The Business Value of Support Automation

FOR THE ENTERPRISE SERVICE DESK

A Tific Green Sheet

Introduction

Utilizing Support Automation technologies, **Enterprise Service Desks** can reap significant business benefits that include: **lowering overall service support cost**; **increasing end-user satisfaction**; **better utilization valuable IT resources**.

This white paper describes how Tific support automation delivers immediate business benefits to Enterprise organizations by deflecting calls from the service desk and improving service desk response by lowering average-call-handling-time (AHT) and increasing first-call-resolution (FCR) rates.

Deriving the Value of Support Automation for the Enterprise Service Desk

Today enterprise service support organizations are dealing with an ever-increasing number of intelligent end-user devices – desktops, laptops, tablets, PDA, mobile phones – that are generating higher service and support call volumes. The result is higher service support cost and lower customer satisfaction due to longer call-handing-time, including longer wait queues, and lower first call resolution rates (FCR) due to shear increase in the number of unique devices.

Utilizing second-generation Support Automation technologies that offer self-healing and self-service capabilities can eliminate a significant number of service desk calls – especially common reoccurring incidents that can be readily identified and remediated automatically. Add the capability of providing the service desk agent with real time insight into the device configuration and status, called assisted-service, that results in lower call-handing-time and improved first-call-resolution rates, and the enterprise service support organizations can reap significant ROI business benefits that include:

1. Lowering the overall cost of service support
2. Increasing customer satisfaction metrics
3. Improving employee productivity

What is support automation?

*"**Support automation** - is the name given to software platforms designed for technical support and service organizations to address problems and to **achieve lower mean time to repair** (MTTR) by **automating problem prevention and resolution processes**.*

*Support automation involves the building of a knowledge base of known issues and their resolutions to support incidents with delivery mechanisms. A **service automation** platform includes a suite of support solutions **including proactive support**, **assisted support** and **self-support**. "*

- Wikipedia

How does Enterprise Service Support derive value from support automation?

Eliminating or deflecting calls (referred to as level 0 in the support supply chain) from the service desk is the ultimate goal – call deflection offers the biggest payback. According to a recent report from HDI (Help Desk Institute), the average fully burdened cost is $20 per incident for phone support. To make matters worse, most organizations experience a high-level of common re-occurring incidents – up to 80% of all incidents.

Support automation that incorporate a self-healing and self-service approach can deflect 10% to 30% (and higher) of these re-occurring incidents. At an average cost of $20 per incident, multiplied by 1000's of incidents per month, enterprise service support organization can realize substantial business benefits. For large enterprise organization this means million of dollars.

A successful self-service approach is dependent on end-user adoption and, of course, end-user adoption is dependent on a self–service capability that is fast and easy to use. First generation solutions, largely knowledge bases, failed to meet the ease-of-use requirements and as such end-user adoption was very low.

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Proactive monitoring and automated self-healing is the key to call deflection

Second-generation self-healing technologies that require little-to-no end user adoption can deflect calls for common, reoccurring problems that result in substantial business benefits.

The Tific Support Automation Suite provides a proactive approach to identifying and remediating a problem for the end-user through self-healing, or what sometimes if referred to as automated remediation.

The Support Automation Suite proactively monitors the end users configuration (hardware & software) to discover, diagnose and remediate common, reoccurring problems (i.e. network connectivity, printer access, etc.). Additionally, Tific can monitor the Windows device to ensure system settings are consistent with IT policy (i.e. firewall enabled, virus protection up-to-date, etc.). If remediation is necessary, the Support Automation Suite can automatically take the necessary corrective actions to remediate the problem with or without the end-users involvement.

The Support Automation Suite provides an easy-to-use graphical development tool (Tific Creator) that enables the IT operations community of subject matter experts (SME) to rapidly develop and deploy self-healing automation – eliminating the need for professional programmers. Tific delivers a library of out-of-the-box automations and a toolbox of over 10,000 re-usable objects to quickly construct and rapidly deploy self-healing automation.

