

Why Your Current Service Desk is Failing Your Business, and What to Do About It

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
Requirement #1: Provide Complete Service Management Capabilities	4
Requirement #2: Facilitate Easy Configuration—without any Coding	4
Requirement #3: Deliver Pragmatic ITIL Support	5
Requirement #4: Feature Action-based Workflows	6
Requirement #5: Offer Flexible Delivery and Pricing	6
Conclusion	7
Appendix: Critical Evaluation Questions	7

Executive Summary

Service management platforms have a vital role to play, but in most organizations, they're not living up to expectations—delivering far too much complexity and cost, and far too little business value. This proves true even in organizations that have migrated to new solutions in recent years. This paper outlines why legacy service desks and even newer platforms have not delivered on expectations, it describes the requirements for a service desk solution to be truly effective in today's business environment and it details how Nimsoft Service Desk delivers on these key requirements.

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Introduction

Many organizations are struggling to adapt to today's tough business climate. Over the past decade, businesses in virtually every industry have seen a fundamental restructuring of the prevailing economic order. For some organizations, near-term survival in this new climate is the sole focus. For others, executives are seeking to help their organizations weather the current storm, and to be in the strongest possible position when things return to "normal". Either way, it's clear that the current economic environment is a fundamentally different one than we saw ten years ago, and, like it or not, the present climate is the new normal.

In today's environment, decision makers have to prioritize projects that deliver the fastest business benefit, whether that means generating new revenues or optimizing operations. It is within this context that service desk initiatives must be viewed. By promising an opportunity to optimize operations, a new service desk initiative can represent an investment that gets top priority. However, these investments will only help businesses contend with the new economic climate if they represent a true break from the service desk implementations of the past.

These past implementations have been characterized by high ongoing costs due to the massive investments in resources needed to support, maintain and upgrade platforms. In short, these platforms have exacted high costs and delivered little business value. Even organizations that have migrated to newer applications in recent years are still running into the same issues, and are not receiving the expected benefits. Why? Because decision makers have had to choose from these categories of offerings:

- **Legacy service desk platforms.** These platforms, offered by such vendors as BMC/Remedy and HP, require laborious custom coding and extensive ongoing support to address the specific business needs of each customer. Because of the custom development that is done, it is an extremely time consuming and costly effort to simply migrate to a new version of these platforms.
- **"New" SaaS service desk platforms.** Even with the benefits of an on-demand model, solutions like ServiceNow and Remedyforce inherently represent similar platforms—and present similar challenges—as legacy offerings. These SaaS alternatives still require complex customization to be completely effective. Consequently, these solutions exact high startup costs and require ongoing maintenance to keep up with new releases. This significantly limits the potential business benefits of the SaaS model.
- **Point SaaS service desk platforms.** Today, there are many SaaS-based point platforms that only offer ticketing or incident management. Because they lack problem management, change management, service catalog and other critical capabilities, they don't represent viable alternatives for organizations with business-critical, complex IT environments.

Given the ongoing, consistent ineffectiveness of these categories of offerings, it's clear organizations require a new alternative. What organizations really need is a service management solution that can support today's business requirements and realities, not just another tool box like those characterized above. In the following sections, we outline the key requirements that comprise a true service management solution, and we show how Nimsoft Service Desk delivers on these mandates.

Requirement #1: Provide Complete Service Management Capabilities

Being forced to choose between huge, complex and expensive legacy platforms on one hand, and limited SaaS-based point solutions on the other hand, is a no-win proposition. What you need is a service management solution that is "just right", one that provides all the required capabilities, but without the overhead of legacy platforms.

Nimsoft Service Desk offers essential, integrated IT service management capabilities—including service catalog, incident management, change management and more. Nimsoft Service Desk gives your technical team everything they need in one place, whether they are responding to incoming incidents or using the configuration management database (CMDB) to plan changes.

Further, Nimsoft Service Desk is integrated with Nimsoft Monitor. With this unified IT Management-as-a-Service solution, your business can leverage these component's combined capabilities to realize even more efficiency and control in IT management. For example, Nimsoft Monitor offers automated discovery capabilities that can feed information into a CMDB that is shared by Nimsoft Service Desk. Consequently, your service desk agents can always leverage current configuration information when troubleshooting—while they minimize the time and effort required to manually update the CMDB. In addition, performance and availability information collected from target systems can automatically generate service desk incidents, allowing service desk personnel to start to triage issues—before the user community even notices there's a problem.

