



Leading IT Service & Support

Resolution Ownership — It Should Matter To You!

by

Peter J. McGarahan, Founder and President, McGarahan & Associates
and HDI Faculty Member

Resolution Ownership — It Should Matter To You!

By Peter J. McGarahan, Founder and President, McGarahan & Associates

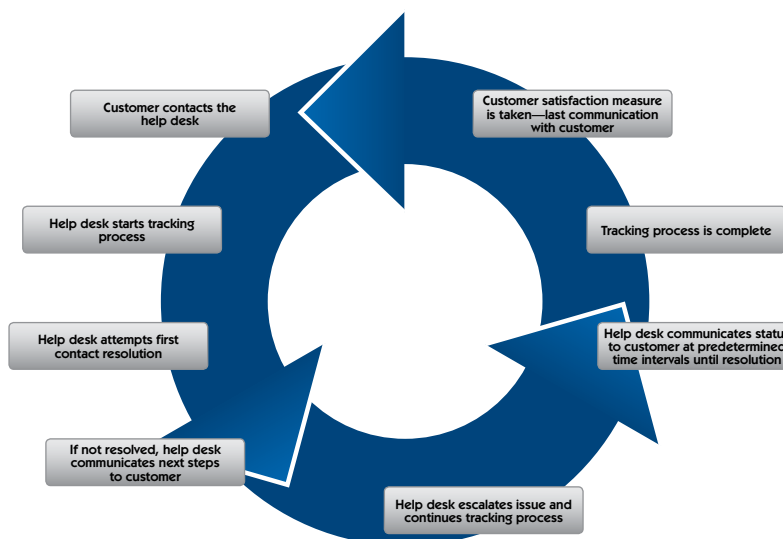
Ownership and Accountability

Every customer dreams of problem-free technology, uninterrupted service and productivity unburdened by repetitive issues! When issues do arise and the customer contacts the support center, the ideal situation from their perspective is getting their issue fixed on the first contact. If not, the issue is escalated to specialized support groups within the organization, the customer wants to simply know who will contact them and when. This is the basis of setting expectations and making a service commitment to the customer by confidently knowing that you “own” the issue to resolution. To do this you must have an agreement with the all the specialized groups (L2/L3) for response/resolution timeframes based on business impact, urgency and prioritization. Communicating these important follow-up details to the customer while following-up and following through establishes a relationship of credibility, respect and professionalism. A customer-focused service culture designed with the customer in mind will quickly benefit from the practice of **Total Contact Ownership (TCO)**, where there is no ambiguity of ownership and accountability when it comes to the customer experience and ultimate satisfaction.

“You Answer It; You Own It”

The concept of Total Contact Ownership is relatively simplistic, “You answer it; you own it.” It’s the consistent delivery and alignment of all support groups working together to deliver end-to-end, seamless and transparent services. In pursuit of issue resolution and getting the customer back to productivity, the support professional executes their role by being resourceful in utilizing all the available tools to properly troubleshoot, diagnose and resolve the issue. As stated earlier, if the issue cannot be resolved at first contact or a viable work-around offered, then the support professional, practicing quality ticket documentation, assigns the incident to proper technician/group. As the single point of contact/communication, the Service Center provides proactive updates to the

