



AN IT PRO'S JOURNEY



PROPER

Cameron



UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Cameron had always prided himself on being a hands-on tech guy who helped keep infrastructure and assets running smoothly. Then one day he was called upon to manage an IT team at a mid-sized call center. This was uncharted territory, as he had never officially managed a team.

Just before Cameron took the helm, the company had rapidly grown from a small-scale operation into an environment with hundreds of staff members fielding calls around the clock.

Find out how Cameron transformed a culture that once resisted change to one that now embraces new trends and technologies.

PART I

BUILDING A POSITIVE AND ENCOURAGING HELP DESK CULTURE



Cameron's first observation was that the current status quo for reporting and tracking issues (end-users sending emails to a distribution list and phoning up technicians throughout the day) would have to go. It wasn't conducive to the rapid growth the organization was experiencing.

The current process didn't scale and had no way of providing the rich sets of metadata necessary for handling problem/resolution situations like help desk ticketing. It was clear that he needed to implement a help desk system and time was of the essence.

Ignore previous cookie.

Lucky Numbers 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, 42



I was challenged with fighting a system that was very simple for the end-users, but mostly worthless for IT.

~~Ticketin~~

Broaching the subject of a ticketing system was met with tales of woe and complaints that it 'won't work' based on past attempts.



I felt, however, that introducing a successful help desk ticketing system required only

a few core principles...



HELP DESK TICKETING SYSTEM

THE CORE PRINCIPLES

1. **A SIMPLE PROCESS** that steered as far away from technical jargon as possible.

2. **BUY-IN** and **PARTICIPATION** from the top echelons of the company.
If the top brass were on board, their subordinates would follow suit.



3. **EMPOWERED IT STAFF** that could influence the look, feel, selection, and direction of the help desk system without fear of retribution or being seen as "wrong", "not a team player", or "stupid."

★ 4. **FASTER RESOLUTION TIMES** (undoubtedly the most important of all) on issues that went through the help desk using various synergies from related metadata (tracking hardware, software, and historical trends).



Armed with a vision and a simple plan, Cameron made preparations to inaugurate a help desk system that would not only revolutionize the organization's current methodologies, but also accommodate the growth it was experiencing.

near light-speed



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in browser



2 WAYS TO RUN A HELP DESK

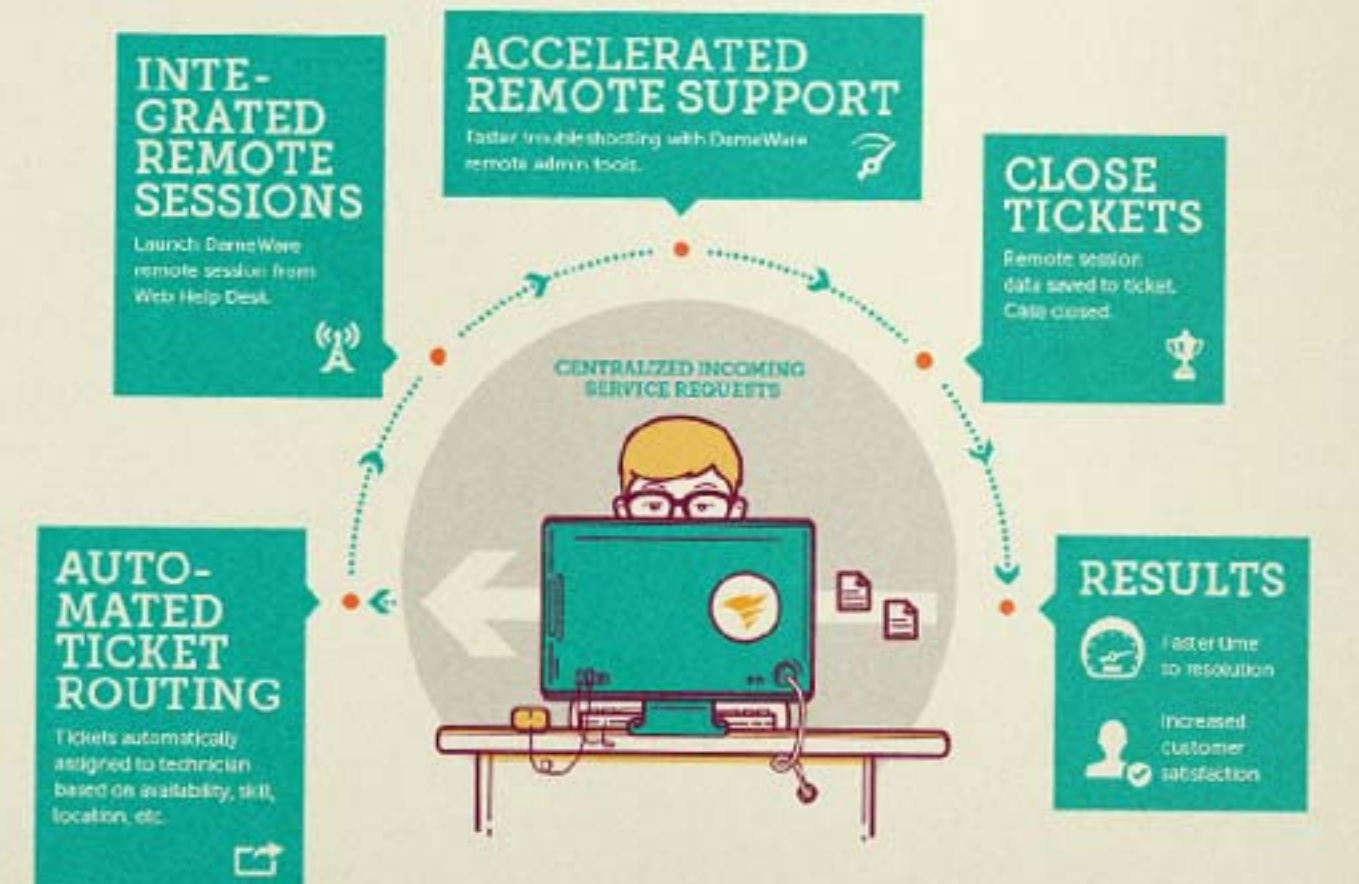
MANUAL HELP DESK

Do you face the challenge of manually receiving and tracking service requests? If so, this is how tedious and cumbersome help desk management could be for you. Don't forget the delayed ticket resolution and unhappy customer!



