SERVICE DESK SUPPORT ANALYST: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When it comes to user perception of IT within an enterprise, there is no doubt that the Service Desk remains one of the major drivers of customer experience.

ITIL 4 defines the Service Desk as an entry and single point of contact for all users, where demand for incident resolution and service requests are received by the service provider. And while self-service portals and AI powered chatbots are all the rage in handling user issues nowadays, there is still room for the human touch—particularly where empathy is required and complexity is encountered.

So, what do employees of a service desk do? Let's look at the service desk support analyst role, including typical responsibilities.

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What does a service desk support analyst do?

Depending on the organization, formal titles for this job may be "service desk support analyst" or

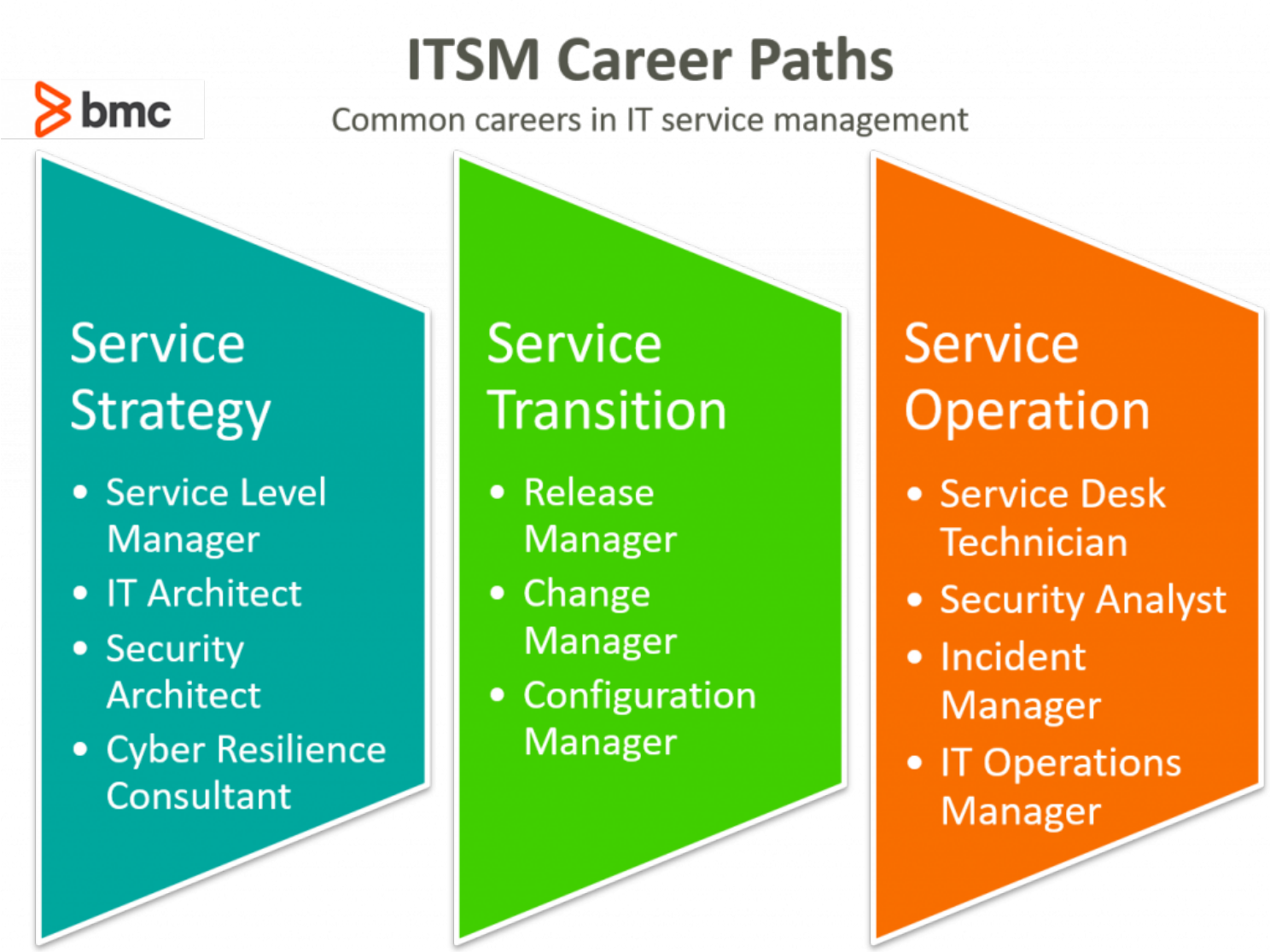
"help desk support analyst" or simply service/help desk support. (Some companies recognize a difference between service desk and help desk, but we'll use the term interchangeably here.)

