

**What is Service Desk Management?**  
**ITIL describes the Service Desk as:**

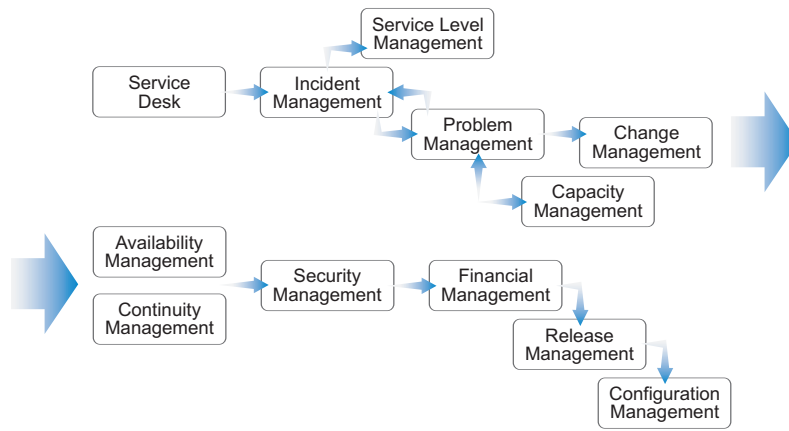
*... the single point of contact between service providers and Users, on a day-to-day basis.*

However, the Service Desk is like no other Discipline in that it is a function and not a process. While the distinction may seem subtle, it is worth exploring to better understand the interaction of Disciplines within the ITIL. Webster defines "process" as: a series of actions or operations conducting to an end. This implies that there is an input to which tools and techniques are applied to render an output, at which point the process ends. On the other hand, there is a continuing nature to a "function", defined by Webster as: any of a group of related actions contributing to a larger action.

This makes sense when you think of the Service Desk a clearing house or hub for accessing the services provided by the other Disciplines. And while the Service Desk's primary role is typically the contact point for handling incidents and requests, it provides a vital interface for all the other Disciplines. This is not to imply that each Discipline will play a role in every possible scenario, but rather only that the Disciplines do interact, from a User perspective, through the Service Desk. To more easily visualize this interaction, consider the following example involving all of the Disciplines: A user calls the Service Desk for assistance with a

new application that initially ran well, but has now ground to a crawl with continual timeouts. The diagram below depicts the interaction of the various Disciplines, coordinated by the Service Desk, to resolve the problem.

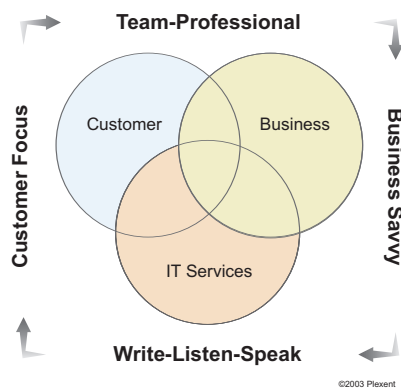
It begins with an event that prevents the user from performing a task. The user reports this event to the Service Desk which initiates Incident Management. Because no similar event is on record, the unknown error is passed to Problem Management for analysis and diagnosis. Incident Management also notifies Service Level Management that due to the complexity of the problem that Service Level Agreement (SLA) targets may be missed. Problem Management quickly passes a workaround back to Incident Management and goes on to determine that the network and not the application is the root cause; they coordinate with Capacity Management to develop a Request for Change (RFC) to permanently address the error. Change Management receives the RFC and coordinates with Availability and Continuity Management to ensure the proposed change does not create additional errors or outages. The finalized RFC is then sent to Security Management for review and Financial Management to coordinate



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the purchase of additional network gear and bandwidth. The RFC is next passed to Release Management for examination of performance issues in subsequent releases of the application. Finally, Configuration Management adds or updates Configuration Items (CIs), such as the new network gear, in the Configuration Management Database (CMDB). All the while the Service Desk monitors impact and urgency to update priority and keep the user apprised of the status.

To operate effectively the Service Desk relies heavily on the skills of its individual team members. In addition to having the technical expertise necessary to perform first tier support, there is a host of other, non-technical skills that must be present if the Service Desk is to be perceived as having value and engender confidence. Support personnel must possess a variety of soft skills and be able to operate in three different worlds, Customer, Business, and IT Services, while balancing the priorities of each. This complex balance and some of the skills are depicted in the diagram below.



It is difficult to assess the consequences of what can go wrong if the Service Desk is not in place or if support personnel are not up to the task. Because of its unique role and direct user interaction, the spectrum extends from delayed resolution of incidents to missed SLA targets. Perhaps one of the most distressing scenarios that can occur is where the Disciplines themselves function effectively, but users continually bypass the Service Desk because it is simply too difficult to deal with. Plexent can help your organization avoid these pitfalls with itDNA.

## The Plexent Approach

itDNA builds on the Service Desk concepts outlined in the ITIL standard and, by leveraging our framework, Plexent can apply ITIL to your organization. If you are just starting out, you may need help to establish interfaces to the Configuration, Incident, and Problem databases so support personnel can initiate and obtain status on those processes. Or, perhaps creating a library of reference materials and developing the necessary training for support personnel is where you need help. Whatever your Service Desk maturity, Plexent can take you to the next level by bringing all of the pieces together.

Much more than just a framework, itDNA brings real-world tools and techniques to bear on your concerns. Backed up by itDNA's maturity models and rich, intellectual property knowledge base, Plexent's project management combines with proven policies and procedures to provide standardized services within the following Service Desk Elements:

- Help Desk
- Consumable Provisioning

Many of the benefits of the Service Desk are both obvious and immediate, such as improved customer service, faster processing of requests, and improved access to information through a single point of contact; others are more subtle. Among these are the improved teamwork resulting from rotating specialists from the other Disciplines through the Service Desk. This opportunity to provide cross training and develop empathy for the challenges faced by those responsible for meeting the targets specified in Operational Level Agreements (OLAs), cannot be underestimated. Other benefits of a mature Service Desk include:

- Increased productivity
- Improved customer awareness by downstream processes
- Identification of user training requirements

Providing Service Desks functions within an organization should be viewed as a basic business necessity rather than an unnecessary expense. As the access point for users to take advantage of the benefits provided by IT Service Management, it is critical that both the Service Desk and the personnel who operate it are trained, equipped, and up to the task. To assist in determining which functions to implement and how best to phase them in, Plexent provides Service Desk assessment services. Leveraging the intelligence in our itDNA, we can help you evaluate where you are today, where you would like to take your organization, and the surest path to get there.

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