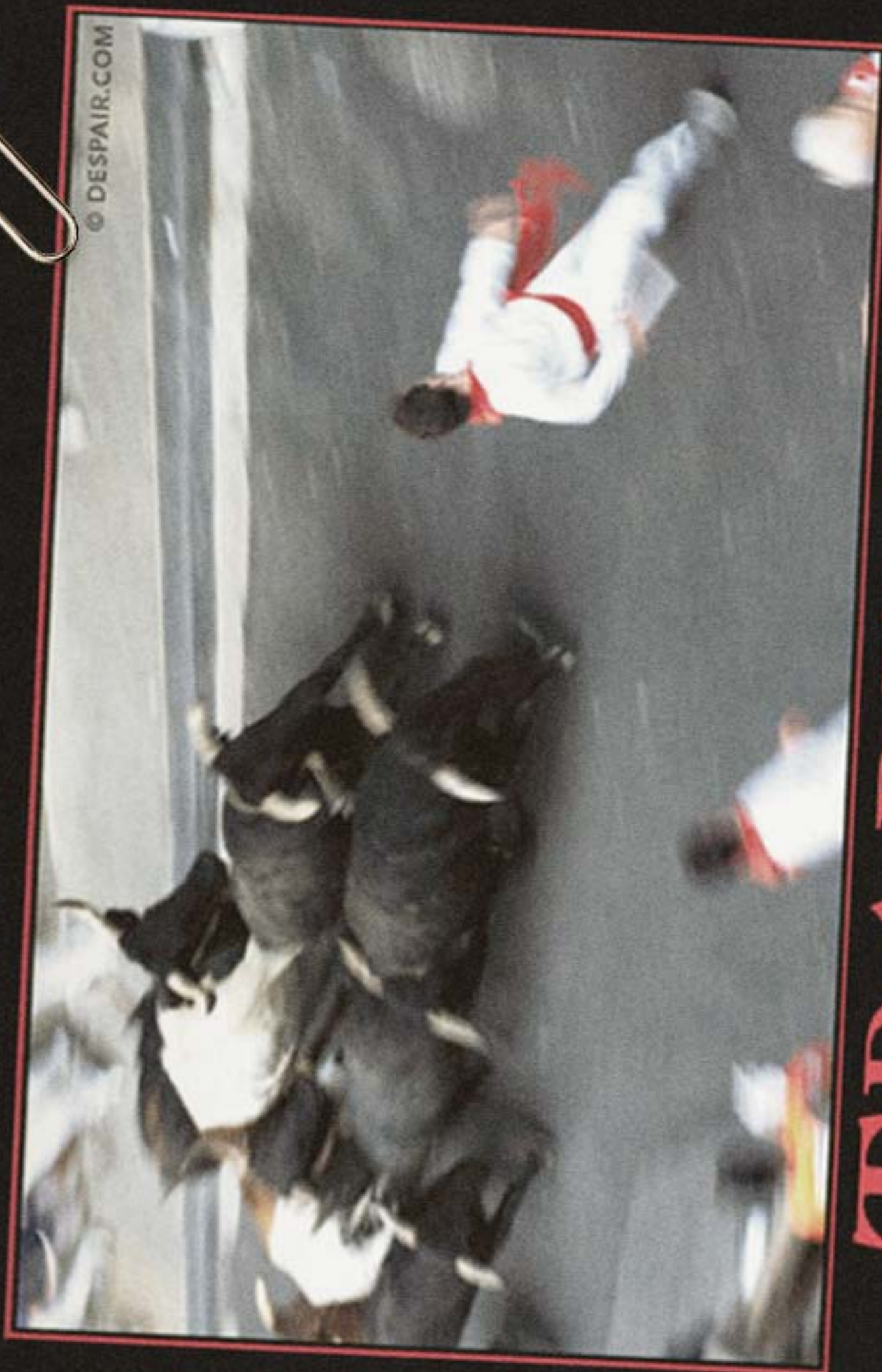
HELP DESK ESSENTIALS

Streamline and automate help desk ticketing and desktop support with SolarWinds® Help Desk Essentials. The combination of Web Help Desk® and DameWare® Remote Support allows you to efficiently manage service requests and provide timely support to end-users.



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TRADITION

JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE IT THAT WAY
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT INCREDIBLY STUPID.



UP NEXT: PART II

Defining Service Level Agreements (SLA)
for successful help desk operations

PART II

DEFINING SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLA) FOR SUCCESSFUL HELP DESK OPERATIONS



HI. MY INTERNET IS OUT...



...UH, MY INTERNET IS STILL OUT...



...LET'S SEE NOW...I'M SURE I HAD A GOOD REASON TO CALL...



As Cameron set out to implement a help desk system, he had the good fortune of managing a sharp, hard-working team. The positive reinforcement from management also helped sell the idea. It was all within his grasp now.

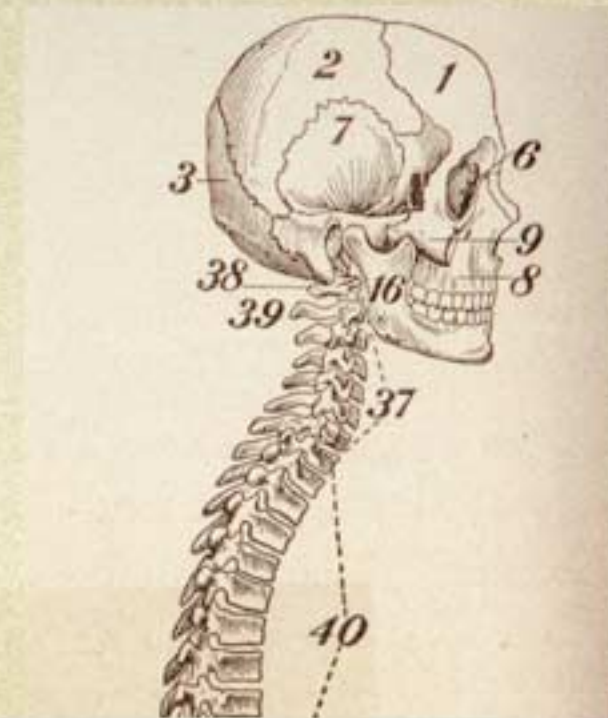
He summoned a handful of power users (you know the type, the "friends of IT" who are out there trying to get their work done) to test the help desk system.

I let it leak that these users were implementing some very cool new system tools that gave them additional access to IT resources.

Those not using the system were curious and actively sought us out to put in those 'cool new tickets' instead of using the old email system.



It was a type of reverse psychology exercise that makes my spine tingle.



Cameron was stoked. It was all coming together better than he had imagined.

But there were still more hurdles to transcend. Now that users were actively engaged and entering data into the system via tickets, he had some tough decisions to make around Service Level Agreements (SLA).

I knew the top brass wanted to see results.

Simple, decorative numbers are great, but it's hard to define SLAs when all of your data is new and there isn't much historical information to work with.



Cameron learned some valuable lessons...

