



Unlocking the Potential of a Modern, Distributed Workforce

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Introduction

The world looks very different than it did at the start of 2020. In fact, towards the end of 2019, respondents to [HDI's annual industry research](#) told us that only 4% of organizations were planning on implementing work-from-home (WFH) policies in 2020, while 32% said they had no plans to implement WFH. Now, organizations are considering how much of the workforce will return to offices and when...or even if. In forthcoming research from HDI, 82% of respondents report it's likely their teams will continue working from home long term.

While so much of our environment is in flux, the mission of IT service and support remains constant. We are charged with co-creating value for the companies and customers we serve by offering services that increase productivity and profitability, by restoring service rapidly after incidents cause disruption, and by managing risks and costs to preserve financial strength.

The way we accomplish our mission is changing. Support centers must reevaluate their strategies as customers and end users adjust to a new way of working. They will increasingly work from anywhere, require help navigating disparate devices and systems, and demand more knowledgeable, empathetic, and personalized support as their pressure to perform intensifies. In the coming months and beyond, leading support centers will become champions of the distributed workforce and help their organizations unlock the potential of the future of work.

This means that we must increasingly depend on a total workforce—that is, all the employees of the organization—that is agile (small “a”), capable, knowledgeable, and available to accomplish all the tasks needed to keep organizations moving forward in a dynamic and changing environment. Support centers will need tools that are flexible, powerful, secure, and adaptable.

HDI uses the term *support center* to refer to the help desk, service desk and desktop/deskside support functions of businesses and institutions.



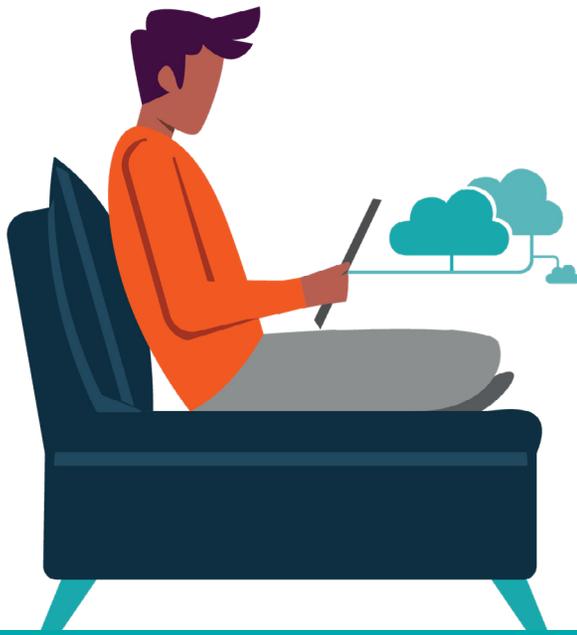
The Service Consumers of Tomorrow

Before mobile phones became ubiquitous, we telephoned locations: home, school, or “the office.” Now we call individuals, independent of where they are located. In the work-from-anywhere era, we have to make a similar shift when it comes to providing support for our colleagues who are the consumers of the services we offer. We may refer to them as customers, employees, as end users, or as clients depending on the culture and preferences of our organization.

This shift to remote work has been underway for several years but was greatly accelerated because of office closures and the rapid move to work-from-home (WFH) at the onset of the pandemic. Many organizations that had no plans for WFH in 2020 found themselves having to provide remote support for everyone. It has now become apparent that much of the workforce will no longer be in offices every day in many—if not most—organizations. Employees are being empowered to make independent decisions about where and how they work as long as their goals are achieved and are producing the desired business outcomes and results.



Is the marketing department working at 11 PM on Saturday? No, but Chris in marketing is, reading over reports on a personally owned tablet on a home network connected to a cloud-based marketing automation application via a virtual private network (VPN). A short time ago, this would have been almost unheard of, but now it's not unlikely. Support will be needed and expected if there is an interruption of Chris's ability to get the work done.



In 2020, organizations are using more applications running on more devices, and have had to increase the scope—and often the complexity—of services offered. Fifty percent of organizations report increased ticket volume. Of those organizations, 52% cite supporting a mobile workforce and 39% cite remote support as key contributors to increased volume.

Due to personal responsibilities—such as childcare or elder care for example—employees are remaining productive by working non-traditional hours. To meet and/or exceed customer expectations, support centers must be increasingly empathetic, open-minded, and flexible in meeting demand as consumers of IT services work from anywhere, at any time. In 2019, according to HDI research, 20% of organizations did not handle support tickets (other than major incidents or P1s) outside of regular business hours, and an additional 18% used an operator or answering service to create tickets to be handled on the next business day.