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Requirement #2: Facilitate Easy Configuration—without any Coding

Traditionally, service desk solutions required coding in order to address the specific needs of the organization. This complex, development-intensive model typically leads to extremely lengthy deployment cycles. Further, this complexity doesn't just affect up-front deployments, but also any and all changes that arise after deployment, and as we've clearly seen in the last couple of years, change just keeps coming faster. For example, if business changes warrant the development of a new, chained approval cycle, the support team and its developers may need to write custom Java code, scripts or active links and filters—along with doing the associated testing and quality assurance—before this capability can be released into production. Ultimately, this complexity costs the support team and the business dearly, both in terms of inflexibility and in terms of lost opportunity costs because so many resources are focused on nonstrategic tasks.

In contrast, Nimsoft Service Desk enables your organization to leverage sophisticated IT service management capabilities and tailor them to the specific needs of your business—without complex, labor-intensive coding, and all its time and budget implications. Nimsoft Service Desk lets your team use an intuitive point-and-click interface to configure the solution to the specific needs of your business. Any IT team member can make these configuration changes using simple, logical business rules.

With Nimsoft Service Desk, your support organization doesn't need to rely on teams of developers to make system changes. During initial deployment and as needs change, the solution can easily be tailored to specific business requirements. Users can adapt workflows, approval processes, escalations and more, all via a graphical user interface.

Further, compared to traditional on-premise enterprise software, which often has upgrade cycles occurring every one or two years, Nimsoft Service Desk is upgraded far more frequently. These incremental upgrades happen automatically for customers, without any need for re-coding custom-developed capabilities. Further, these updates are far less disruptive than the major upgrades of legacy platforms, which can require technology and process changes and re-training before end users can get back to being productive.

Requirement #3: Deliver Pragmatic ITIL Support

ITIL has become the most broadly adopted standard for service management, and for good reason. By leveraging ITIL concepts in their service desk operations, many organizations have optimized their processes and so realized improved efficiency, speed and service levels.

For anyone who has tried to implement ITIL, however, it is clear that there's a big gulf between understanding the theoretical benefits of ITIL and realizing them in practice. That's because with legacy platforms, implementing ITIL typically meant huge process engineering and development efforts. Today, you should be able to leverage core ITIL processes in your service management platform to maximize staff efficiency and productivity, but your team shouldn't have to manually develop these processes or be ITIL experts to use them.

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Nimsoft Service Desk has all the core ITIL best practices embedded in the solution—complete with pre-built workflows that are fully integrated and available for you to use immediately. Nine ITIL processes within Nimsoft Service Desk have been verified by Pink Elephant. The solution's workflows cover all core service management processes, including incident assignment, escalation, SLA tracking and more. Nimsoft Service Desk offers these features:

- **Pre-configured processes.** Rather than forcing you to do a lot of customized process engineering, Nimsoft Service Desk enables you to leverage automated, pre-configured processes. These processes represent all the core capabilities your organization requires, right out of the gate—effectively jump starting the bulk of the work needed to get your ITIL service desk running.
- **Central data model.** ITIL recommends centralization and cross-referential integration of data, which is key to efficient, intelligent service management operations. Nimsoft Service Desk supports this by having an integrated, unified data infrastructure. The solution features a CMDB that acts as the central repository for data that underpins all capabilities, including incident management, change management and more.
- **Robust reporting.** Nimsoft Service Desk offers the comprehensive reporting capabilities that are essential to supporting ITIL principles and facilitating continual process refinements. The solution features pre-built, customizable reports that cover such areas as ticket volumes, ticket backlog, average incident duration, SLA compliance and more.

Requirement #4: Feature Action-based Workflows

The ultimate key to a service management platform's success is the degree to which it facilitates the team's ability to serve users. Toward this end, it's vital that service desk platforms guide agents through the activities they need to conduct.

Nimsoft Service Desk has pre-built workflows that are fully integrated and available for you to use immediately. Nimsoft Service Desk workflows cover all the essential processes, from initial request submission to case close. As a result, this solution makes it easy for agents to follow consistent, repeatable and proven processes—which helps improve consistency, efficiency and service levels. With Nimsoft Service Desk, even new and junior agents get the resources and tools they need to be effective.

Nimsoft Service Desk's action-based workflows guide agents through issue resolution processes. For example, based on the current state of a ticket, an agent will be presented with a specific set of options. After he or she makes a selection, Nimsoft Service Desk presents a tailored set of follow-on actions. Consequently, Nimsoft Service Desk makes it easy for agents to follow an effective process through to issue resolution, without having to wade through a series of drop-down menus or remember each step required.

Requirement #5: Offer Flexible Delivery and Pricing

For too long, organizations have been saddled with service management platforms that weren't aligned with the IT team's budgets, objectives or charters. To be a true solution, service management offerings need to turn that around, offering the deployment and pricing flexibility that enables adaptation to the specific requirements of each business.

