

TOP 5 SERVICE DESK METRICS



Two oft-repeated business maxims state that 1) *You can't manage what you don't measure* and 2) *if you can't measure something, you can't improve it*. These sentiments apply beautifully to Service Desk management and the virtuous cycle that's created when an organization implements an [Information Technology Service Management \(ITSM\) system using an Information Technology Infrastructure Library framework \(ITIL\) framework](#).

From Maxims to ITIL

It's easy to draw a straight line from these standard maxims to ITSM and ITIL. One major benefit of implementing ITSM via ITIL is that it provides a framework for the continual creation, deployment, improvement, and retirement of IT services. Continuous improvement is built directly into ITIL in the *Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)* core area of the ITIL Service Lifecycle (figure 1).

To continuously improve your IT services, you need service measurement metrics, also known as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). All of which asks the question of exactly what service metrics do you need to collect for your continuous improvement processes and what type of reporting should be done on those metrics?

Two Types of Service Desk Reporting

First, it's important to remember that there are two types of Service Desk reporting:

- 1) Reporting on the overall performance of the Service Desk for all offered services
- 2) Reporting on the delivery of individual IT Services

Overall Service Desk reporting tells you how well your Service Desk is functioning and what structural areas need to be improved (things like how long your customers are waiting for service delivery; whether you have enough staff for the workload; and whether you are meeting your Service Level Agreements). Overall Service Desk reporting provides feedback into how well the staffing and organizational structure of your Service Desk is working, highlighting the areas that need attention.

Service Delivery reporting focuses on where there are problems with individual services in your IT Services Catalog (things like which services have the most incident tickets; which services are most likely to be escalated to Level 2 and above; and what common incidents are occurring for which service items). IT service reporting feeds into the Continuous Process Improvement core area of your ITIL framework. It spotlights which services need improvement and helps provide goals for individual IT service improvement.

Given these reporting types, here are five valuable Service Desk KPIs that can help you effectively manage your Service Desk. Note that many of these metrics can either be applied to overall Service Desk performance or to individual IT service delivery performance.

5 Valuable Service Desk Metrics

1. *Number of tickets processed and ticket/service agent ratio* – Two simple metrics that add up the number of tickets submitted during specific times (i.e. shift, hour, day, week, etc.) and create a ratio of tickets/available service agents during those times. This is a key KPI that speaks to staffing levels and informs other Service Desk metrics.
2. *Wait times* – How long after a customer submits a service request do they have to wait before Service Desk agents start working on the ticket? Your wait time metrics also speak to Service Desk staffing levels. Once you identify whether your Service Desk has excessive wait times, you can drill down to see what might be causing wait times to run long (i.e. low staff levels at certain times of the day or week; not enough service agents trained for a specific service; processing issues; etc.) and create a remedy that applies to your entire Service Desk organization or to an individual IT service.
3. *Transfer analysis (tickets solved on first-touch versus multi-touch tickets)* – Number of tickets that are solved by the first agent to handle the ticket (first-touch) versus the number of tickets that are assigned to one or more groups through the ticket's lifespan. Great for determining which tickets need special attention, particularly those tickets where automation might reduce the amount of ticket passing between technical groups.
4. *Ticket growth over time and backlog* – Trending data showing the increase (or decrease) in the number of Service Desk tickets over time. It can help spot unexpected changes in user requests that may indicate a need for more Service Desk staff or more automation. Or, it may identify that a specific change resulted in increased Service Desk resources. You also want to check the trends for your backlog of tickets in progress and the number of unresolved tickets. A growth in backlogged tickets can indicate a change in service desk demand or problems with service deployment.
5. *Top IT services with the most incidents* – Spotlights which services are failing, causing the most Service Desk support. Helpful for spotting problem IT services that need modification.