Unlike first generation tools that required expensive programmers with deep system-level subject matter expertise and offered no re-use, Tific empowers subject matter experts with an agile development tool that encourages re-use and supports the rapid deployment of automation.

Typical Self-Healing Use Cases

Detect and address connectivity problems
- Reset proxy settings
- Connect to network printer
- Identify and resolve device conflicts

Monitor configuration data to for IT policy
- Anti-virus software running and up to date
- Firewalls are correctly activated
- Trusted URLs are up to date

Ensure initial installation, set-up, and activation
- Prepare for new version of MS Office
- Install local or network printer
- Configure VPN access

Perform maintenance/optimize performance
- Perform routine file clean up
- Monitor disk capacity
- Monitor memory usage

Detect and repair application issues
- Applications will not launch or shut down
- Applications freeze or won't respond

Self-healing is best used to resolve common, reoccurring problems before they affect the end-user and result in call to the service desk. Call deflection rates depend on the environment and service desk analytics. It is not uncommon to see 15% and as high as 30% of calls deflected as a result automated self-healing.

It is important to note that the Tific Support Automation Suite records all self-healing incidents (as closed tickets) to the Remedy service desk or other 3rd Party Ticketing System to ensure service desk analytics accurately reflect the value of support automation to the support organization.

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Employee adoption of self-service is based on ease-of-use and immediate results

Second generation solutions have substantially improved the success rate of self-service, but enterprise support organizations aren't ready to invest in self-service without substantial proof that end-user's will adopt in mass. This is a case where success breeds more success and delivers exponential value. However there are many factors that determine the degree and rate of end-user adoption.

The Tific Support Automation Suite's application of predictive analytics plays a big role in providing foundation to build a successful self-service program. When a user is seeking self-help, Tific presents support content that is only relevant to their client-side environment (hardware, operating system, installed applications, etc.) and in the context of their specific problem. This greatly simplifies the amount of content the end-user has to deal with and narrows the scope (akin to how Google ranks content for search results).

The Support Automation Suite provides a self-help template based on the Tific Style Guide that delivers information to the end user in a form that is always consistent and designed to guide the end-user through the problem diagnosis and resolution process step-by-step.

A typical self-service scenario looks like this:

The Support Automation Suite takes proactive action by notifying the user that a problem exists. Tific will prompt the user to either have it fixed automatically (self-healing) or to manually address the problem through a step-by-step process (utilizing a Self-Help Wizard based on the Tific Style Guide). Additionally, the end user can use the Tific Support Automation Suite to search for automated solutions to assist with an immediate problem or a "how to" task (i.e. configure a new default printer, backup my computer, etc.). The Tific application continuously monitors the users' behavior and system configuration to enable them to quickly locate relevant answers, shortening navigation time and frustration.

Reducing unnecessary information by ensuring that all information is relevant is the cornerstone to improving the success rate of self-service.

"Only 10% of service requests are resolved at Level 0 by end-users through support automation technology. "

- Gartner

Primary reasons for the lack of adoption:

1. First-generation tools were too technically complex or too difficult for support staff to learn
2. Self-help interfaces did not offer assistance in the context of the problem at hand. Users searched through an excessive store of knowledge to find a possible cure to the problem and often failed to find the right information—finally giving up in frustration.

Gartner predicts that second-generation support automation solutions, like Tific, combined with better standardization and management of desktop configurations, will result in a much improved success rate for self-service. Gartner predicts that as much as 40% of service requests will be resolved at Level 0.

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What are the typical self-healing and/or self-service use cases?

