

What Help Desk Data tells an MSP about their Customer Base

The typical PC generates 5-7 calls per year. It is important to review your help desk data to see what your customer base generates for activity. There can be a lot of interesting inferences depending on what your base is doing.

A business of 10 PCs and a server will generate 50-70 calls per year, or 4-6 per month. If you are seeing more or less than that number, it bears a closer look. If for instance your customer of 10 systems has generated 48 calls over 6 months (more than the 25-35 you would expect in that time), you should look at why.

Take the monthly data, the 48 calls, and sort them by issue type. You may not need immediate action, but the data indicates this customer bears a second look as far as their setup, PCs, software, knowledge of operations. If you've been to the doctor and your cholesterol is high, it's something the doctor will want to watch. You should do the same for this customer to watch for continued abnormally high incidents, or resumption of normal call activity.

You should look at several customers at a time to look for systemic issues in the way you have customers set up. It is important to look at a large enough sample to reduce the bias in your data. We typically look at 6 to 10 months of data depending on the size of the company. If you find everyone is calling in more frequently than normal, or if you identify some locations who call more frequently, these are areas to study.

You may find the opposite problem. Say the users at this customer after 6 months has called only 10 times. There are four areas to review:

1. Perhaps this is just a great setup. The people don't have a need, and they aren't calling in.
2. Perhaps there is a tech going on site, solving issues on the side. Check to see if the tech should be logging those calls and tracking the activity.
3. There may be someone at the customer who is acting the part of the IT consultants for others. Sometimes there is someone who everyone goes to in order to solve routine interruptions. You may be relieved as then these issues don't interrupt you. However without tracking them, how do you know if you have missed something important? There could be a lion lurking in the shadows you won't know about since you don't know about the small issues.
4. It could be everyone's on vacation.

If 1 or 4, track for another 4 months. See what happens over time. Keep an eye on it and see if it changes. If it's your tech, ask them to log the issues they resolve on site. This kind of activity can keep them from doing what they should be, and may impact your projects delivery. They should encourage the users to call the help desk.

If there's someone on site who's helping you need to capture that as well. If the customer is paying them for another job, it's going to keep them from doing what they

should as well. Productivity is lower when users have to wait to find someone local to resolve an issue vs. calling a help desk where people are trained to resolve issues quickly and get the callers back to work.

It's important to review your entire base in this way. Look at each customer and their activity. Your overall base should be balanced. You will meet your goals if performance among your customers is balanced.

Here is an example of an IT company with 10 customers.

Company	# users	#calls (6 months)	Min Expected	Max Expected	expected/over/under	Calls/ User/ Yr
A	10	25	20	70	E	5.0
B	26	200	52	182	O	15.4
C	5	12	10	35	U	4.8
D	73	350	146	511	O	9.6
E	29	75	58	203	E	5.2
F	56	100	112	392	U	3.6
G	43	140	86	301	E	6.5
H	15	21	30	105	U	2.8
I	8	63	16	56	O	15.8
J	80	500	160	560	O	12.5
Total	345	1486	690	2415	O	8.6

The columns tell you the data you need to identify those who need extra attention. You need to review those who are over (companies B, D, I and J) and under (companies C, F and H) and keep an eye on those close to going over and under. Those with fewer calls than expected may be interrupting your techs or talking to someone in the office. Those with more calls than expected may have an issue that needs to be addressed.

Average the data over 6 months, and review it monthly. You will find opportunities to resolve issues that are important, and your customer will be pleased with the improvement.

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