

'Helpdesks' – myth or reality?

By David Felix-Davies

The feeling of being a "safe pair of hands", is one of the most satisfying outcomes a software provider can give its clients.

The success of this depends on the team working with you. This might sound obvious; however, we have all experienced the 'helpdesk' that is more of a hindrance than a benefit.

A dedicated team with proven success

At Plum, we are proud of the longevity of our team. Between us we have over 200 years of industry experience and many of those years have been with Plum. We love what we do and want to keep doing it!

Most importantly, we are all extremely knowledgeable about the software, the industry and our clients' needs. Because we know our clients very well, we really are able to provide that personal touch.

Of course, other factors are important, but ask yourself; do you know your account managers name? "How many account managers have you had in the last three years? When did they last make contact?"

An account manager is important because they focus attention to the relevant part of their business, ensuring you get the best possible service for *your* business.

Keeping the ball rolling

Once your new system has been installed and high quality training has been provided, then that service generally falls to the helpdesk / customer support team and they will be essential to your success.

Their quality of support is fundamental to the future fulfilment of your engagement and successful utilisation of the software. Does your current provider answer calls personally? Do you only have the option to email day to day questions as to how to use the software? Will your support desk call you to discuss any potential problems? Does your current supplier not provide support free but charge you by the minute? These points may seem farfetched but some software providers are guilty of not doing some, or all the above.

A support desk should be knowledgeable. Ideally, the support person you first make contact with should be able to help you with your query. On the rare occasion, they cannot deal with your query, then they need to understand what is causing you the problem and know who to direct that problem to for a speedy resolution.

Some software houses retain their support staff about as long as their account managers - the revolving door syndrome.

Look for a software provider who has staff who have been with them for many years. This will lead to both a much better understanding of the software you are paying for and an understanding of the business you work in enabling them to hone in on the issue and provide a practical and quick resolution. It is much easier to build a relationship with someone who you have spoken to before.

Taking responsibility

It is important that all people who work on a support desk can log your issue in a query management system. This helps to analyse problem areas in the software which can then be addressed. It also means that the history of your relationship with the software is captured and if the person who initially took your call is unavailable, then an experienced colleague can take over with an equal level of knowledge.

It's all about the journey – rocky road or smooth sailing?

Your software provider's goal should be to offer the best service right throughout your journey, not just at the point of sale. Time is money for you and by not supporting the product with a consistent, reliable and knowledgeable, time conscious desk they are impacting the very heart of your business. Software as a service is so much more than good product features or a slick user interface. Neither of those are of use to you if you can't keep going because the right help is not there.

If you would like to discuss how we could support your business please call us on 0203 873 5566 or email sales@plumsoftware.co.uk

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