No matter your title, if you're working in a service desk or help desk environment, you're serving as the first, perhaps only, point of contact between an end user and your company.

Though structures of service desks can change (see next section), the roles of the service desk support analyst can be grouped into three main processes:

- **User query/issue handling.** Ensuring user queries or issues are captured, validated, and triaged for further processing.
- **Communicating with users.** Ensuring that various types of information are communicated to users through the appropriate channel(s).
- **Optimization.**Ensuring improvement of the two previous processes through analysis, reviews, and reporting, as well as through automation, competence building, knowledge sharing and other organizational changes.

The service desk is one portion of your company's overarching IT service management strategy. Here are additional career paths in ITSM:



Structure of a service desk

Traditionally, the functional unit(s) of a service desk are layered in a form that supports escalation where issues of greater magnitude or priority are forwarded to staff with higher skill sets, regularly termed level 1, 2 and 3, and beyond that to vendors who may have similar structures.

Of course, the more the tiers, the greater the challenge of providing a coordinated response. This often results in a degraded customer experience due to multiple handovers and challenges in status tracking. Some service desks have specialized functions which limit routing and reduce response time. Modern approaches such as Shift Left advocate for the reduction in these layers, by bringing the support closer to the user. Swarming, which promotes teamwork over level-by-level escalation, encourages the initial point of contact seeing the issue through to resolution.

As technology changes, so too will the role of the service desk. The ITOps Times reported that the Service Desk will take the role of "Uber for Business", supporting tech-savvy employees with knowledge on the latest IT-approved applications available on their service portal or any app store.

Service desk standards

Some frameworks standardize the work performed on the service desk. The European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) defines "Service Support" as one of its 40 ICT Professional Role Profiles in the Service and Operation Family, whose purpose is to provide remote or onsite diagnosis or guidance to internal or external clients with technical issues. The main tasks of this role, which fits very well with what is expected in the Service Desk, include:

- Identify and diagnose issues and problems
- Categorize and record reported queries and provide solutions
- Support problem identification
- Advise users on appropriate course of action
- Monitor issues from start to resolution
- Escalate, if needed, unresolved problems to a higher level of support
- Provide essential online security advice and support

On the other hand, SFIA 7 does not have a specific competence titled as "Service Desk" but does reference the Service Desk in the "Customer Service Support" skill which is listed under the Client Interface category of *'Relationships and Engagement'* and sub category *'Stakeholder Management'*. The skill is defined as follows:

- Managing one or more customer service or service desk functions.
- Acting as a point of contact to support service users and customers reporting issues, requesting information, access, or other services.
- Delivering customer service through multiple channels including human, digital, self-service, and automated.

Examples of service desk tasks and responsibilities

Drawing from both the e-CF and the SFIA 7, here are common examples of service desk tasks. Though these indicate levels within a traditional tiered framework, these competencies are applicable to most service desk approaches:

Level 1 (Entry level)

- Receives and handles requests for service, following agreed procedures.
- Promptly allocates calls as appropriate.
- Logs incidents and service requests and maintains relevant records:
    - Identifies and classifies incident types and service interruptions
    - Records incidents cataloging them by symptom and resolution
- Acts under guidance to record and track reliability data for your services

Level 2

- Systematically interprets user problems and identifies solutions and possible side effects.
- Uses experience to address user problems and interrogates database for potential solutions.
- Escalates complex or unresolved incidents.
- Records and tracks issues from outset to conclusion.
- During change, acts systematically to respond to day by day operational needs and react to them, avoiding service disruptions and maintaining coherence to (SLA) and information security requirements.
- Responds to common requests for service by providing information to enable fulfilment. Promptly allocates unresolved calls as appropriate.
- Maintains records, informs users about the process and advises relevant persons of actions taken.

