Eliminating Support Email: Is it a viable option?

An EDUCAUSE IT Support Services Community Group Webinar

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Eliminating Support Email

Is it a viable option?
Introduction

• Name: Jason Welborn
• Title: Manager, IT Help Desk
• Institution: Buffalo State College

• Help Desk:
  – Supervise 3 pro staff and 10-15 student employees
• IT Department:
  – 70+ professional staff
Client Base

Students:
– Undergrad: 8,082
– Graduate: 1,036
– Total: 9,118

Faculty/Staff:
– Full-Time: 1,206
– Part-Time: 578
– Total: 1,784
Current ITSM setup

- Ticketing System: TeamDynamix (July 2017)
- Ticket Classifications:
  - Incidents and Service Requests
  - Problem, Change, Release Management haven’t been implemented
- Ticket Sources:
  - Walk-In
  - Phone
  - Client Portal
  - Email (manually created, not auto-generated)
Old ITSM System vs. New ITSM System

• Old ITSM system:
  – Inaccessible for techs (not web-based, PC only)
  – No self-service options for customers
  – Lack of communication options
  – All tickets created by Help Desk

• New ITSM system (TeamDynamix):
  – Accessible for techs (web-based)
  – Many self-service options for customers
  – Easier communication options
  – Many tickets created via portal (bypassing Help Desk)
Eliminating E-mail: Disadvantages

• User preference:
  – Convenient, Quick, Easy

• User resistance to change:
  – “I generally find the self-service portal incredibly cumbersome and always seem to have difficulty knowing which options to select to make sure I’m completing the request correctly. I consider myself a generally tech-savvy person; I can only imagine how challenging others must find it to navigate.”

• IT staff preference:
  – Some inquiries can be responded to and resolved quickly
Eliminating E-mail: Advantages

• One less support channel to monitor
• Email (outside of ITSM):
  – Difficult to track/report on (without a ticket)
  – Becomes a ‘crutch’ for users
  – Potential for ‘balls to be dropped’
• Email (within ITSM):
  – Labor-intensive / a lot of overhead
  – Tickets need to be reviewed / ‘cleaned up’
• Email is open ended:
  – Ticket forms make it easier to collect information
Email Dilemma

Buffalo State will evaluate three options:

1. Eliminate email completely (and promote other support channels)
2. Implement email monitoring option within ITSM (to track/monitor)
3. Status Quo: Keep email but don’t track (handle outside of ITSM)
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Providing Email Support
NSU IT Service Desk

Rachel Bowling
Assistant Director of Client Services
About Our Institution

• Cherokee National Female Seminary - 1846
• Oklahoma: Broken Arrow, Muskogee, and Tahlequah
• Degree Programs: 54 Undergraduate and 24 Graduate
• Students: 7,879
  – Undergraduate: 6,712
  – Graduate: 1,167
• Employees: 1,293
  – Faculty: 569
  – Staff: 724
• Total of 9,172 Clients
About Our Service Desk

- Two Full Time Employees: Myself and a CSR
- Student Worker Operated
  - 25 Institutional Positions
  - Tiered Level’s
  - Four Crews
- What We Do
  - University Operator Consoles
  - Service Desk Phones
  - Front Desk Visitors
  - After Hours & Weekend Labs
  - First Tier Support
Poll Question

What method of reporting problems to your help or service desk is the most popular?
Our Support Methods

- Phone & Email
  - Main Methods
- Self-Service
  - Improving
- Walk-In
  - Traffic is Minimal
- Chatbot
  - Underutilized
Old Email Process

Log In / Monitor Inbox

Potentially, Create Ticket

Respond to Clients

Move Emails to Folder
Old Email Process – Cons

- One Employee’s Primary Responsibility
- Inaccurate Ticket Counts and Reporting
- Inability to Document Time and Work
- Manual Process for Large Amount of Intake
- Search 50,000+ Emails to Reference
- Limited Visibility for Department
Old Email Process - Pros

- Easy for Clients to Contact Us
- Receive Formal / Personalized Response
- Utilized Canned Responses
- Student Workers Learn Email Etiquette
New Email Process

Email Monitor Generates Ticket → Reviewing Group Assign Ticket → Responsible Group / Person Completes Ticket
New Email Process – Cons

- Automation Takes Time!
- Monitor Emails Outside Our Domain
- Move to ‘TeamDynamix Inbox’ Folder to Generate Tickets

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<td>Additional Monitor Rules</td>
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New Email Process - Pros

- Delegated Access to Email Account
- Reduced Spam Flooding Inbox
- Ticket Counts and Reporting are More Accurate
- Visibility for Department and Reference Usage
- Time Tracking for Employees
- Multiple Employee’s Responsibility
- Communication in Single location
Continue to Offer Email Support

Convenient for Clients + Common Practice = Win!
Thank You!

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About Providence College

• 4,834 total students (undergrad, grad, continuing education)
• 520 total faculty
• 598 total staff
• ~9000 alumni with email accounts

IT Client Base

• 44 total full-time employees
• 10 full-time User Support
  • 2-3 assigned to Helpdesk
• 6 half-time User Support graduate assistants
• 52 User Support student employees

IT Staff
Helpdesk Support Request Methods

- Phone call
- Walk-in
- Email
- Self-service ticket in ServiceNow

- All methods result in ServiceNow ticket
- Requests resolved on first contact do not record full details
- Prior to ServiceNow, emails were not tracked
Email Pros and Cons

Pros

• Keeps support user-friendly
• Meet the user where they are
• Ease of response to simple/common questions and issues
• Ticket can be automatically generated in some ITSM systems

Cons

• No way of tracking unless tickets entered for each email
• Automatically generated tickets may require tweaking for category/content
Why Email?

- Continuously re-evaluating use of email for support
- Considered auto-generating tickets
- Easy to request support
- Easy to respond to requests for support
- Will always receive support requests by email
Further questions?

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