Nimsoft Service Desk addresses these demands, offering the following characteristics:

- **Pricing and delivery model flexibility.** Nimsoft Service Desk is offered both as a SaaS-based service as well as an on-premise solution. Both for on-premise and SaaS customers, Nimsoft provides flexible, usage-based pricing, floating user licenses and more. Consequently, you can choose the approach that works best for your business, and you don't need to make huge up-front commitments to get started.
- **A true SaaS-based platform.** Traditional on-premise software was architected for a dedicated hardware platform and server. Consequently, setting up and expanding these types of applications is a manual process that doesn't scale easily. Having on-premise applications hosted with an external service provider is analogous to the early ASP models, where vendors effectively built and managed custom environments for each client. Fundamentally, these one-off approaches lack the economies of scale that a true SaaS provider can achieve. Nimsoft Service Desk was architected for SaaS delivery, offering the scalability to easily accommodate more users and more customers, so the services are closely aligned with the client's current and evolving business goals. At the same time, the solution leverages the economies of scale that yield significant efficiency and cost savings.
- **True multi-tenant architecture.** For a SaaS provider, true multi-tenancy is critical: the entire delivery model by definition has to support multiple clients to facilitate scalability and efficiency. However, this multi-tenancy can't risk the exposure of one customer's data to another customer. The same can be true for service providers and even corporate IT organizations that are focused on serving internal or external business groups. Being able to effectively divide business processes while sharing infrastructure is key to cost efficiency and business alignment. From the outset of development, Nimsoft Service Desk was built on a multi-tenant architecture, which ensures organizations can scale as needed, while having confidence that their data is secure.

Conclusion

To advance beyond the failed service management deployments of the past, your organization needs a fundamentally different solution—one like Nimsoft Service Desk. Only Nimsoft Service Desk delivers the capabilities you need to manage and optimize all aspects of service delivery, while at the same time enabling your organization to realize these benefits with minimal up-front cost and ongoing effort.

Appendix: Critical Evaluation Questions

Following are questions to ask a prospective vendor—before you choose a new service desk platform:

Comprehensiveness

- Does your service desk platform provide a complete, fully integrated set of capabilities, including:
 - Incident management?
 - Problem management?
 - Change management?
 - Configuration management (CMDB)?
 - Service level management?
 - Knowledge management?
 - Service catalog?
- Can your solution provide an end-user interface through which employees can request standardized IT services?
- Can your solution support the development, delivery and management of surveys of end users to measure support effectiveness?
- Can your solution link incidents to a configuration item (CI), a group of CIs or a service?
- Does your solution provide a change calendar, including capabilities for viewing scheduled changes by group, and for customizing the sorting and filtering of calendar views?
- Does your solution support the creation of a “virtual” change advisory board (CAB)? For example, enabling approvals and issues to be submitted and stored electronically?

ITIL and Best Practices Support

- Does your solution provide prepackaged problem process templates that are based on industry best practices and/or ITIL?
- Has your solution been certified as ITIL compatible by PinkVERIFY?

Configuration

- Will I have to do any custom coding to tailor the platform to my specific business processes? If so, what happens when it's time to upgrade to a new version of the platform? Will I need to modify my custom code?
- What happens if we need to develop a new, chained approval cycle? Can any of my team members use simple business logic to set it up in the platform?

- Does your solution support other languages beyond English?

Workflows

- Does your platform provide action-based workflows and contextual navigation that walks agents through resolution processes, so they don't have to memorize each step or choose from a laundry list of options that aren't related to current tasks?
- Are there tools required to design workflow? If so, what are they?

Monitoring Platform Integration

- Is your platform integrated with a monitoring solution that features automated discovery capabilities?
- Can I have monitoring alarms automatically generate tickets?
- Will both the service desk and monitoring platform leverage a common CMDB?

SaaS Deployment

- I'm looking at deploying via a SaaS model. If I need to significantly increase the number of users or the volume of data we manage, can your platform quickly accommodate this growth?
- How do you ensure the confidentiality of our data when it's held in your SaaS platform?
- Are there any differences between the SaaS and on premise products?
- If we start out with the on premise product and decide to move to the SaaS model, or vice versa, is the migration painful?
- Was your solution initially designed to run in a SaaS environment or is it based on legacy technology and a different delivery model?

On Premise Deployment

- We have business requirements that demand our service desk is on premise, can you support that?
- Can you support an on premise deployment along with the need to have remote connections for updates?

Pricing

- What's the total up-front investment we'll need to make in order to get started with your solution?
- Will you let us have floating user licenses?
- Can we pay based on actual resource usage?
- Is pricing for SaaS and on premise versions based on the same subscription model?
- Is 24x7 support included with our subscription?



About Nimsoft

Nimsoft provides leading IT Management-as-a-Service solutions within the CA Technologies portfolio. Companies and service providers of all sizes use Nimsoft to rapidly and easily implement essential monitoring and service desk capabilities necessary to manage today's dynamic computing environments. Learn more at www.nimsoft.com.

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