

# Helpdesk Mastery

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Don't Let Support Tickets Run Your IT Team

**|||NEWMIND**



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## WHY LEVEL 1 MATTERS

### WHAT IS “LEVEL 1”?

Level 1 is a catch-all term we use to describe many of the low-complexity, fast-resolution tasks that IT teams are faced with on a regular basis. The systems and services that make up level 1 will vary between organizations, but they all usually involve problems with technology active in your environment right now. To name a few:



Printing problems



User account access



Data access



Network performance

In the grand scheme of things, these are the tasks that are easy to solve, right?

One Newmind Group client explained that level 1 is so time-consuming that they had to break down those responsibilities to a weekly rotation:

“When multiple team members are tied down to projects and only one is left over to tend to level 1, it becomes overwhelming.

It reached a point where ownership of these tasks became such a challenge that we had to implement a rotation of level 1 duties.

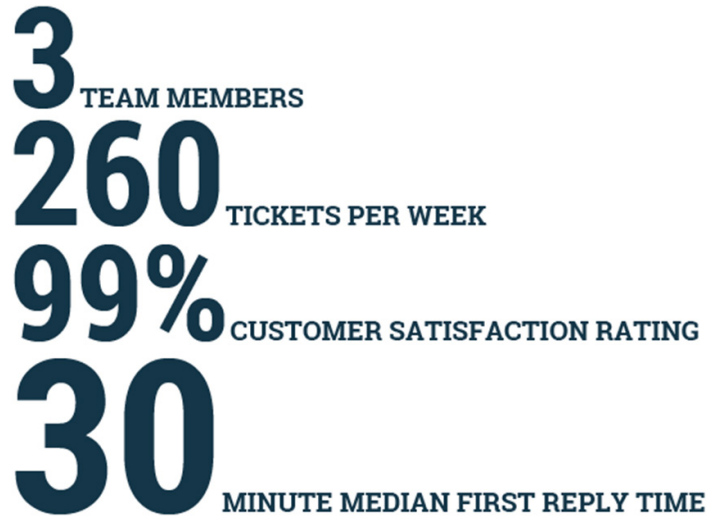
An individual on our team spends as much as 32 hours a week focusing on level 1 support—because we rotate those duties between team members, we spend an average of 66 hours (and as much as 80 hours) every week week on those tasks.”

—James Loiselle, Greenleaf Hospitality Group

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Some organizations are looking at dozens, hundreds, or even thousands, of Level 1 tickets every single week. When you look at the sum of all these parts, you've easily collected enough responsibilities for a couple dedicated IT support positions, but those won't be specialists driving value, they'll be jack-of-all-trades employees helping to keep the lights on.

### NEWMIND GROUP HELPDESK: BY THE NUMBERS



### TICKET TIP!: "I NEED TO RESET MY PASSWORD"

This is especially common in organizations where users need to juggle multiple accounts. There are so many bad "solutions" to this problem—like keeping your password on a sticky note.

### SOLUTION: PASSWORD MANAGEMENT TOOL

Introduce a password management tool to your organization, like Lastpass. It's secure plus it's easy to manage and share access between individuals as well as organizational units. It's a bit like that "sticky note" idea, except all the user credentials are under lock and key at Lastpass—you only need one master password, secured with two-step authentication. They also offer a premium option with enterprise controls and the ability to share folders throughout your organization.

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## HOW LEVEL 1 IS HOLDING YOU BACK

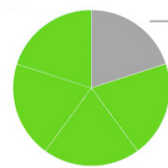
Isolating level 1 strategically can win your team more time to spend on large projects, a more effective use of manpower and budget, and most importantly, the focus to add strategic value to the organization, rather than acting as last-resort tech support. [In a 2012 Quocirca study](#), IT support staff remarked on the way level 1 tasks affect their work, and three benefit areas quickly become apparent.