4 VALUABLE LESSONS

FOR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS



1. PRIORITIZE TICKETS

It is a mistake to allow user-defined ticket priorities to influence which SLAs we could be held accountable for. Everyone feels like his or her ticket is high priority and requires the highest SLA. Eventually, our internal IT team learned how to prioritize the tickets that are entered in the queue. (The user-defined priority was left in to make people feel better. 😊)

2. LEVERAGE CURRENT METHODS

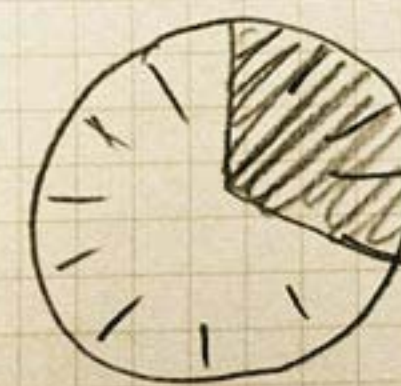
We started mimicking SLAs from our vendors. For example, if a server vendor offered a four-hour replacement window, we would match that value, or go slightly above it to allow for break/fix time after the replacement arrived.



REPLACEMENT WINDOW

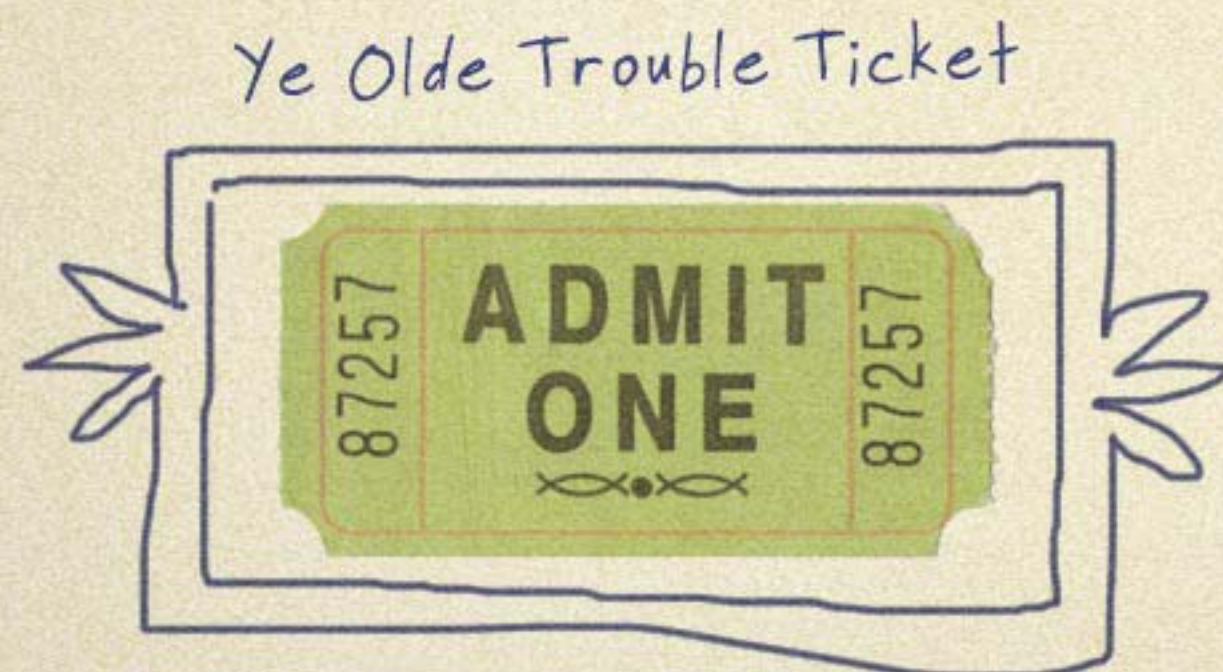
VENDOR

OURS



3. INCLUDE HISTORICAL METADATA WITH TICKET OBJECTS

Knowing how many times a specific phone had stopped working gave us increased confidence to make actionable decisions. This helped us go far beyond our standard four-hour SLA because we could quickly pitch old hardware into a replacement queue, discard queue, or "fix-it" queue. In essence, hardware told us stories about themselves.



APPROVED

4. TRUST YOUR DATA

Being able to show our SLAs in hard numbers provided valuable protection against fallible human memory.

It also pointed out our weak spots that needed improvement, training, or additional skill sets.



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COMPREHENSIVE, AFFORDABLE, SECURE

8 Ways to Improve the "Agreement" Part of Your

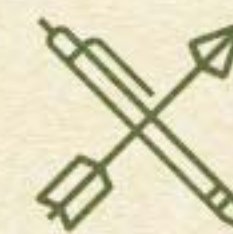
Posted by David Jensen on Thu, Jan 22, 2015 | Comments(1)

While in my home office listening to a training seminar, I lost my Internet connection and suddenly felt like I was in some kind of inter-dimensional void. I went from 0 to 100 under 3 seconds. I was ready to blame my ISP for everything from global warming to high cholesterol. By the time Technical Support got me reconnected, I missed 30 minutes of the seminar. Ideally, I wanted the Technical Support person to not only resolve the issue but alter the space-time continuum in such a way that I didn't miss a single minute of the seminar.

A seemingly common scenario in the service provider/customer relationship is the impossible, and in many ways, you would like to deliver the impossible. Unfortunately, customers feel personally wronged when something goes awry. Then, it's up to you to resolve the issue that gets an earful of fury.

Enter the Service Level Agreement (SLA). This pact between service provider and customer is touted as a complaint silencer. When a customer starts holding you personally wrong with the world, you simply wave him or her off with your SLA.

