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Staffing the Service Desk:

How Many Agents Do You Need?

By Jeff Rumburg
Managing Partner at:

MetricNet

Introduction

One of the most common questions I hear from IT support managers is "How many agents do I need in the service desk?" It's a great question, but one that is rarely answered adequately. The result is that many the service desks are not staffed properly because they do not follow any sort of proven methodology when making headcount decisions. Instead, they rely on "gut feel" or "instinct" when it comes to staffing the service desk.

In this article, MetricNet (www.metricnet.com), a leading source of online benchmarks and a pioneer in Desktop Support, Service Desk, and Call Center benchmarking, defines a rigorous methodology for determining the appropriate agent headcount for the service desk. Following the approach outlined in this article, your service desk can be assured that it will be staffed to meet the needs and expectations of its customers, while simultaneously delivering services in an efficient, fiscally responsible manner.

The Staffing Fallacy in Service Desk

A common misperception in the service desk is that the user population alone will define the number of agents needed. This approach wrongly assumes that the ratio of the service desk agents to the number of users supported is fixed. For example, 5 service desk agents are needed for every 1,000 users. The error in this approach is that no two user populations have the same needs, and therefore no two user populations generate the same workload. As such, staffing decisions in the service desk should be based upon workload, not user population.

Consider the example of a financial services company with a corporate staff of 2,500. The device count for this user population is as follows:

- 2,100 desktop computers
- 950 laptop computers
- 140 printers and copy machines
- 1,100 smart phones
- 240 servers

Staffing the Desktop Support Function:

How Many Technicians Do You Need?

By Jeff Rumburg
Managing Partner at:

MetricNet

Introduction

One of the most common questions I hear from IT support managers is "How many techs should I have in desktop support?" It's a great question, but one that is rarely answered adequately. The result is that many desktop support organizations are not staffed properly because they do not follow any sort of proven methodology when making headcount decisions. Instead, they rely on "gut feel" or "instinct" when it comes to staffing desktop support. Compounding this situation is the fact that many desktop support groups do not follow a strict SPOC (Single Point of Contact) support model, and end up handling large numbers of incidents that could and should be resolved by the service desk. It's no wonder then that many desktop support groups are overstaffed, and hence very costly.

In this article, MetricNet (www.metricnet.com), a leading source of online benchmarks and a pioneer in Desktop Support, Service Desk, and Call Center benchmarking, defines a rigorous methodology for determining the appropriate technician headcount for desktop support. Following the approach outlined in this article, desktop support organizations can be assured that they will be staffed to meet the needs and expectations of their customers, while simultaneously delivering services in an efficient, fiscally responsible manner.

The Staffing Fallacy in Desktop Support

A common misperception in desktop support is that the user population alone will define the number of technicians needed. This approach wrongly assumes that the ratio of desktop support technicians to the number of users supported is fixed. For example, 12.5 desktop support technicians are needed for every 1,000 users. The error in this approach is that no two user populations have the same needs, and therefore no two user populations generate the same workload. As such, staffing decisions in desktop support should be based upon workload, not user population.

Consider the example of a financial services company with a corporate staff of 2,500. The device count for this user population is as follows:

- 2,100 desktop computers
- 950 laptop computers
- 140 printers and copy machines
- 1,100 smart phones

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Tech Talk

Your Speakers:

Jeff Rumburg, MetricNet, LLC

Rae Ann Bruno, Business Solutions Training

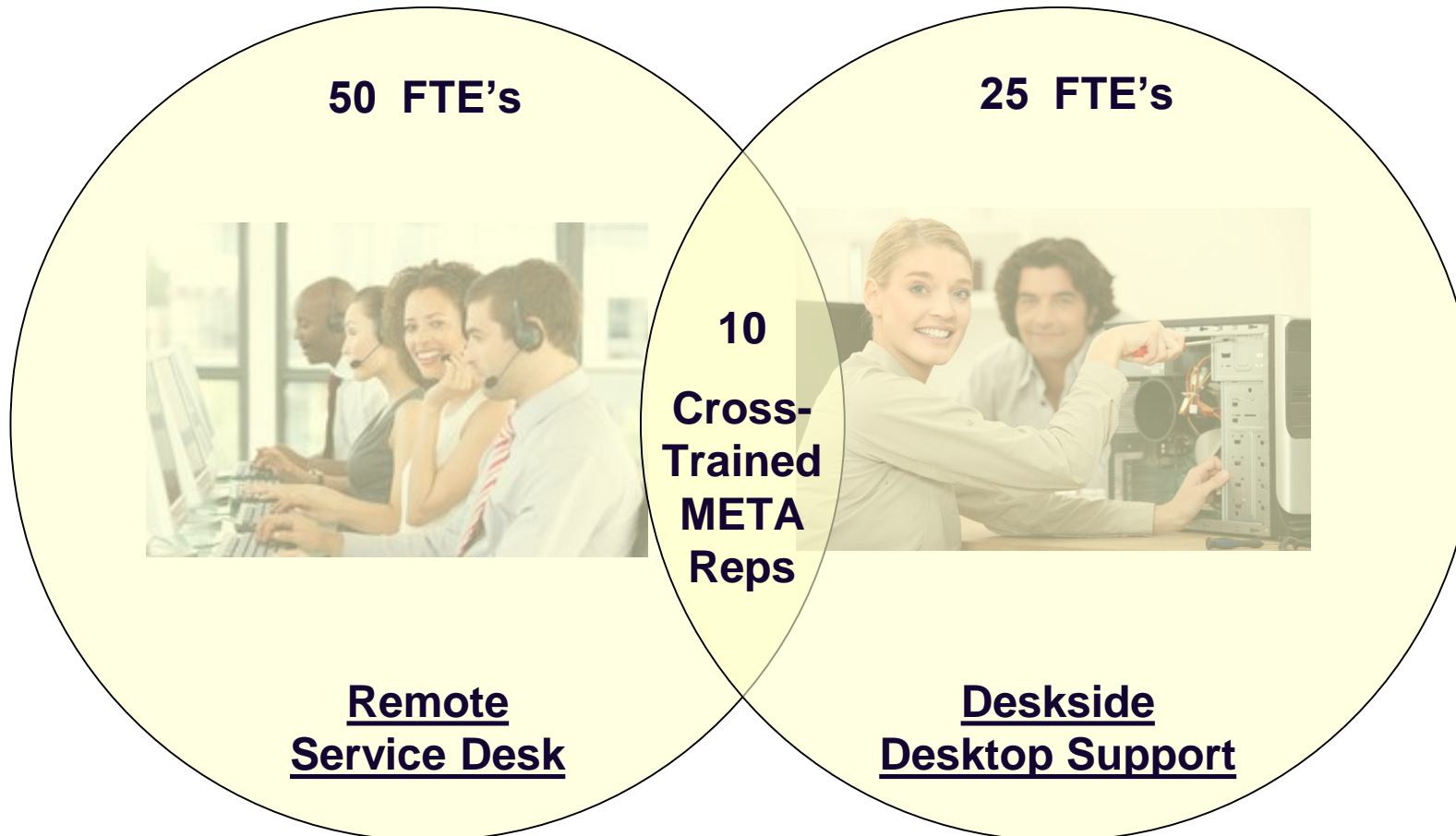#HDIConf

MetricNet.com/hdi18

Tech Talk

Your Speakers:

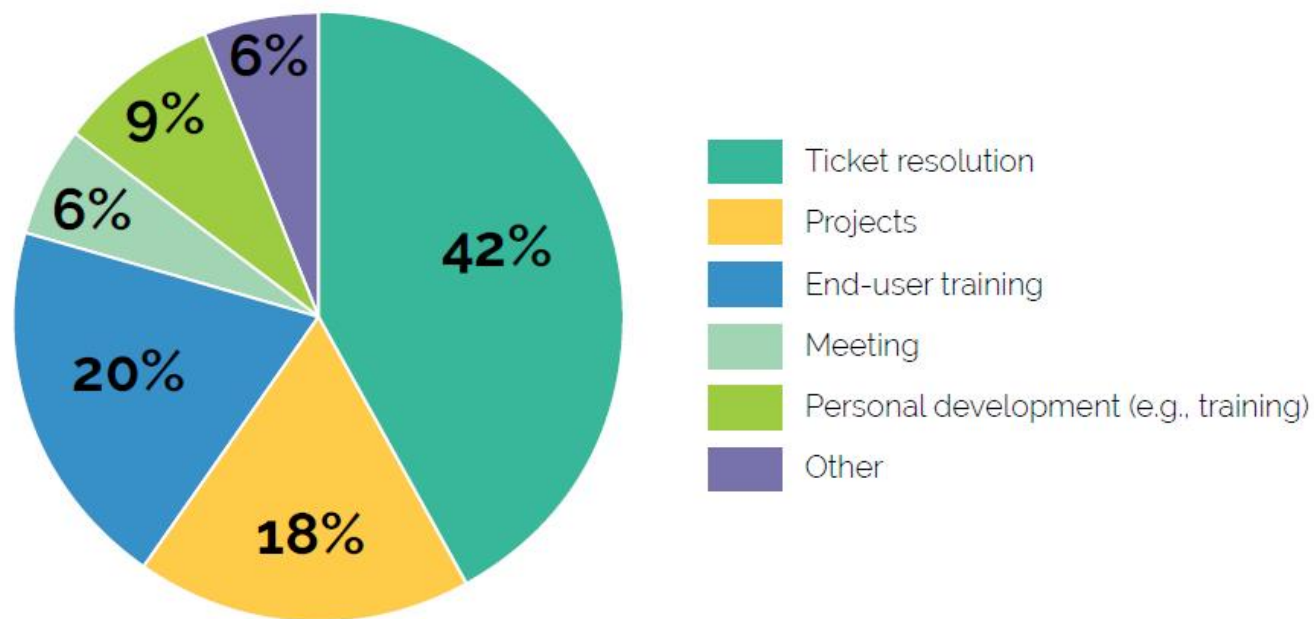Jeff Rumburg, MetricNet, LLC

Rae Ann Bruno, Business Solutions Training
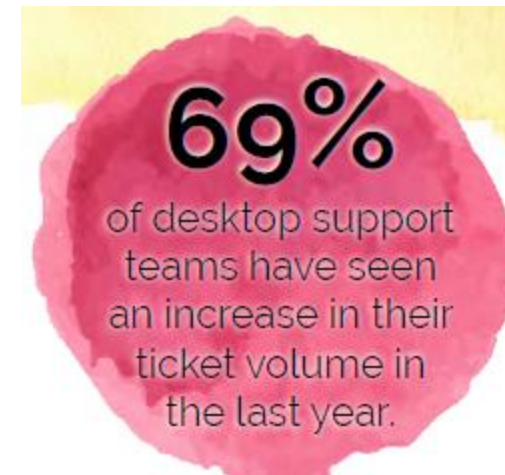
Hybrid Support is Increasingly Common

50 FTE's

25 FTE's

10 Cross-Trained META Reps

Remote Service Desk

Deskside Desktop Support

Time desktop support technicians spend on each activity:

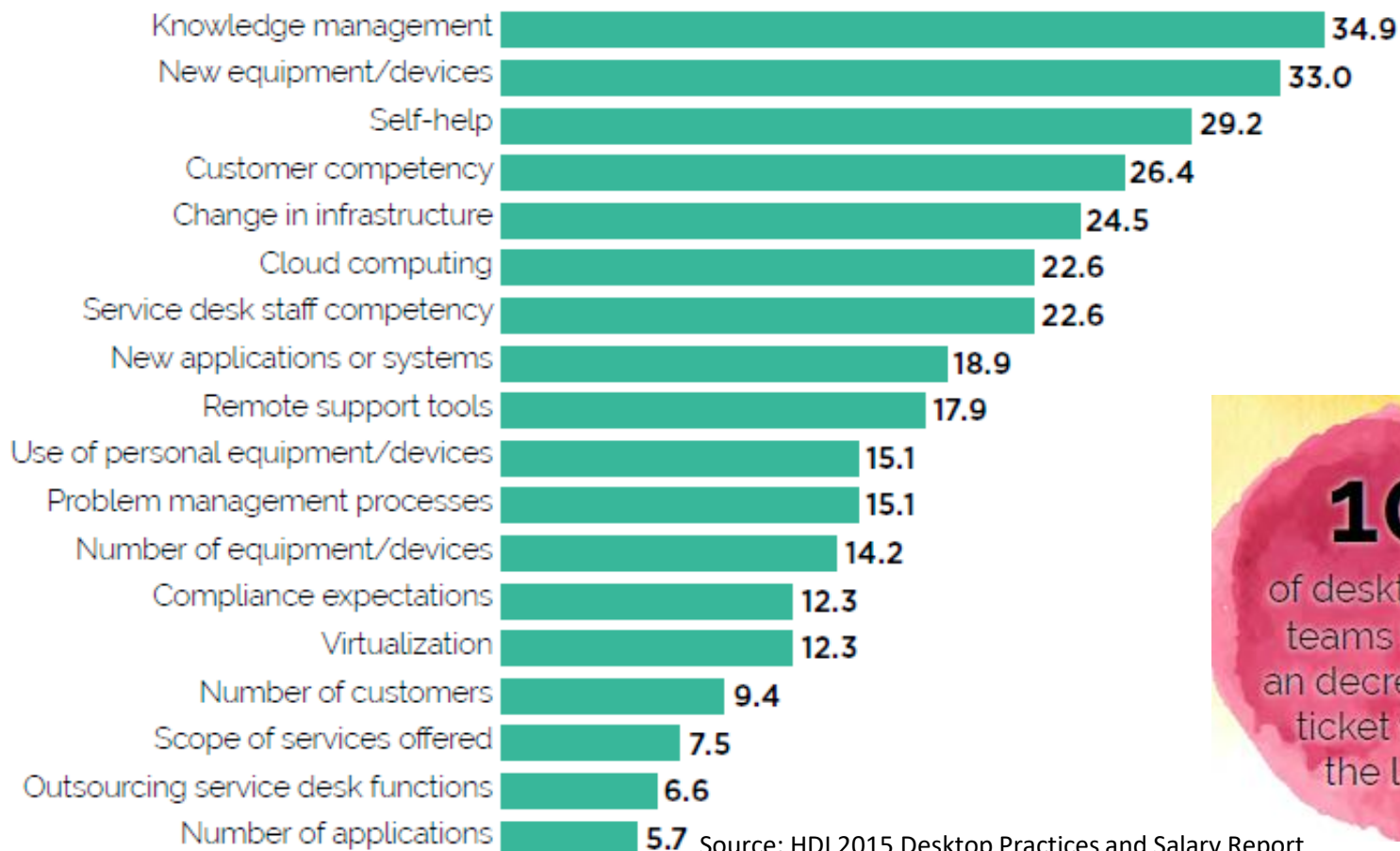|	
■	Ticket resolution
■	Projects
■	End-user training
■	Meeting
■	Personal development (e.g., training)
■	Other

42%
18%
20%
6%
9%
6%

Percentage of time

Source: HDI 2015 Desktop Practices and Salary Report

Organizations reporting a decrease in ticket volume attribute it to the following factors:
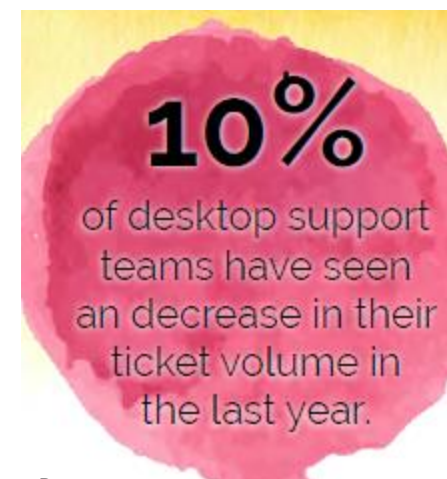
Factor	Value
Knowledge management	34.9
New equipment/devices	33.0
Self-help	29.2
Customer competency	26.4
Change in infrastructure	24.5
Cloud computing	22.6
Service desk staff competency	22.6
New applications or systems	18.9
Remote support tools	17.9
Use of personal equipment/devices	15.1
Problem management processes	15.1
Number of equipment/devices	14.2
Compliance expectations	12.3
Virtualization	12.3
Number of customers	9.4
Scope of services offered	7.5
Outsourcing service desk functions	6.6
Number of applications	5.7

10% of desktop support teams have seen an decrease in their ticket volume in the last year.

Source: HDI 2015 Desktop Practices and Salary Report

- Standardize

- Automate

- Deflect (shift left, e.g. Self-Help)

- Time Tracking (quantifying work effort)

- Set Expectations appropriately

- Published SLA response and resolution times

- Service Catalog

- Minimize unnecessary escalations

- Gain control over process bypasses

- Reengineer (e.g. replace vs. fix, Walk Up vs. deskside)