

CAPACITY MANAGEMENT FOR THE SERVICE DESK



This is the final blog in our five-part series on "Delivering a World Class Service Desk." In our last installment, we explored the issues around outsourcing and offshoring: how to decide whether to do it, and how to

make sure it works out. In this installment, we'll look at how you can make sure your service desk can keep up with the demands of your business—without overspending on excess capacity.

Are you spending the right amount of money in the right ways to achieve optimal value for your service desk? If you had to stop and think about it, there's a good chance the answer is no. Accurate and effective capacity management doesn't happen by chance. To consistently meet service level requirements and agreements—while avoiding overspending—you need a systematic way to fully understand your customer requirements and demand patterns, and map them to your operational capabilities and supporting infrastructure services.

Service level requirements

First, establish the baseline parameters for your service desk. What are your hours of operations? What are your commitments for response time and resolution time? If you're unable to meet these targets in a consistent and methodical way, there may well be a capacity issue at play. To understand exactly what it is, you'll need to explore the factors discussed below, but it all starts with recognizing the red flags that indicate a problem. For good measure, this part of the exercise should also include a consideration of the cost of non-performance—that's one more incentive to make sure you're getting the job done right.

Demand management

Capacity management would be a lot simpler if demand remained nice and level over time—but that wouldn't be nearly as interesting, would it? Instead, you get to map out the many factors that can send demand up or down, from gentle curves to sudden spikes. The better you can recognize and anticipate these trends, the better you can plan to accommodate them. Take into account:

- **Critical business hours** – Are there times of day that tend to see especially heavy call volume, whether due to peak user count, critical workloads, complex processes, or other factors?
- **Seasonal trends** – You probably already have a gut feeling for your heaviest seasons. Now put some data and analytics behind it: exactly when does that surge begin, how big does it get, and how long does it last? What are the drivers, and do they come into play to some degree at other times of year as well?
- **Key business events** – End-of-quarter order processing, holiday retail, new product releases, new promotional campaigns, M&A—there are many business events that can have a direct and fairly predictable impact on service desk demand. Make sure you have a reliable way to see them coming.
- **Key IT events** – Your change management discipline probably already encompasses major system releases and changes, new initiatives like BYOD and mobility, and other events that can confuse or concern some users. You need to be able to absorb that demand while meeting SLAs.
- **Forecasting** – Don't assume you can know and anticipate all the factors that influence demand. Run a statistical analysis on call and incident volume to uncover hidden trends and enable more accurate forecasting.

Operational capabilities and costs

Now that you understand what you need to get done, evaluate whether you have what you need to get it done—and at what cost. This includes:

- **Service desk skills inventory** – Do you have the right skills in place to handle the kind of issues and incidents that come up in your environment? Has your service desk staff kept pace with the evolution of the technologies they support?
- **Service desk skills distribution** – Are some of your agents busier than others—or a lot busier? Do you have the right allocation of personnel across technical areas?
- **Cost drivers** – Is your cost structure efficient and sustainable? What's your cost per incident for various types of incidents, and what's your cost per service request for the kinds of requests you generally get? What's your first-call resolution rate—the percentage of customer issues that were solved by the first phone call—and how does that correlate to staffing costs? If you know you need additional staff to meet service levels, can you justify exactly how many more you need? Do you know how many is too much versus not enough?

Supporting infrastructure services

To get a complete picture of your capacity, you'll also need to take into account the infrastructure through which support is delivered and managed. This breaks down into three areas:

- **ITSM system capacity** – Can your ITSM platform scale to meet the demands you place on it? Can it support every type of service delivery, from desktop to mobile to self-service? Does it enable seamless and efficient workflows to maximize the value of your staff?
- **Telecommunications capacity** – Do you have adequate phone circuits and bandwidth to support the volume of calls coming in? Communication delays will prolong mean time to repair (MTTR) and leave users hanging.
- **Overflow services and off-hours support** – Make sure you're covered around the clock, regardless of volume, so that every user gets a prompt response to their issue.

The answers to the questions above will give you a much clearer and more complete understanding of the alignment of your operational capabilities and supporting infrastructure services with the requirements your service desk needs to fulfill. This is not a one-time exercise; you should remain alert to changes over time calling for additional capacity, or to opportunities to meet business demands more efficiently.

BMC offers powerful yet simple-to-use tools to help you manage the capacity of your service desk and your whole IT environment, including [BMC TrueSight Capacity Optimization](#) to manage and optimize infrastructure services, and [BMC Remedy](#), our industry-leading ITSM platform, to help your service desk maintain peak efficiency.