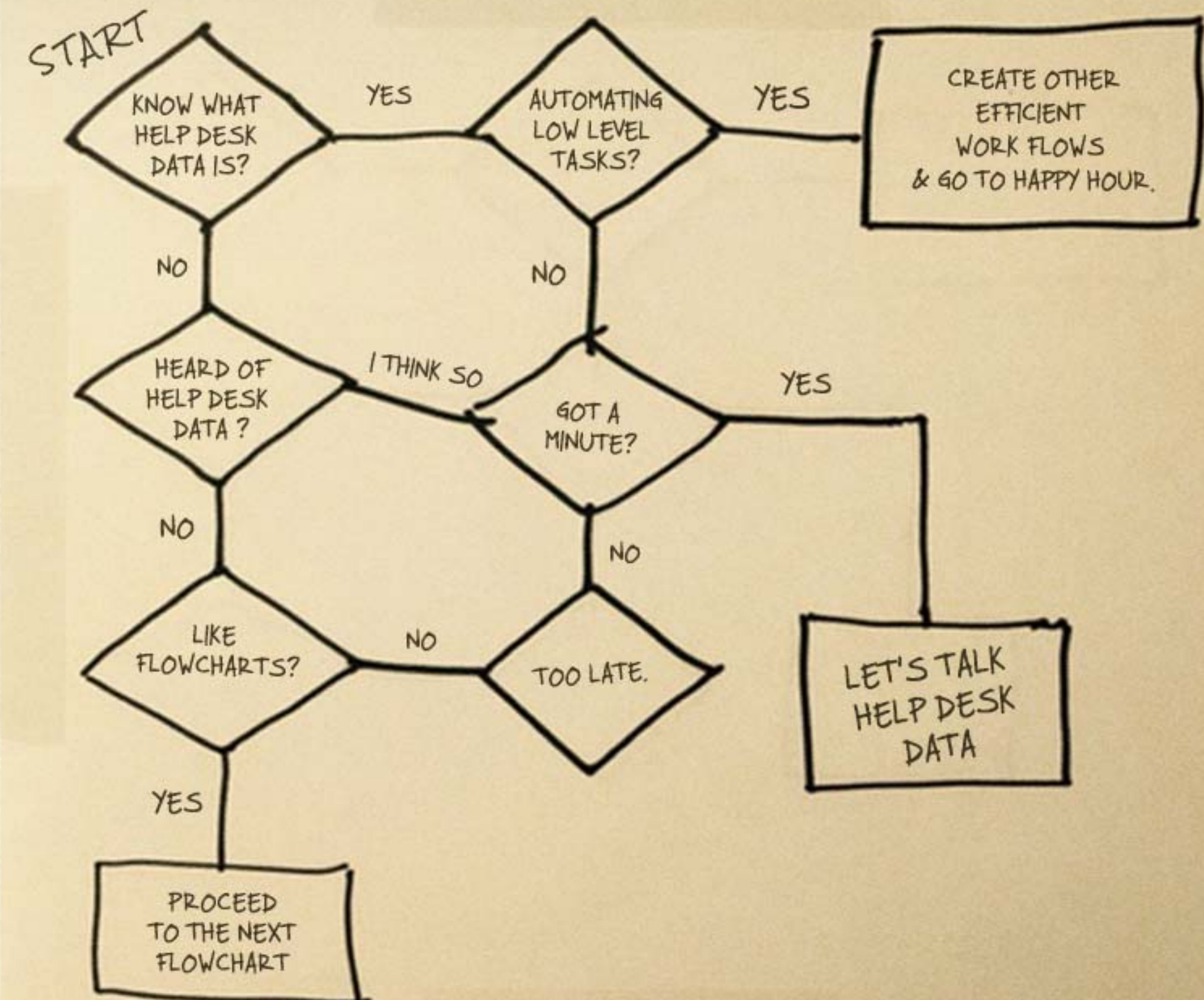
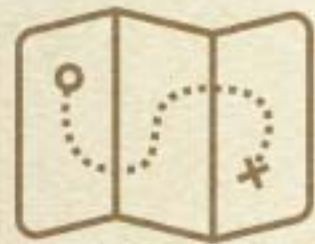
Your SLA shouldn't be thought of as the hinge that's holding your business together. It's better to serve both you and your customers to get a win-win scenario that



UP NEXT: PART III
Developing WORKFLOWS
using help desk data

PART III

DEVELOPING WORKFLOWS USING HELP DESK DATA



Once Cameron's team established a help desk and defined SLAs for various requests and workflows, it was time to get proactive.



MATT A.K.A. "THE SOOTHSAYER"

One of the team members (seemingly able to see certain trends that no one else could) suggested that using the data stored in the help desk could further build a sort of analytics engine for making better decisions in the future...

MATT'S SUGGESTIONS:

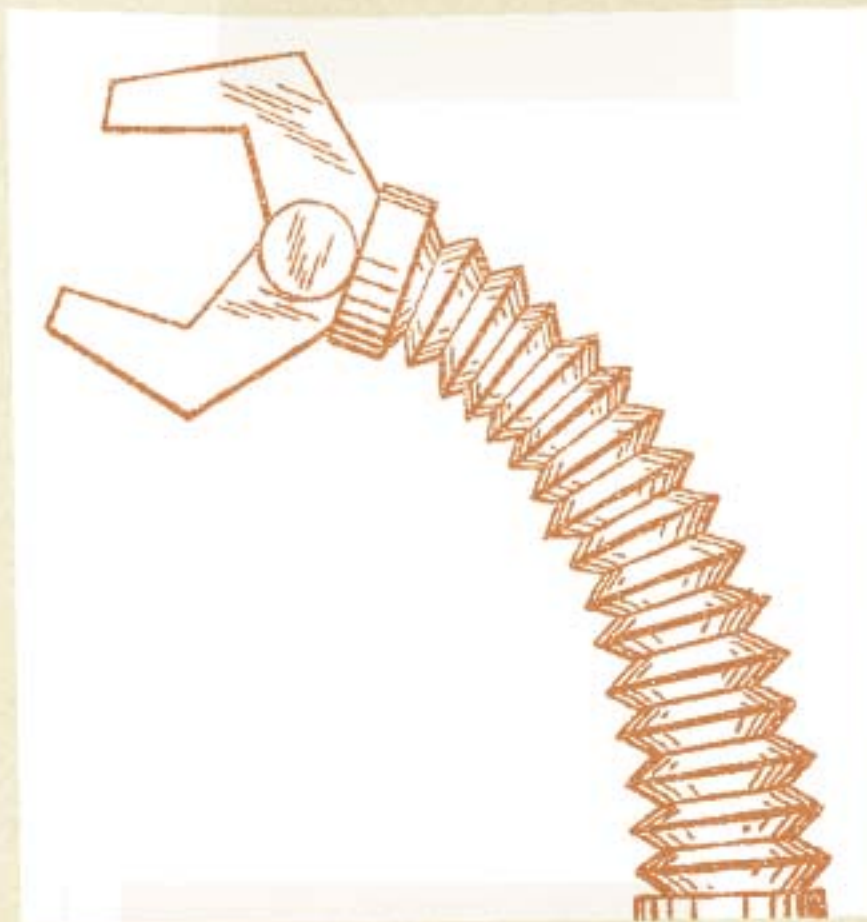


- Which activities are the **most frequent** or the **most time consuming**?
Is there a correlation?
- Can we find ways to proactively **automate** a number of frequently occurring requests, such as password resets?
- Is there a way to extrapolate our hardware replacement rates to build a reasonably accurate **forecast** for next quarter (or next year) **budget** numbers?