This level of service is unacceptable today. Instead, they will seek the shortest route to get support right where they are and right when they need it. They will expect the support team to be ready, knowledgeable, and capable of handling their inquiry or issue.

In 2020, 11% of organizations reported a decrease in customer satisfaction.

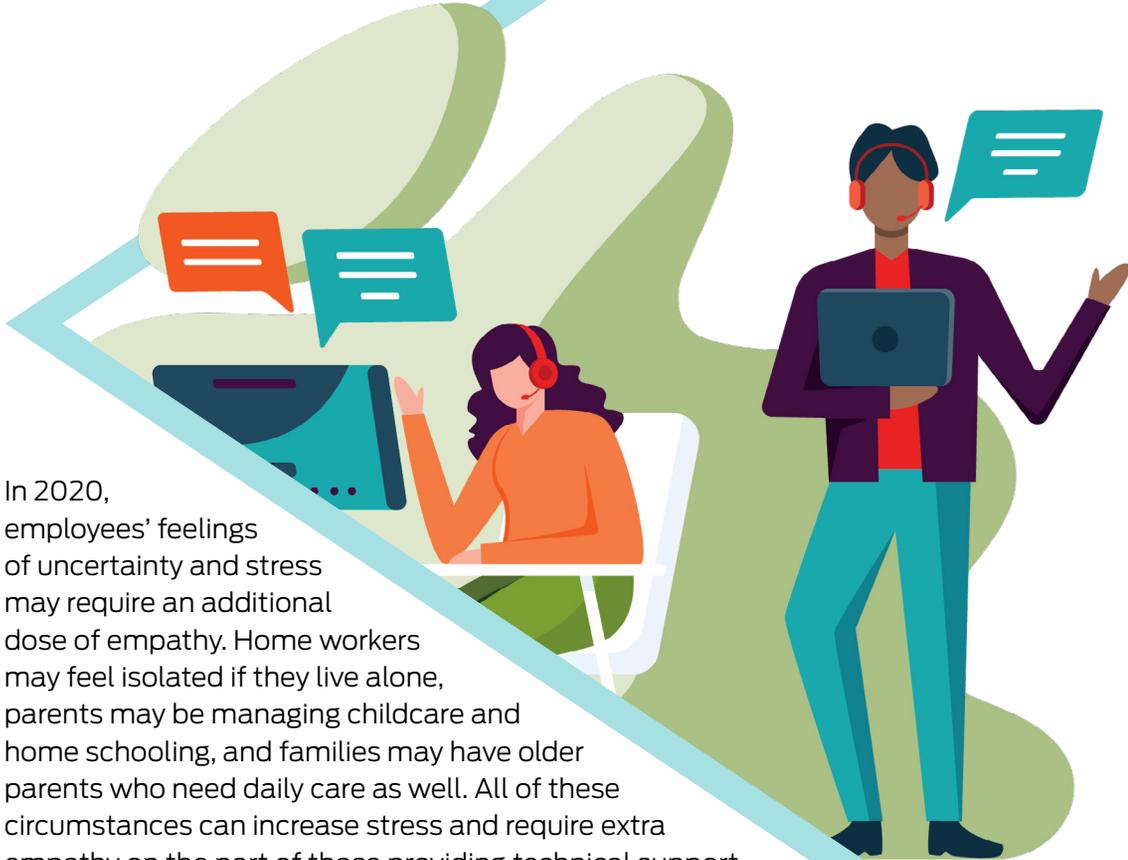
40% of those cited the availability of support as a major factor in the decrease.



How will that be accomplished? *Through the right combination of people, process, and technology.*

- ✓ Relevant and easily accessible channels for support
- ✓ An excellent knowledge base that:
 - Is current and accurate
 - Is searchable and findable
 - Includes third-party applications used by business units
 - Features appropriate user-facing knowledge
 - Is chatbot-compatible
- ✓ Excellent remote support technology that:
 - Is secure over any network
 - Is capable of connecting to any device
 - Provides the ability to see what the end user sees
- ✓ Well-trained staff who are:
 - Empathetic
 - Open-minded
 - Motivated
 - Collaborative

Empathy has always been essential for good technical support; service analysts needed to understand the urgency felt by end users working to deadline or absorbing additional work.