## THE PRIORITIZATION CHALLENGE

**30%** OF YOUR TIME IS SPENT ON LEVEL 1

The average in-house IT staff spend 30% of their time dealing with these low-level tasks—and as much as 40% in the manufacturing industry. How much time is your IT team losing to these tasks? It may be time to redistribute where level 1 tasks are winding up in your organization.

## TIME DRAIN



LEVEL 1 HELPDESK CONSUMES OVER 1 FULL BUSINESS DAY EVERY WEEK

Even if your organization only spends 20% of their week on level 1 tasks, the low end of the study, that's still **the loss of an entire business day** for each IT staff on your payroll. If you're delegating level 1 tasks to highly qualified specialists, then you're incurring an even bigger loss.

“For 3 full-time level 1 service desk employees plus a service desk manager and ancillary tools, we spend around .6% of total annual revenue on running our service desk.”

—Michael Cross, CIO of Greenleaf Hospitality Group

**NEWMIND****UNDER-UTILIZED TEAM**

**50%** OF ALL IT WORK IS  
**BELOW YOUR**  
TEAM'S SKILL LEVEL

IT managers estimate that their IT staff members only use about 50% of their qualifications and those skilled workers are resigned to performing tasks below their skill level. When you're coordinating your team, you want specialists bringing the best value that they can to your company—not wasting away on general tasks.

**EXPLORE OFFLOADING LEVEL 1 TASKS**

If you're stuck worrying about how to handle low-priority issues, here are 3 strategies that can stage your team to start adding value:

- ⦿ Dedicated Level 1 Helpdesk
- ⦿ Automation
- ⦿ Outsourced IT

[\*\*LEARN MORE\*\*](#)**TICKET TIP! : "I LOST MY SHARED DRIVE"**

If your organization works with shared drives, you've probably experienced users' shared drives disappearing from their workstations. This leaves users disabled, and you're stuck mapping the drive back through the network.

**SOLUTION: CLOUD-BASED STORAGE**

It's more stable, and oftentimes it's easier on your budget (especially smaller businesses) than dealing with servers and shared drives. The best tool for this scenario is a live cloud-based data management solution, like Google Drive. With Google's data management tools, problems are rare, and if anything happens, it's most likely affecting the whole platform. With Google's 99.99% uptime, those problems are few and far between.

## TACKLING SUPPORT ISSUES EFFICIENTLY

Productivity is often easier said than done. Whether or not you're working with a full helpdesk on your side, there are fundamentals to IT support that will keep your response rate and ticket resolution high.

### DOCUMENTATION

When you're juggling many end-users, clear documentation is key. What you could do is keep files for recurring issues and troubleshooting information, but if you're going to spend all the time creating and indexing documents, you may as well save that time and invest in a ticketing system that builds a self-help wiki for your user.

### COMMUNICATION

Good communication between IT support and the end-user is essential, but what's also important is communication with the rest of your team. On our team, internal communication is highly encouraged between IT support as well as higher-level technicians when appropriate. Team members use Google Hangouts™ to have real-time conversations, which can rapidly reduce the time it takes to resolve an issue.

### ESCALATION

There comes a point where a problem simply becomes too complex for level 1 IT support to effectively handle, and it's important to recognize where that line is. If your priorities are to solve issues and keep response times down, then you don't want to get mired in high-complexity areas. When we reach points like this, our helpdesk coordinates a hand-off where the problem goes to a more specialized technician, who has the time to dedicate towards deeper tasks.

## TOOLS

### **Ticket Tracking**

Ticket trackers, for cataloging tickets and pertinent user information, are essential for any IT support operation, and it's all about finding the right one for you, like Freshdesk, Spiceworks, Trello, or Zendesk. Weigh each application's features (like reporting, plugins, or sharing features) against the needs of your organization, and settle on one!

### **Documenting common issues and processes**

After a ticket tracking system is in place, look into effective documentation tools, and experiment with creating a user self-help portal for common issues that the laymen can solve with a step-by-step guide. Google Sites, Wikia, and SharePoint can all be used to create basic knowledgebase-style websites for your end-users to access anytime they run into a solvable level 1 issue.