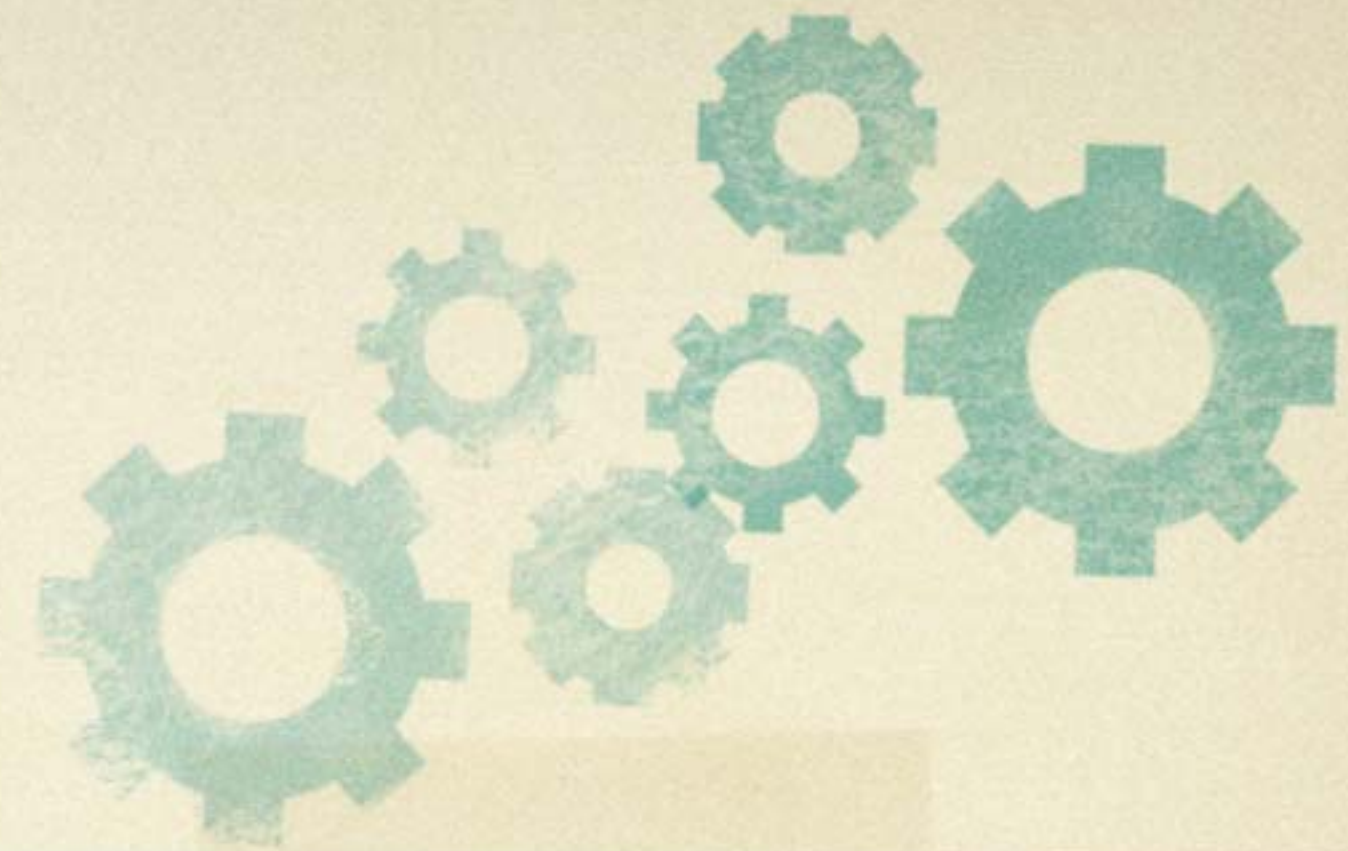


Cameron's team discovered that a number of workflows could be created to solve/remediate requests with their help desk system acting as the front-end interface.

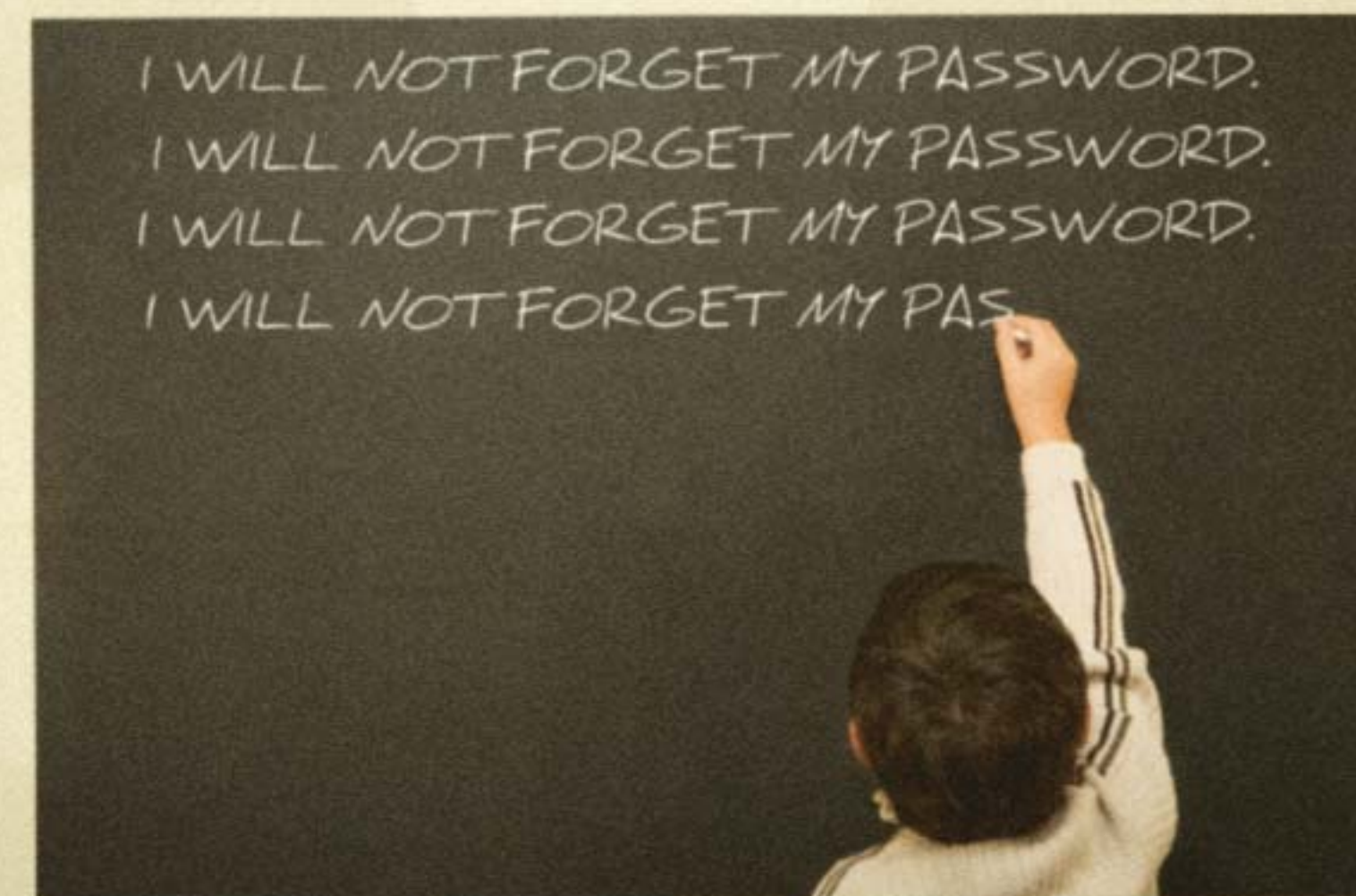
Password requests ended up being the most common, so we assigned the non-IT supervisor staff the ability to issue time-sensitive password resets for their pods (teams) once per day.