In 2020, employees' feelings of uncertainty and stress may require an additional dose of empathy. Home workers may feel isolated if they live alone, parents may be managing childcare and home schooling, and families may have older parents who need daily care as well. All of these circumstances can increase stress and require extra empathy on the part of those providing technical support.

To summarize: Tremendous and rapid change has accelerated the necessity of supporting anytime/anywhere work which will remain part of the “new normal.” Well-trained support staff using excellent tools and well versed in the art of collaboration without physical proximity will be required to achieve and sustain organizational goals and results. Employees and support staff alike have gone through major changes in the way they work with very little time to adapt.

Reconsidering Our Commitments

The best support organizations have achieved their successes by adhering to carefully considered strategies, procedures, and policies. They balance the cost of desired services against the value they bring to the organization. Effective support centers document their commitments through written agreements with their service consumers, organization, and suppliers by practicing service level management. Managers hold their teams accountable by the metrics established in these promises. We must adapt our service strategy to meet customers where they are and in 2020, where we are as well.

According to HDI's most recent research on enterprise service management, two-thirds of respondents said that their support organizations are now providing additional IT services, while more than half said they're supporting a broader scope of service consumers.



The service desk is tasked with providing support for a wide array of devices:



88%
Desktops/
Laptops



85%
Mobile
Devices



82%
Peripherals



77%
Telecom



71%
Audio/
Visual



65%
Network
Devices



55%
Other (POS,
SIM, kiosk, etc.)



38%
Internet of
Things

Percentage of organizations

With the current and future need to work from anywhere/support from anywhere, the complexity of the IT support environment has dramatically increased. Additionally, the options for deskside visits to perform troubleshooting are constrained by the necessity to observe health and safety procedures such as contactless drop-off and pickup. In-person service is a last resort in most cases.

Some organizations have had policies in place to exclude support for personally owned devices, and those devices may have gained importance during the move to WFH. Those policies may need review, and even if it isn't possible to include some or all of them as supported, it may be important for support to know where to point people to get the support they need.



Useful information to publicize:

- . A statement about which devices you do support, such as “the monitor you brought home from your workspace”***
- . Basic troubleshooting such as:***
 - Restarting the home router and modem***
 - Testing internet connections and speed***
 - Common issues that are generating support contacts***



In addition to the need to document and update the scope of services offered, now is the time to:

- ✓ Review and revise service level agreements.
 - Are targets realistic for remote work?
 - Is renegotiation necessary?
- ✓ Review and revise metrics and measurements.
 - Which are no longer relevant?
 - Have common metrics like first contact resolution (FCR) and average handle time (AHT) changed? Do the organization's expectations need to change as well?
 - What are we not measuring that's important now?
 - How does each metric align with the goals of IT? With the goals of the entire organization?

Empowering Remote Support

As a byproduct of working from anywhere, support center analysts and technicians have become increasingly important to the IT organization. In addition to being called on to support more types of services and devices, they are serving as a critical communication link between the organization and its IT service consumers. Changes in support analysts' and technicians' work comes with consequences. Their job descriptions may need to be expanded to include the support of new technologies their organizations now depend upon. They may be managing escalations complicated by geographic separation. They are likely bolstering self-service/self-help to offset increased demand.

Meanwhile, the channels by which they provide support are changing, traditional tools and troubleshooting methods may be obsolete, and incidents may require more knowledge and time to resolve.

According to recent HDI research, 86% of organization used remote control technologies as of January 1, 2020, and 10% plan to implement, replace, or upgrade it in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Specific areas requiring additional attention are:

- ✓ Protecting the organization's security while supporting more personally owned devices, peripherals, and home networks (BYOD)
- ✓ Managing hands-on escalations and the logistics of collecting and distributing devices safely
- ✓ Responding to change and service disruptions to third-party cloud services
- ✓ Increasing adaptability as incident trends shift

In summary: Yesterday's support is no longer enough to ensure the productivity of the organization's workforce. A thorough re-examination of how support is done and what is expected of the people doing it should be undertaken by every business or institution now, not later.

From Pandemic to Plan

Extracted from "Remote Work Is the New Normal: 4 Steps to Set Up a Successful Remote IT Help Desk," an ebook from LogMeIn Rescue.

