initiatives please contact your Computacenter Account Manager.

computacenter.com/uk/NGSD