The resets were still audited to make sure no "funny business" took place, but this alleviated a fair bit of pain as call center staff commonly forgot their passwords right at the beginning of their shifts.



After a little sleuthing, Cameron's team discovered that many employees were getting around the password reset either by sharing a password or requiring a supervisor to override the login for their VoIP system. Delegating password resets not only closed this loop, it also provided further visibility into the problem.



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Great article
with ideas for
streamlining
help desk
ticketing
process.

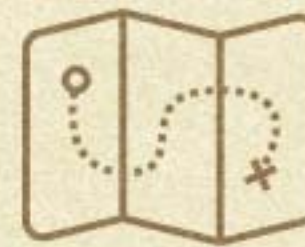


Resources

Overcoming the challenge of disparate
channels to log IT service requests

Resources

Harness the Power of Automated Help
Desk Ticketing

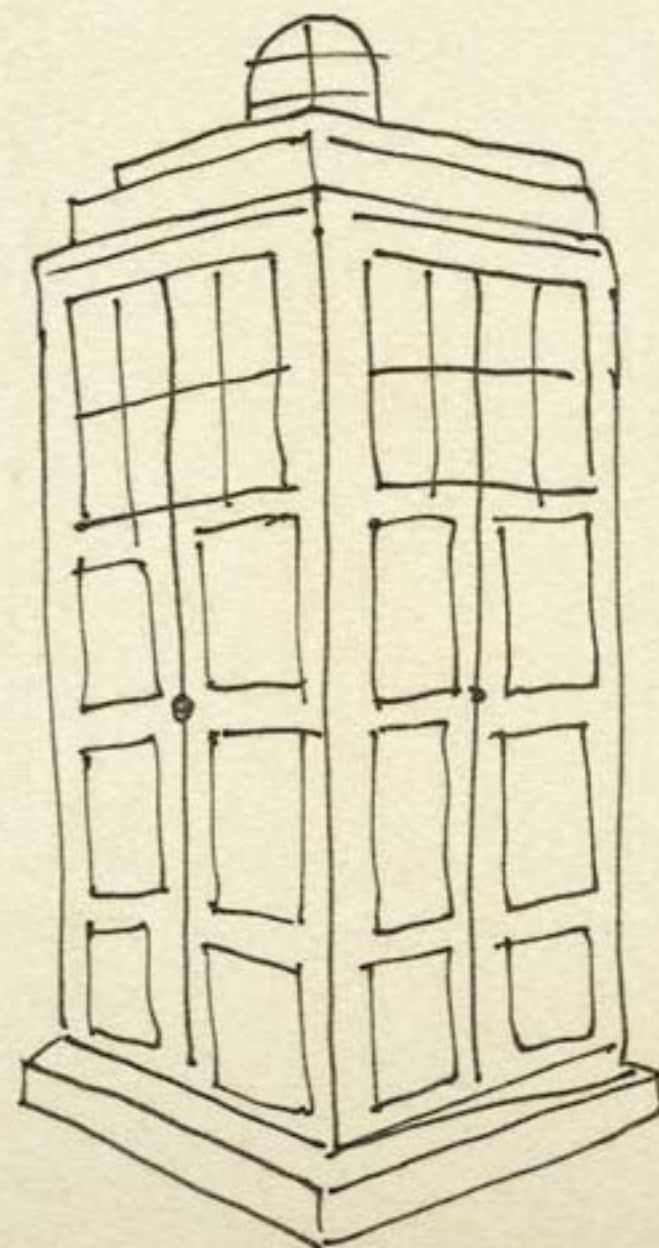
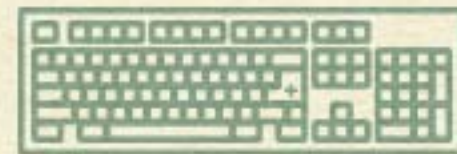