Governance & Compliance	
Security	• Ensuring anti-virus software running and up to date • Determining firewalls are correctly activated • Confirming trusted URLs are up to date • Confirming Windows Update is on and configured appropriately • Configuring Internet Explorer (and other major browsers) settings for a secure web browsing experience • Detecting settings changes that break the compliance model and auto-fixing the issue to ensure the PC remains in compliance
Software Compliance	• Verifying standard background applications are installed and active • Detecting and remove blacklisted applications • Providing reporting data on non-compliant application usage to IT Administration • Proactively notifying the End User about compliance violations
System Performance & Connectivity	
PC Health	• Performing routine file clean up • Monitoring and defrag disk capacity • Monitoring memory usage and automatically adjusting settings • Cleaning up old or broken registry entries • Defragmenting the Windows Registry • Optimizing Network Settings for fastest connection • Optimize Browser settings to ensure
Connectivity	• Detecting when network cards are disabled and automatically enabling • Verifying email server connectivity and providing automated fixes or self service workflows to address the problem • Protecting and Restoring internet and browser settings • Monitoring and restoring VPN Profiles • Providing automated / self service solutions regardless of the users online/offline state
Password Management	• Automating your password reset workflows • Assisting with setup and activation of new accounts • Increasing Identity and Password Management enrollment
Application Availability	• Providing searchable knowledge base for common questions related to your productivity applications • Automating backup and maintenance associated to Outlook PST files • Fixing applications that will not launch or unexpectedly shut down • Fixing applications that freeze or won't respond • Assisting with initial installation and set-up of new applications

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System Migration	
Streamlines desktop OS migrations	• Saving and restoring systems preferences and setting • Saving and restoring application specific data (.pst files) • Saving and restoring personal data (documents, pictures, music) • Restoring local / networked resources (printers, storage servers) • Restoring network and VPN settings

Assisting the service desk agent with real-time intelligence delivers immediate value

Enterprise organizations who are skeptical about end-user adoption of self-service, can realize immediate payback by taking advantage of Assisted Service.

With Assisted Service, enterprise support desks can:

1. Substantially reduce (from 15% to 30%) the call-handling time for the service desk analyst
2. Improve the success rate (from 10% to 25%) of first-call resolution, eliminating costly escalation to level 2 or higher
3. Increase customer satisfaction metrics (by 15% or higher)
4. Consider alternative lower cost support channels, like Chat

For service desk analysts, the Tific Support Analyst Console delivers intelligence about the incident at hand by providing detailed information about the end-users environment, including the hardware configuration, operating system metrics, recent system changes, installed applications and more.

Having this information available eliminates discovery questions that often take up a significant portion of call-time (up to 50%), which only increases the frustration level to the end user.

More importantly this “incident intelligence” information allows the support analyst to start problem solving immediately, improving the success rate of first-call resolution thereby eliminating costly escalations.

Assisted Service opens the door to more efficient support channels – *like Chat*

Moving the support channel from phone to chat offers significant business benefits by improving the efficiency for the service desk analyst by handling multiple incidents in parallel. It is difficult, if not impossible, to move to Chat to resolve problems in a desktop support environment without intelligence about the users system. You can certainly utilize chat for simple “how to” questions, but to diagnose and remediate a problem requires more insight. This is where remote control technologies can be applied, but these tools do not generally lower call handling time at level 1 and are often used once an incident has been escalated.

The use of the Tific Support Analyst Console enables a lower cost, chat support channel for problem diagnosis and remediation in the same way it lowers call handling time and improves first-call resolution over the phone channel.

