

Tips for Maintaining an Organized Help Desk Knowledge Base

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A well organized helpdesk knowledge base can be a big time saver, and greatly improve both IT and end user efficiency when it's well-organized and maintained. Or, when it isn't, it can be a nightmarish data dump that confuses end users more than ever.

Choose your knowledge base software carefully so that you can easily create and update a knowledge base that can help end users solve problems themselves (self-service). Furthermore, a great knowledge base can keep off a good number of distressed callers, reduce wait time for those with more complicated IT issues, and free help desk agents from having to solve the same problem over and over for different users.

If you want your knowledge base to accomplish all this, you need to keep it organized so that end users can quickly and easily find effective solutions to the most common IT problems. Here are some tips for making your knowledge base system work for you, and for your end users.

- 1. Address the solution to major problems early.**



If you're upgrading your help desk or shifting to a cloud-based web help desk, you have a prime opportunity to determine which issues arise most often, so you can automate the knowledge base around them. Make a "Top 10 list of common problems" to focus on where people struggle and where IT resources are being wasted, and make sure your knowledge base addresses these problems. The classic example of an issue that both end users and help desk workers realize is a time waster is the forgotten password. If your knowledge base software has a self-service portal that walks end users through the process of addressing this very common problem, the generation of a new support ticket can be prevented.

2. Create templates of solutions for end users.

Choose your knowledge base software wisely, and you can create templates for solutions that neatly organize knowledge and help end users take care of many common, minor problems. This is a great way to prevent your knowledge base from turning into an unwieldy, amorphous glob of data that takes end users longer to navigate than it would to submit a ticket and get a help desk worker to fix a problem for them.

3. Make sure all knowledge base content is tagged and searchable.

This is no longer a herculean task, because you can get software that automatically captures solutions for the knowledge base and tags the content for you. It's OK to let end users think you spent hours upon hours toiling over it, however.

4. Periodically edit solutions collaboratively with other help desk workers.

When you automatically capture solutions and put them into the knowledge base, you can end up with multiple, slight variations on a common problem-solution scenario. Occasionally you'll need to spend some time editing solutions so that when an end user searches for something like "forgotten password," he or she is presented with one comprehensive solution, rather than a dozen nearly identical solutions that result in reading through multiple solution pages before settling on the "right" one. The best knowledge base software allows multiple IT people edit collaboratively.

5. Create a set of "best practices" guidelines for maintaining the knowledge base.

For example, you may want to evaluate knowledge base usage at set intervals to see if there are cases where users could be taking advantage of the knowledge base, but for whatever reason aren't. If you're still dealing with high numbers of service tickets for issues that are addressed in the knowledge base, you need to find out why this is happening. Are users having a hard time finding the information? Is the solution presented clearly and concisely? Have large numbers of users upgraded hardware or software recently? A great knowledge base is like a great vegetable garden: sometimes you have to weed and

prune things to get the best results, and you can't wait until things get out of control to do so.

A well-organized and well-maintained knowledge base is one of the best time investments an IT department can make. Increasing numbers of end users actually prefer the option of finding their own solution through a self-service portal rather than waiting in an endless phone queue or submitting a help desk ticket and waiting for a technician to be free to work on it. Of course, there will be a few "hard to please" end users who refuse to use the knowledge base, but when you keep these to a minimum, you free up IT techs to address more serious problems while giving the majority of end users quicker solutions that keep their own productivity high.

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