

Of all service desk contact volume, as much as 40 percent could be solved through IT self-service, but only 5 percent of issues actually are solved by IT self-service, according to Gartner, Inc. By 2015, the majority of IT organizations will have less than 10 percent of the contact volume managed by IT self-service.

"IT self-service is a great concept, enabling and empowering end users to solve their own IT problems, thereby allowing support organizations to gain efficiencies through a reduced incident and request workload," said David Coyle, research vice president at Gartner. "However, building a best-in-class IT self-service portal does not guarantee that end users will utilize it."

Following extensive client research, Gartner analysts have identified four common myths that organizations have regarding IT self-service. Gartner believes that these myths and the associated realities, in combination with low IT service desk maturity, are the factors that prevent IT organizations from successfully delivering IT self-service.

**Myth:** IT self-service reduces costs.

**Reality:** IT self-service will reduce Level 1 support.

IT self-service does have the opportunity to reduce the cost of IT service and support by moving end-user issues to a lower cost level. However, self-service works well only for specific record types (mainly how-to requests, FAQs and password resets), so organizations should understand that implementing self-service will reduce volume only for those call types. Some issues will still require a call to the IT service desk and/or the assistance of a support technician.

"Organizations that fail to understand the demand mix of service and support will not be able to predict or measure the influence of self-service," Mr. Coyle said. "In addition, IT self-service requires upfront and ongoing investment in staff resources and tools like knowledge management and password reset. The bottom line is that if the investment in IT self-service is higher than the return associated with reducing support costs and increasing end-user productivity, then self-service will actually increase costs."

**Myth:** IT self-service is a one-time investment.

**Reality:** IT self-service requires constant care and feeding.

IT self-service is not a "set it and forget it" option, and IT leaders need to constantly understand how IT self-service is being leveraged, and whether end users are getting value from the offering. End users can be aware of the existence of IT self-service support and still not understand how it functions, how it can and should be leveraged, or the benefits it can provide. This requires marketing efforts, specifically to users who may not be aware or users who do not find value in the offering or prefer calling the service desk.

Ongoing efforts also include the maintenance of the knowledge base where articles need continuous updating. Articles that do not fix the problem or that are difficult to understand do not lend themselves well to the credibility that IT self-service portals need to establish. Also, the wider the range of services supported, the more difficult it becomes to keep these knowledge articles up to date.

**Myth:** End users will flock to self-service.

**Reality:** End-user acceptance varies greatly.

Understanding the adoption of IT self-service by end users is critical in developing a successful IT self-service strategy, and most organizations will find that the first-year adoption rate can be very low. End-user utilization is the primary objective, so the time and cost investments that are tied to building a world-class self-service portal will not yield favorable returns if end users are not inclined to log their own tickets or attempt to solve their own problems.

Factors that can provide insight into this include an organization's demographics; groups like engineers or young people may be able and willing to leverage self-service, but end users who are stuck in their ways or who are not sophisticated computer users may not be as willing.

**Myth:** IT self-service is easy to implement

**Reality:** The right "companion" tools and processes are prerequisites for a successful implementation.

End users want an IT self-service portal where knowledge is readily available, where passwords are easy to reset, and that is very intuitive to use. It is not the responsibility of the end user to dig through knowledge if it is not stored correctly, or care about any processes or roadblock issues that prevent the support organization from keeping the site fresh and up to date.

The two most frequent call types are how-to requests (how to access or operate IT resources) and password reset (establishing or regaining the privilege to access IT resources). Because password problems make up 20 percent to 30 percent of all IT service desk volume, with most of those issues resolvable by password reset tools, automating this function can save organizations the costs of supporting this type of request.

"The benefits of a well-designed self-service portal go well beyond service desk contact reduction. If properly implemented, self-service can

improve customer satisfaction, provide incident trend analysis, identify training opportunities, and consolidate the knowledge that currently exists in silos across the support organization," Mr. Coyle said. "These 'soft' benefits should always be outlined when making a business case for self-service."

Additional details are available in the Gartner report "Addressing IT Self-Service Myths and Realities for Successful Implementations." The report is available on Gartner's website at <http://www.gartner.com/resId=1409913>.

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