### **Time Tracking**

There are many options out there for tracking time and expenses, like Harvest, Paymo, or Timecamp. Each one has its own set of features, so find one that matches your needs. Harvest can plug in with ticket tracking apps, for instance, and Paymo offers robust reporting options.

### **TICKET TIP!: "MY PHONE WON'T DIAL OUT"**

If you're working with server-based phone systems, you know that if your internet goes out, your phone system goes out. All it takes is an ISP issue to create problems with incoming and outgoing communications.

### **SOLUTION: CLOUD-BASED SOLUTION FOR PHONE SYSTEM**

Cloud-based solutions are reliable because they're maintained by a service, instead of locally, where failovers and backup contingencies can become cost prohibitive. Not only does it relieve you of the hardware burden, it follows the same logic as cloud-based storage—the only issues you'll run into will typically be affecting the entire tool—and there will already be a support team addressing them.



## DELIVERING THE BEST POSSIBLE HELPDESK

Productivity is only half of the game—if you want a smooth helpdesk experience, you also need a level of trust with your end-users.

For your job to be as pleasant and effective as possible, you'll want to ensure you're communicating responsively, comfortably, and with care. It'll also make your job more pleasant—this doesn't have to be a strictly clinical relationship!



### RESPONSIVENESS

You want to appear reliable to your end-users, and you don't want your team to lose momentum on small hangups—one day to ensure that is by working towards a quick response time, so users know they're being addressed. Whether you're working with an in-house helpdesk, or you're outsourcing level 1 tasks to a helpdesk provider, following the tips outlined in the productivity section of this ebook, you should be able to maximize your ticket response rate—and leave your specialists to focus on issues and strategies that fall outside of level 1.

Chances are, you're already tracking your response rate—don't just quantify these numbers, actively discuss them! Set aside time weekly to explore strategies to reach your ideal response rate. The higher your rate of ticket turnover, the more satisfied your end-users will be, and the more time you'll have to explore forward thinking strategy like automation.



### COMFORT & CLARITY

Whether you're addressing helpdesk issues over the phone, email, or chat messaging, language consistency is a big factor in keeping the end-user on the same page while you solve their issue. You might understand that there's a difference between “reboot the system” and “turn it off and back on,” but your end-users may not.

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When you're communicating with a person who just doesn't understand certain terminology, those issues can cause serious hangups—our helpdesk workers find that communicating over the phone can be the most effective with struggling end-users, because it's a more 1:1 communication speed, and tone of voice helps with understanding. If you're gauging your end-user's level of expertise, though, you should refer to our next point:



### EMPATHY

By and large, you shouldn't approach every communication from a technical level, so much as a human level—it softens the difference in technical understanding, and makes the problem-solving process more pleasant for all parties involved. When you go into each call worrying about the level of technical understanding, you run a risk of alienating the end-user, either by sounding patronizing or moving at pace that they can't match.

The best approach is to forego the technical side of it and connect with the user on a human level first. From there, you can let them address the issue at hand, and feel out their technical expertise that way, so no one gets left behind.

### TICKET TIP: "THE INTERNET WENT DOWN AGAIN..."

An all too common issue, you know the groans you'll hear when the ISP drops. Whether it's due to bandwidth congestion, or an act of god, that connection is a lifeline to how you do business, so you want to minimize downtime!

### SOLUTION: WORK WITH DUAL ISP PROVIDERS

By switching to a dual ISP system, you can use them for failover when ISP trouble crops up. By also implementing bandwidth-monitoring access points and switches, you can prevent congestion and address problems even more quickly.



## CONTACT US

Is your helpdesk stuck on level 1? Newmind Group can help you empower your IT team through a range of helpdesk services, as well as offer insight from similar organizations, and the cultural alignment to run the best helpdesk for your company. Don't leave your support team on "hold."

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