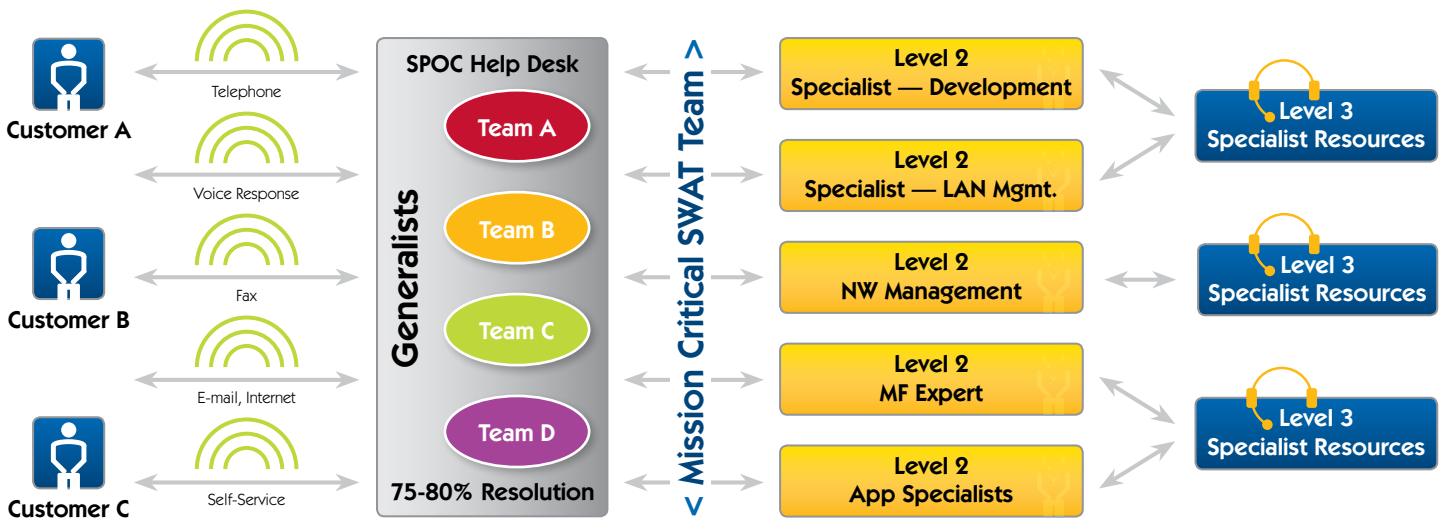
customer regarding the issue resolution status. By viewing the Opened Incident Records by Me”, the support professional dedicates a part of their day to reviewing the tickets that were opened by them, assigned to other resources and in need of status updates/resolution. At this point, every service and support professional should accept the fact that they ALL work for the Service Center. From a CIO perspective, it’s should not be an option given that most customers interact with the front-line Service Center more than any other group in their organization. The Service Center should be positioned as the “Face” of IT and the “Voice” of the customer. Any questions?



The process of Total Contact Ownership is built on these foundational valued principles:

- Business value-driven service and support.
- Best practice processes improving efficiency, leverage, scalability, consistency and results.
- Common-sense, relationship-driven customer service based on respect and professionalism.
- Alignment of goals, priorities and expectations for any group that “touches” the customer.
- Follow-up and follow-through on all customer commitments.

Single Point of Contact enables Total Contact Ownership



It is critical that all groups within the organization that are actively involved in any sales, service or support process have a defined role as a “customer touch-point”. Whether they are accountable, responsible, consulted or informed, everyone should have the same level of communication, buy-in, training and accountability for doing their part—the right way—achieving measurable results. There is no room for the uncommitted or “stealth” players who feel that Total Contact Ownership is a strategy-de-jour. Total Contact Ownership will cease to matter as a result of the business not treating everyone like a customer.

The Benefits of Total Contact Ownership (TCO)

From an impact perspective, the contagious ripple effect of culture-based ownership/accountability is powerful. Just by eliminating the ambiguity of “who’s on first” or “whose in charge” is a very positive step in the right direction. Since I now know who is accountable, I can “sign *my* service” with *my* unique way of handling the customer, deliver my value proposition/service differentiator. The primary reason for implementing TCO is to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction and give the service organization the means to deliver on committed service levels. Every customer would like to believe that service organizations understand the business issues as well as the technical issues and empathize with the situation enough to resolve the business problem first. The service organization must also be skilled in assessing the experience, skills and knowledge of the customer and incorporate that into the overall communication and issue resolution approach and style. TCO addresses the customer’s biggest fear—“if I hang up the phone, my issue will most likely fall through the cracks. I will be frustrated by having to continuously call the Service Center to hunt someone down who can resolve my issue in a timely manner”.

In addition to helping support service level management, an effective TCO strategy can certainly identify the “weak links in the chain” giving management performance improvement opportunities. Increased Service Center pride is a wonderful boost to individual and team morale. It facilitates higher levels of engagement and performance. Another positive outcome of TCO is in the increased quality ticket documentation as well as the tracking of 100% of all incidents and requests. If I am being held accountable for all issues that I first address with the customer, then I want to ensure that I first, have a record of it, secondly, that I properly account and document the details of the issue or request in support of “**if it’s not in the ticket, it did not happen**”.