Level 3

- Acts as the routine contact point, receiving and handling requests for support.
- Responds to a broad range of service requests for support by providing information to fulfill requests or enable resolution.
- Provides first line investigation and diagnosis and promptly allocates unresolved issues as appropriate.
- Assists with the development of standards, and applies these to track, monitor, report, resolve or escalate issues.
- Contributes to creation of support documentation.

Level 4 (Analytical or manager role)

- Monitors service delivery channels and collects performance data.
- Assists with the specification, development, research and evaluation of services standards.
- Applies these standards to resolve or escalate issues and gives technical briefings to staff members.

Level 5 (Manager role)

- Responsible for day-to-day management, resource planning and work allocation to meet agreed service levels.
- Specifies, agrees and applies standards.
- Ensures that tracking and monitoring of performance of service delivery through all channels is

carried out, metrics and reports are analyzed, and issues are resolved.
- Drafts and maintains policy, standards and procedures for the customer service or service desk functions.
- Ensures that the service catalog is complete and current.

Level 6 (Department head)

- Influences the strategic direction and takes responsibility for the full range of customer service functions, including organizational frameworks for complaints, service standards and operational agreements.
- Defines service channels, service levels, standards and the monitoring process for customer service or service desk staff.
- Provides leadership to deliver the service culture required to deliver required organizational outcomes.
- Takes responsibility for business continuity and legal, regulatory, and contractual compliance.

Job experience and skillsets

For entry-level service desk work, you'll need to understand basic computer functionality and a beginner's understanding of your company's services. Many companies hire entry-level employees without requiring a college or advance degree, and they'll train you on the job. As you advance, you'll learn more technical skills.

Of course, the service desk role is technical in nature, but it is obvious that softer skills play an increasingly important role in achieving excellence. Communication, business context, emotional intelligence and marketing are just a few of the capabilities that any person working in this role needs to be continually trained on.

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Outlook and salary

The service desk analyst role is one that offers plenty of advancement. Companies routinely hire a range of experience levels, from entry to expert, to handle their ongoing service delivery. Plus, customers are becoming savvier and increasingly expect above-average customer service to be part of the holistic product. That means you're safe in these roles: there are opportunities for growth, and long-term need even as technologies like AI develop.

In the U.S., the average salary for a service desk role as of February 2020 is $52,488 per year, based on self-reported data. The low end hovers in the mid-30s, but more experienced and advanced roles, including analysts and managers, can easily earn in the $65,000-$80,000 range. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics correlates these salaries, indicating a mean annual wage of $55,050.

Service desk certification

A variety of training can help you improve as a service desk analyst. The Service Desk Institute, an industry leader, offers professional certifications in a variety of service desk roles, including:

- Service Desk Analyst
- Senior Analyst to Manager
- Service Desk Manager

Each certification builds on the last, so start with these certification steps.

Service desk support from BMC

Service and help desks are an essential piece of successful IT service management. Ticketing tools are necessary, but as customer expectations increase, your ITSM solutions and tools become just as important as the person handling the ticket.

Built for the cloud, BMC Helix is the first and only intelligent enhanced end-to-end service and operations platform.

- The platform is predictive, servicing the consumer *before* they send in the request.
- BMC Helix provides a range of tools relevant to the service desk, including incident and problem management, proactive service resolution, knowledge management, smart reporting, digital workplace, and service request management.

Discover the impact intelligent automation can have on creating and deploying innovative services.