UP NEXT: PART IV
How to fence off TIME
for a help desk

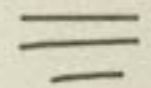


PART IV

HOW TO FENCE OFF TIME FOR A HELP DESK

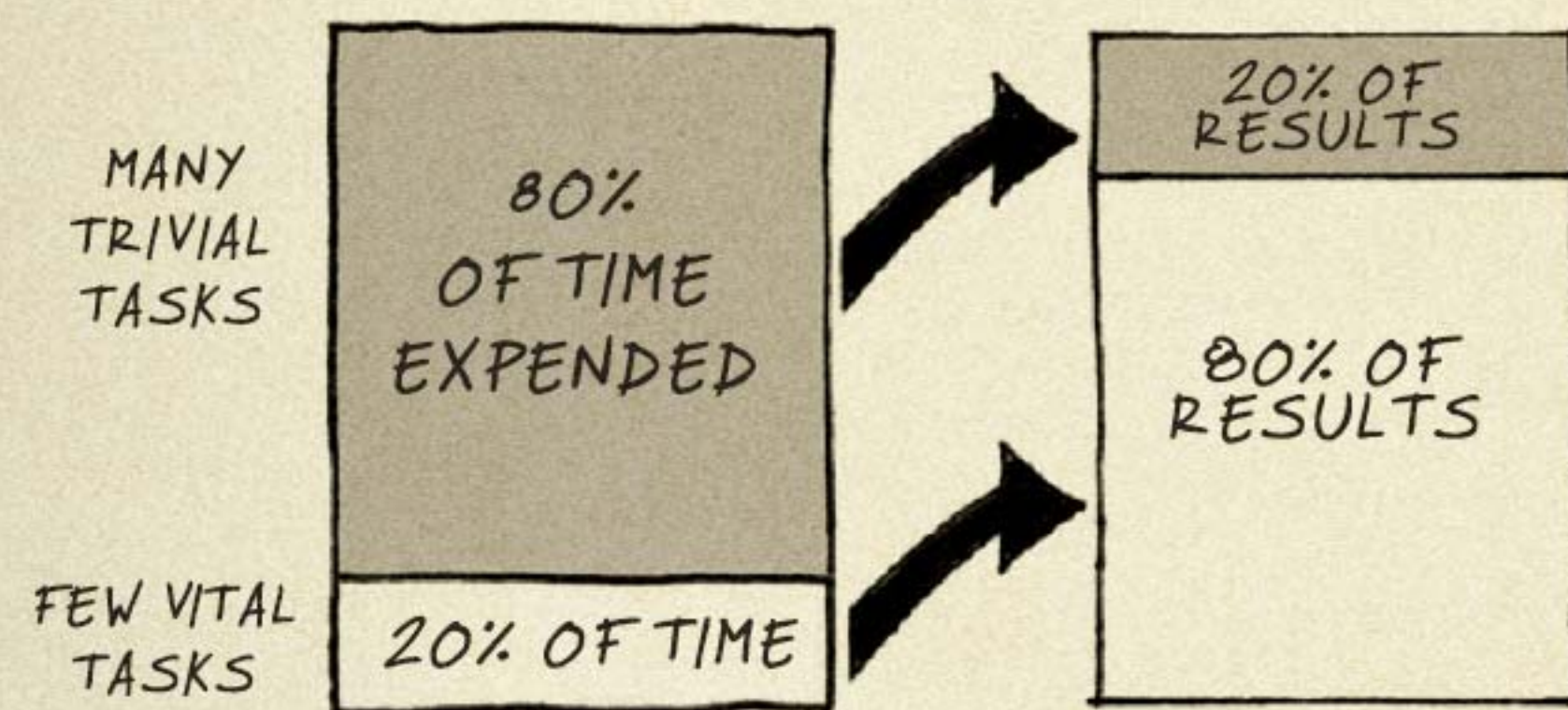


Cameron was pleased with his and his team's progress with their help desk system. Further, he could now add help desk manager to his quiver of industry skills. But there was still one piece he hadn't addressed—time.



January	February	March	April
Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa
1 2 3 4	1	1	1 2 3 4 5
5 6 7 8 9 10 11	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	6 7 8 9 10 11 12
12 13 14 15 16 17 18	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	13 14 15 16 17 18 19
19 20 21 22 23 24 25	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	20 21 22 23 24 25 26
26 27 28 29 30 31	23 24 25 26 27 28	23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	27 28 29 30
May	June	July	August
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4 5 6 7 8 9 10	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11 12 13 14 15 16 17	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	10 11 12 13 14 15 16
18 19 20 21 22 23 24	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29 30	27 28 29 30 31	24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
September	October	November	December
Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa	Su M Tu W Th Fr Sa
1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1	1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	5 6 7 8 9 10 11	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30	26 27 28 29 30 31	23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	28 29 30 31

Time is finite, difficult to find, and often buried in other daily tasks. According to the Pareto Principle regarding the 80/20 rule, IT professionals spend 80% of their time on trivial tasks and 20% innovating (providing some real impact).



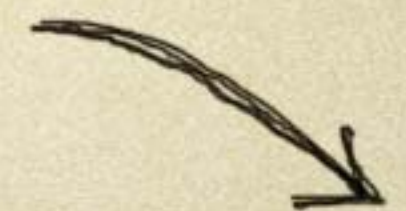
In some of my positions, it might as well be the 99/1 rule (or the 100/20 rule, in which I spent nights and weekends on the innovation part).

How did my team and I find the time to build out a new help desk system?

I made a few bold statements to management to help get this off the ground, and set up some daily team exercises.

Again, support from the upper echelons is critical!

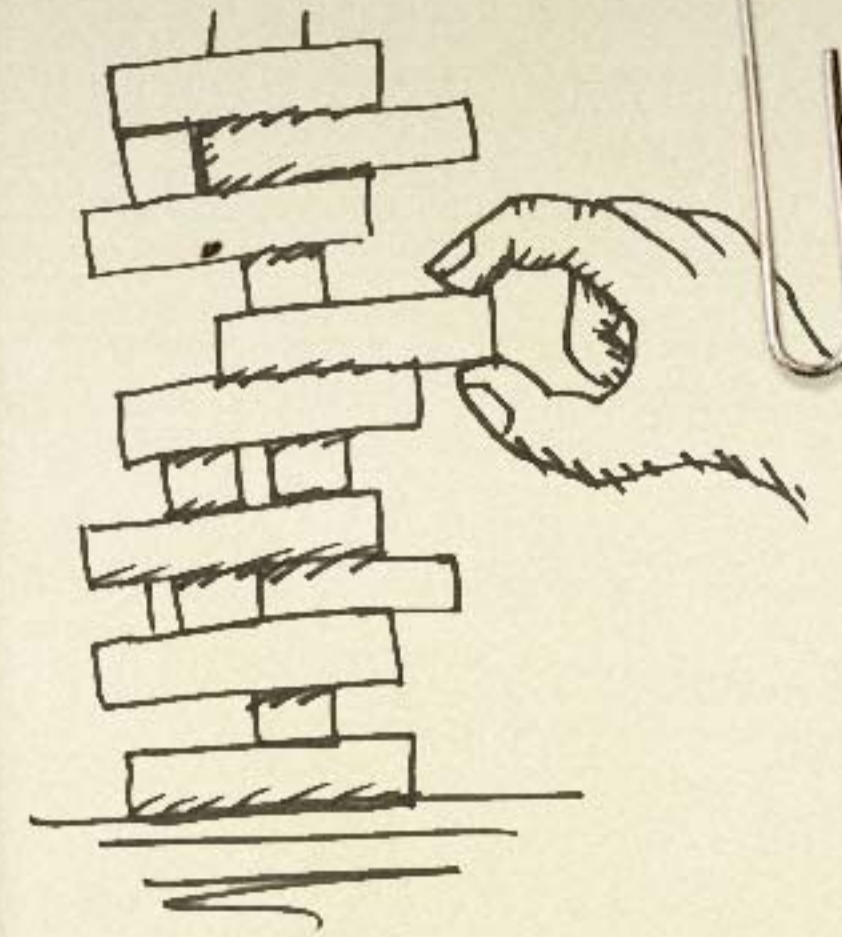
KEY PRINCIPLES WE LEARNED...



- The help desk, and related SLA and workflow creation, was considered an IT project with time allotments. They could budget team time to the help desk and could give it priority in the queue.

- The team covered for one another when other issues arose. For example, one person spent time working issues on the call center floor, while another staff member focused on building a workflow.