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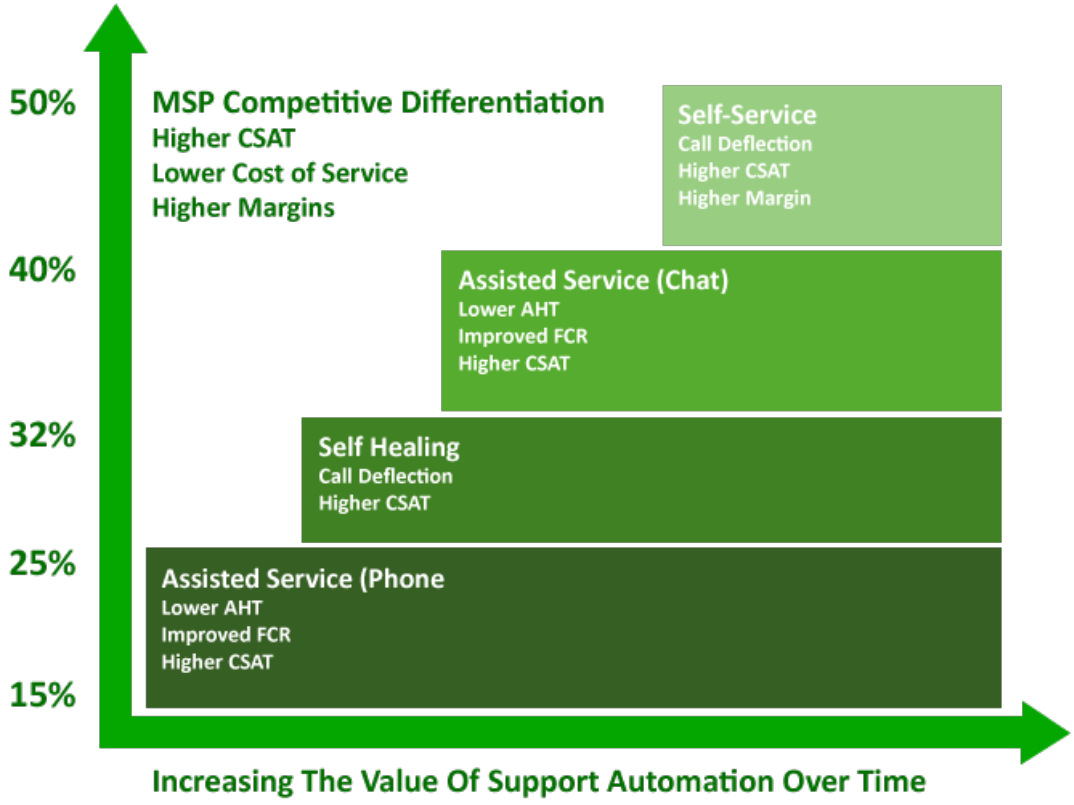
Once assisted service is in place for phone support, the support desk can begin to explore chat as a more efficient, lower cost support channel.

Deriving Immediate Value from Support Automation – A Phased Approach

Enterprise service support organizations should approach deploying Tific Support Automation in phases. Immediate results can be achieved by deploying phone-based assisted service integrated to reduce call-handling time, improve first call resolution rates and improve customer satisfaction metrics.

Deploying self-healing automation for common, reoccurring problems (based on service desk analytics) that touch the service desk can immediately reduce the number of calls and shorten queue length – freeing up service desk analysts to work more pressing issues.

Moving from a phone support channel to a chat support channel is enabled by Tific assisted service and will have a substantial impact on service desk efficiency and overall customer satisfaction. Adding a chat support channel is a natural evolution from phone-based assisted service. Blending phone support with chat offers significant business benefits.



Due to the uncertainty of end-user adoption, enterprise support organizations are cautious to make a commitment to invest in self-service. However, committing to the Tific support automation platform provides a foundation and vehicle to implement a successful self-service program that can lower service desk incident volume by as much as 40%.

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In Summary

Tific's second-generation support automation solution addresses problems along the support supply chain that existed in first-generation attempts. Tific's end-to-end approach excels in the following areas:

1. Shortens call duration for the service desk agent and improves problem resolution success rate by providing incident intelligence to the service desk analyst.
2. Using predictive analytics, Tific deflects calls from the service desk by automatically detecting and resolving client-side computing problems even before they impact the end-user; that is to say, automated self-healing.
3. Simplifies the development and maintenance of support content thereby lowering support engineering costs and shortening the delivery time for support automation.
4. Enables successful end-user self-service through a unique information reduction feature that only presents information to the end-user in the context of the problem and the client configuration, which substantially increases the success rate of end users solving problems on their own.

About Tific

Tific, a PlumChoice company, is a leading provider of self-healing support automation solutions for large enterprise IT operations and IT outsourcers. Our solutions streamline the support supply chain for Global 2000 corporations, and our products represent the leading ideas in the invention, design, and development of second-generation support automation. Our breakthrough technology eliminates support calls and repetitive problems by providing best-of-breed self-healing solutions as well as ease-of-deployment and state-of-the-art migration capabilities that empower end users to succeed at resolving their own problems. For more information, visit http://www.tific.com and http://www.plumchoice.com.

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