

# Optimism and Opportunity in IT Support

*House on the Hill User Group  
Manchester, September 2008*

**Noel Bruton**

[www.noelbruton.com](http://www.noelbruton.com)

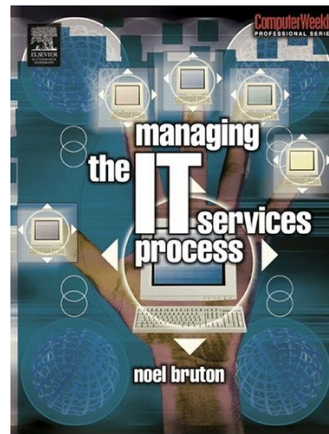
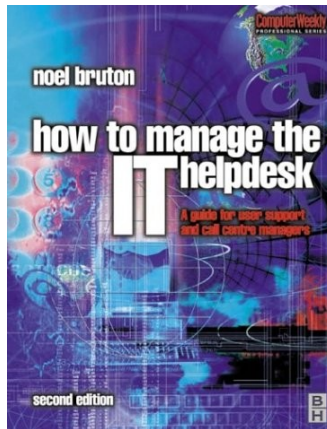


# Noel Bruton

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*Helpdesk Improvement Consultant, Advisor and Trainer*

## “I fix IT helpdesks”



**BRUTON CONSULTANCY**  
*IT Support Management Consultancy and Training*  
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*“The Helpdesk industry  
is ugly and stagnant”*

- Gartner Group

# Don't Want to be a Doomsayer, But...

- Helpdesk salaries falling
- Deskilling of the second line
  - Technology offers increased centralisation
  - Porters and installers where once were experts
- Career limitations beginning to emerge
  - Helpdesk staff are getting older...
- 'ITIL Refresh' offers nothing new
  - So no leadership there any more
  - Helpdesk products in the doldrums
- UK 'HITSS' formerly seen as banal, lacklustre

# The ITIL Legacy

- Bureaucratic beginnings
- Only three updates in over 20 years
  - Still no mention of staff, customers, skillsets, structure, performance, benchmarking, reporting, service design, marketing, cost justification
- Vendor-driven prominence
  - So main impact was on helpdesk
  - Compatibility stifled innovation and competition
- Learn jargon, get a qualification
- Config/Release management failures
- Management misdirection for decades

# Thankfully, ITIL is Over!

- Fox-IT absent from London Service Desk Show '08
- Several stands using term 'Helpdesk'
- Several new non-ITIL features on show
- SDITS Breakfast Briefing
  - *“ITIL has merged with the wallpaper”*
    - Bruton
  - *“I agree”*
    - Ben Clacy, Business development manager, ITSMF
- SDI white paper
  - IT services managers more concerned with non-ITIL issues

# Break Out of the Underclass

- Why are helpdesk salaries falling?
  - Because financiers know our cost but not our worth
  - Production unit without value management? Madness!
- Why doesn't IT understand our value?
  - Come to think of it, why don't we?
  - Or ITIL, or the vendors, or the HDI, etc. etc.
- Why are user service skills not valued?
  - Come to think of it, why doesn't ITIL recognise them?
- Why can they still launch unprepared systems?
  - Because we let them?
- *We must* take more responsibility!

# Let's Prove Our Worth

*“The purpose of the helpdesk is not merely to fix computer problems, for that is just a means to an end. It is to maximise user productivity through IT, and to restore to optimum that productivity when it has been impeded by a failure in either IT or its usage.”*

- We are answerable for the supportability of delivered systems.
- We are answerable for impeded user productivity and so, consequential fiscal loss.
- We are answerable for fix times, which relate directly to corporate ROI.

*So let's start behaving like we are!*

# User Productivity Impediments

- Systems failures
- Long resolution times
- Pointless backlogs due to cherry-picking
- Poorly documented systems
- Product launches without helpdesk training
- Suppressed salaries and skillsets
- Over-simplification of helpdesk responsibilities
- Underestimating helpdesk workload
- Failing to understand our real purpose
- Believing that productivity doesn't matter

# Helpdesk Fiscal Value

- Corporate turnover X IT dependency / IT user effort (€/hour)
- Helpdesk solutions / € Cost of helpdesk production
  - Which is more expensive? Fewer helpdesk staff or less productive corporation? Duh...
- How much downtime because of:
  - Skimped development
  - Insufficient training
  - Low FLF
- And what did that downtime cost?

# A Culture of Success

- Busy is not necessarily productive
- Output, output, output
  - Not ‘working on a project’ but ‘have completed that project milestone’
  - Not ‘solved some problems’, but ‘met problem solving target’
  - Not user-ignored SLA but internal productivity
- Developing Staff
  - Not “I’ve not been on the course” but “I can fix problems with that system now”
  - Not “Get out of the helpdesk to earn a better living” but “get paid for the value of these skills”

# Gaining User Appreciation

- First know your product
  - It is not just the solution of the computer problem
  - It is taking responsibility for and ownership of the computer problem
  - We're dealing with abdicative, flawed, emotional, duplicitous, power-hungry humans!
- Prove we're dealing with it
  - Take control of the relationship
  - Advise them proactively
  - Never leave them in the dark
- Measure their reactions and report back
- Tell them something they didn't know about their business needs

# Getting Our Importance Known

- Prove how much user productivity enabled
- Prove how much helpdesk morale is up
- Prove increasing user satisfaction
- Impatiently take on all external impediments
  - If we don't think it's important, why should they?
- Take uncommunicative managers to task
  - The business needs you to be able to plan services
- Talk money, not machinery

# Increasing Influence

- Know what you want and stick to it
- Have strict expectations from suppliers
  - Management information
  - Development inclusion
  - Staff diligence
- Do not be a ‘user victim’
  - You are a service provider, not a servant
  - You manage the provision, not they
  - Never be afraid of telling a customer how it is
  - Never risk turning your staff into victims

# Getting and Staying Motivated

- Come to work, work, go home...
  - Altogether now: "You load sixteen tons..."
- Think in terms of what you intend to achieve
- Make the job worth doing
  - How much better will this place be?
  - How much will your staff lives have improved by working for you?
  - Lead them there
- Do not tolerate impediments
- Know what constitutes success at all levels
  - Expect it, enable it and recognise it

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