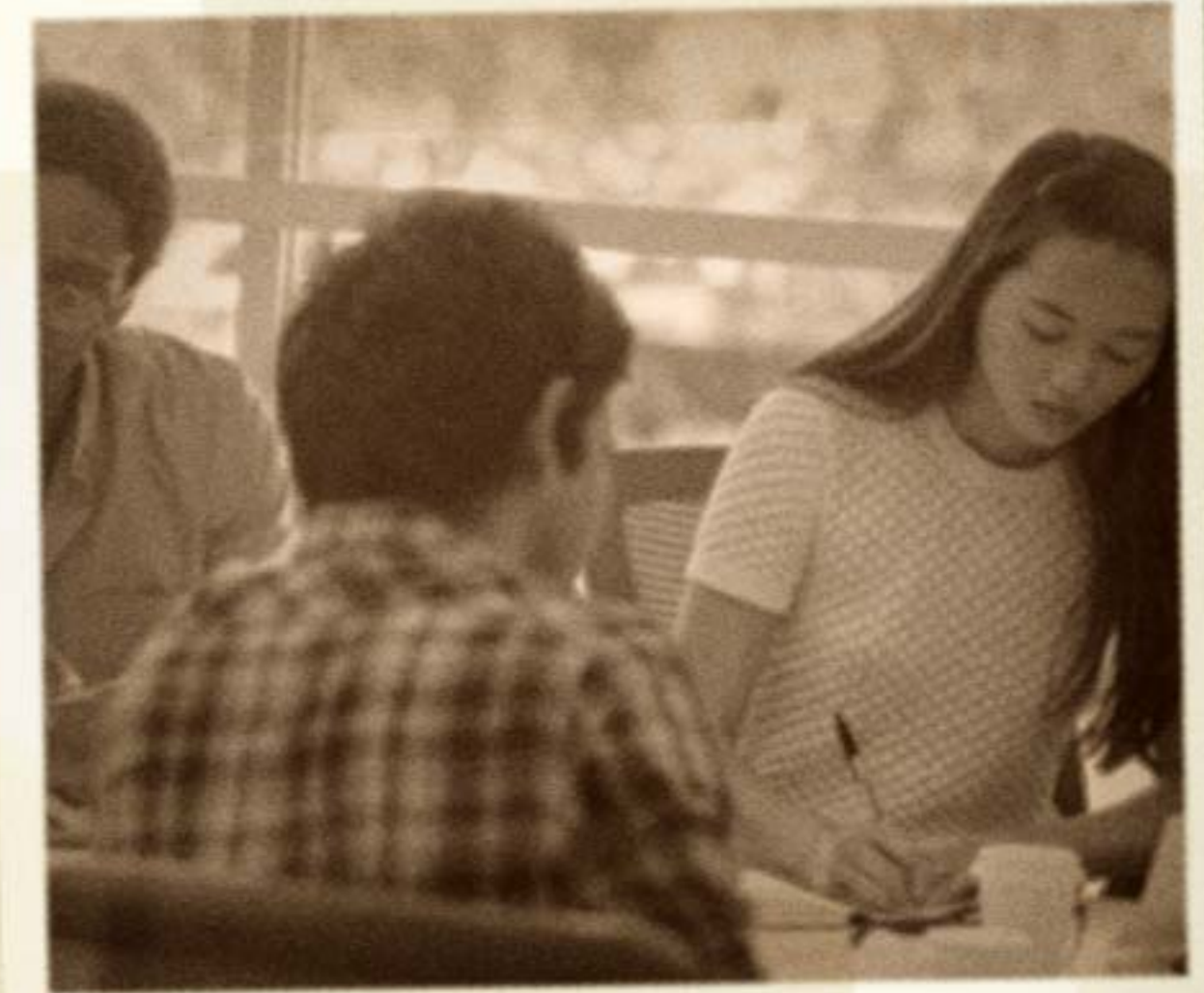
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Don't get into "technical debt."

Putting off a help desk now means you pay for it with more work later. A help desk system pays off operational debt quickly and efficiently.

- We started the day with a morning "red zone" meeting to review the backlog of work and determine what we wanted to accomplish that day. It was also a great time to figure out how we could best help each other with various daily tasks and discuss team progress.



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GEEK SPEAK

5 TIME-SAVING STRATEGIES FOR THE HELP DESK

Posted by [vinod.mohan](#) in [Geek Speak](#) on Mar 13, 2015 5:08:33 AM

Support centers in organizations are under constant pressure due to increasing volume of service tickets and increasing end-user deadlines. So, how can help desk admins increase the efficiency of the help desk process, and ultimately result in faster time on repetitive, less important, and menial tasks can help you gain that time for actual ticket resolution.

Here are 5 useful time-saving strategies for improved help desk productivity:

#1 DON'T GO INVENTING FIXES. SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE ALREADY DONE THAT.
Not all service tickets are unique and different from one another. It is highly common to have had different users face the same issue. Capture the best resolution applied in an internal knowledge base. This way, it will be never be a new issue to deal with from scratch.

#2 KNOW WHAT YOUR ARE DEALING WITH.
Before jumping the gun and assuming you know exactly what problem you are dealing with and start fixing it, make sure you have the right tools, how to use something, or it is such a simple fix that the user can do it himself. So, don't settle for vague descriptions from tickets.

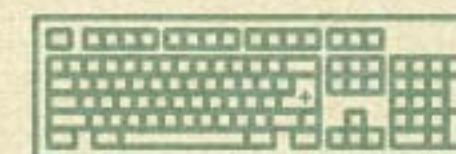
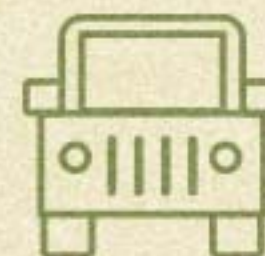
#3 PROMOTE END-USER SELF-SERVICE.
If your user base is growing and you are receiving tickets for commonplace issues with easy fixes, it is time you start thinking about self-service. Password reset is still a top call driver for support teams. Self-service portals will free up a fair share of IT admins' time.

#4 ESCALATE WHEN YOU CAN'T RESOLVE.
While you might feel capable of resolving any level of support ticket, there will be a time when you face some technical challenge beyond your memory exhaustion no matter what you do. These are times you must act on judgment and escalate the issue to another technician. Escalation is not a failure, but will result in more tickets piling up. Make sure your help desk has proper escalation, de-escalation, and automation.

#5 DO IT REMOTELY.
Yes, personal human contact is the best possible means of communication. However, it can cost you handsomely in time and money. Remote support is the best way to help users remotely if you conduct a remote session of the user's system. And if you have additional [remote administration tools](#), you can speed up the process.

What other tricks of the trade do you have to up your sleeve to help fellow IT pros speed up customer support?

3514 Views Tags: [remote_support](#), [remote_administration](#), [help_desk_geekspeak](#), [help_desk_software](#), [tools_geekspeak](#)



Let's wrap this thing up...

Implementing a help desk system is an exercise in change management. It's not just about changing processes, it's also about getting everyone (IT technicians, end-users, and management) on board. A successful help desk implementation depends on three instrumental factors: the right people, the right process, and the right technology. To go one step further in achieving greater help desk success and IT service, you need to have the right combination of these elements.

- Find the right people for help desk operations. Keep them motivated. Retain talent.
- Implement the right process. Define measurable goals, milestones, and metrics. Monitor help desk activity.
- Use the right help desk tools and technology for task automation, and make operations simpler.



About SolarWinds® Web Help Desk®

Web Help Desk is a fully automated help desk and IT asset management software that allows you to efficiently streamline your IT support process from ticket creation to resolution. With built-in automation to simplify help desk tasks, discover and manage IT assets, develop workflows for change control, and knowledge base to promote self-service, Web Help Desk helps you save time and deliver faster support to your end-users. [Learn more »](#)

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