The benefits of Total Contact Ownership include but are not limited to:

- Increased customer satisfaction, loyalty and improved relationships based on credibility, trust and respect.
- Better individual and team performance based on ownership, pride, commitment and teamwork.
- Better utilization of the tools and resources available to the support organization driving consistent customer handling, less manual effort and more predictable results.
- Forces people to think more proactively given it’s THEIR problem and not someone else’s.
- Reduction in total support costs where the “Shift-left” strategy benefits from Total Contact Ownership’s focus on resolving the incident at the most cost-effective support level.

Additional Implementation Guidelines:

1. Assess your tools for their capabilities to support TCO.
2. Perform a gap analysis on our current operation to ensure you know where you need to target continuous improvement initiatives.
3. Assess the current performance standards and determine how the TCO processes can be incorporated.
4. Assess the knowledge base and whether it contains the technical and procedural information to support the TCO process.
5. Determine, collectively with all support groups, the appropriate response / resolution timeframes for escalated issues.
6. Document the processes that will be implemented and communicate these to all support groups.
7. Map the processes into all the tools so they support and automate as much of the process as possible.
8. Communicate service levels, process change and expectations (what they will notice) to the customers.
9. Measure success with the new TCO process and communicate these to all support groups and customers.

Implementing Total Contact Ownership

To implement TCO successfully and ensure the proper buy-in and empowered ownership, please follow these recommended guidelines:

- Communicate and training all service and support professionals in all groups on TCO, especially the process and their roles within the process and how the processes have been mapped into the tools.
- Incorporate into the weekly/monthly Quality Review process and identify gaps and provide the necessary constructive, developmental feedback to the professionals regarding areas of opportunity for better compliance with TCO.
- Put the right balanced metrics in place to support TCO and gauge individual and team performance relative to established targets.
- Proactively monitor aging incidents and requests and look for root causes and trends in terms of why they are taking so long to resolve.
- Implement scripting guidelines as well as incident, requests and escalation processes and automate into the tools.
- Ensure proper business rules and notifications as a safety net when the process does not go as designed.
- Measure, measure, measure the customer experience every time and take follow-up action as required.

In Closing

Remember, to gain traction with Total Contact Ownership requires management buy-in and support as well as agreement/involvement from all service and support groups. You will certainly have to address the WHY this important, WHY they should care and WHAT'S in it for them (WIIFM). Before you begin your TCO transformation, it is highly recommend that you benchmark your current operations and your current customer perspective (CSI) regarding their perspective/experience relevant to the support/service they receive. Total Contact Ownership is the “heart” of the Service Center and promotes an understanding of both the customer and the business. Ultimately, the Service Center will become more efficient/effective in its support of the business, the resolution timeframe will decrease and customer satisfaction will increase.

About the Author

Peter J. McGarahan is the founder and president of McGarahan & Associates. Pete recently served as the Chairman of the IT Infrastructure Management Association, a sister organization to HDI.

Pete offers 25 years of IT and Business experience helping IT organizations optimize their service delivery model to support business objectives. His value to the service and support industry and business is his thought leadership. As a practitioner, product manager and support industry analyst and expert, he has influenced the maturity of the service and support industry. His passions for customer service led the Taco Bell support organization to achieve the **Help Desk Institute Team Excellence Award**. IT Support News also named him one of the **“Top 25 Professionals in the Service and Support Industry”** in 1999. Support professionals voted McGarahan “The Legend of the Year” in 2002 and again in 2004 at the Help Desk Professionals conference for his endless energy, mentoring and coaching and his valuable contribution to the support industry and community. **Contact Pete at pete@mcgarahan.com.**



About HDI

HDI, a Think Services company, is the world's largest IT service and support membership association and the industry's premier certification and training body. Guided by an international panel of industry experts and practitioners, HDI is the leading resource for help desk/support center emerging trends and best practices. HDI provides members with a vast repository of resources, networking opportunities and the largest industry event — the HDI Annual Conference and Expo. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colo., USA, HDI offers training in multiple languages and countries. For more information, visit www.ThinkHDI.com or call +1 719.268.0174. (Think Services and HDI are not affiliated with Customers International Limited or HDI Europe.)