March 2020 was one of the most disruptive months ever for organizations and employees around the globe, as COVID-19 brought lockdowns that forced almost everyone to work from home. Organizations (and help desks) that had already developed flexible ways of working pre-COVID were able to manage the crisis effectively, maintaining their business continuity and remaining agile in periods of ongoing uncertainty.

But organizations that may have been supporting a small remote workforce were suddenly forced to support a fully remote one. IT teams and help desks went into "scramble mode" to adapt an infrastructure of hardware, software, security, and IT support that had previously been in office-only environments to a fully remote/ WFH environment of personal routers and personal devices (not to mention kids and pets).

The multiple, ongoing uncertainties help desks face include complex home environments, new security vulnerabilities resulting from the increased use of personal devices and home WiFi networks, and end users with differing levels of tech savvy, who can no longer just walk down the hallway to get IT support. What does an IT org do now?



4 Steps to Success in Supporting Remote Workforces

Step #1: Overcome Early Challenges

Transitioning from a partially remote workforce to a fully remote one requires a lot of scrambling, flexibility, and patience on all sides. As Chris Handley, product manager for LogMeIn Rescue, explains, “When you make that transition to a fully remote workforce, IT and the help desk have to adapt and scale your infrastructure of hardware, software, security, and support, ensuring that your infrastructure can handle the additional load.” That means standing up the capacity to deploy and scale assets that were once centralized in an office environment to home environments that are typically more complex and uncertain.

Security is especially mission-critical for any remote support function, especially at a time when malicious activities have increased along with the vulnerabilities of IT infrastructure deployed in home environments—a potentially lethal combination for security and employee productivity.

Step #2: Support Uncharted Employee Needs

When you move a computer from the office to a home, the environment changes. IT teams “need to quickly understand the entire environment that employees and customers are working in [from home] and figure out how to support them” when assets like routers, VPNs/networks, printers, devices and help desks that were once concentrated in the office are now operating from home, says Handley. Keeping employees supported, no

matter their working environment and the complexity of their needs, also means keeping them productive, which is critical for the success of the entire organization.

Help desks need to be flexible enough with their tools and processes to adapt how they provide support to how employees are working from complex home environments. Visual engagement technology like instant camera sharing, for example, has emerged as a truly helpful, fast, and effective way to bridge the physical distance between end users and the help desk.

As Chad Seagraves, manager of Managed Desktop Service at North Carolina State University, explains, “We can’t be the people who say ‘no’ all the time to the users we support. We need to listen to them more and provide them with more support options.” That requires maintaining a stance of flexibility in tools and practices.

Step #3: Arm IT Teams with “Superpowers”

Walking over to the help desk for individualized, in-person support is no longer possible. IT needs “superpowers” to support new, remote ways of working at scale. One such superpower is using scripts to automate repetitive, mundane or complicated tasks. With scripting, for example, IT teams can resolve one employee issue and then standardize and scale that resolution across the entire organization. Those “superpowers” often mean working smarter through enabling technologies such as automation, AI, and machine learning.

Step #4: Stay Connected to Employees

Organizations need flexibility in allowing employees to connect with IT in frictionless ways that are familiar and intuitive (for employees and IT alike). As Anderson Dinga, senior manager of OCIO Change Readiness at LogMeIn, explains, “Trends like cloud and mobile are impacting how we deliver support and how end users expect to access support. There’s been a consumerization trend.” Both employees and IT teams need seamless, user-friendly tools for interacting in order to resolve remote work issues that can disrupt employee productivity.

Check out LogMeIn Rescue’s [interactive guide](#) to powering up remote support.

As uncertainty continues, your help desk will need flexible tools that allow it to adapt and deploy remote work infrastructure (including support) at scale. Staying flexible will not only pay off in times of crisis but also in the long run as we all adapt to a “new normal,” which by all accounts is here to stay.



For thirty years, HDI has partnered with thousands of professionals and their organizations to improve their performance by helping them to: drive change, harness knowledge, transform teams, make connections, and turn challenges into opportunities. HDI empowers the technical support and service management community to advance their strategy, operations and teams through optimized service delivery.

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LogMeIn Rescue is a powerful, easy-to-use remote support solution for PCs, Macs, mobile devices, and more. Rescue is built to serve teams of all sizes, from small help desks to the world's largest support organizations, and everyone in between. Rescue helps you provide technical support to your employees, your customers, or both, with a solution that is fast, reliable, flexible, and easy to use.

For more information, visit www.LogMeInRescue.com.