

The Human Face of the Service Desk

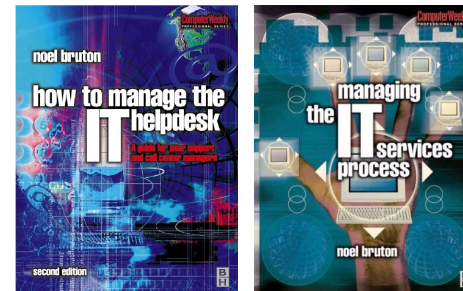
Noel Bruton

*itSMF regional event
Cardiff, September 2007*

Noel Bruton



- Consultant, trainer and interim manager in helpdesk and IT services
 - “The most respected IT helpdesk expert in the business” – *Customer Service News*
 - “Helpdesk guru” – *PC Week*
 - “The UK’s leading independent” – *Helpdesk Institute*
 - “IT services expert” – *ITSMF ServiceTalk*
- Consultant since 1991
- Worldwide clientele



Author

Human Face of the Service Desk

- Already human from user PoV
 - People relationships
 - “Never mind your Blackberry, how’s the new baby?”
- Too much so?
 - Not sufficiently technical?
- Facelessness
 - Telephone, remote control, downloadable service request forms etc.
- Staffed by people
 - Structural and management implications?
 - Access to a services catalogue or somebody to talk to?

Common Prejudices - 1

- Service desk staff are:
 - Cheap (typically less than £20k pa)
 - Transient (typically less than 3-year tenure)
 - Less technically versed than desktop support analysts
 - Good with people, genuinely nice
 - Almost immune to stress
 - Able to calm irate or upset users
 - Always looking for an opportunity to ‘move up’ to desktop support
 - Not always likely to ask the right diagnostic questions
 - Not always likely to present a properly completed trouble ticket



Common Prejudices - 2

- The Service Desk is:
 - More like a call centre than a part of IT
 - A place where career analysts should never have to return
 - Under constant pressure from the telephones
 - The IT department most likely to be outsourced
 - Routinely bypassed by users ‘going direct’
 - An option for routing all types of enquiries

Harsh Reality

- The Service Desk:
 - Per resolution, costs perhaps a quarter that of other IT resolving agencies
 - Typically repeats up to 40% of its work because of gaps in ownership process
 - Fields up to four out of five IT-destined enquiries - as far as the users care, *is* IT
 - Rarely offers a real career path, except technically
 - Consequently, cannot formally recognise service skills
 - Is a key point for improving service quality while reducing costs
 - Typically lacks direct management due to 1990's restructuring

A Human Face?

- The truth is we tend to rely too much on the Service Desk's humanity!
- But we don't support computers, but their usage
 - Dealing with people is the *essence*, not just a feature of the job
- How to turn the service desk into something that:
 - Serves the users well
 - Makes IT accessible
 - Reflects the business needs
 - Protects the rest of IT
 - Is meanwhile a rewarding place for humans to work?

Recognising Business Value

- Know & show how important they *really* are
- Cost comparisons
 - First-line costs / # incoming enquiries
 - Second-line costs / # 2L assignments
 - Ratio commonly 1:4, possibly higher
- Small FTF increase = disproportionate 2L savings
- Quality
 - User view – 1L fix preferred, but 1L fix is *cheaper*
- Logistics
 - Centralised
 - Duplication, redundancy, availability, etc.



Beware...

Cost benefits of high FTF
make a strong case *against*
the multi-topic service desk

Genuine Process

- ‘Standard Operating Procedures’
 - Documented ways of dealing with everything, *fed by...*
- ‘New Business’ process for SD - ***no exceptions***
 - Expected workload, escalation routes, change management, FAQ, formal release, etc.
- Managing the second line
 - Enquiry priorities start at SD – no ‘self-logging’
 - ‘Going direct’ discouraged
 - ‘Announced enquiry ownership’ becomes part of 2L routine

Match Resource to Workload

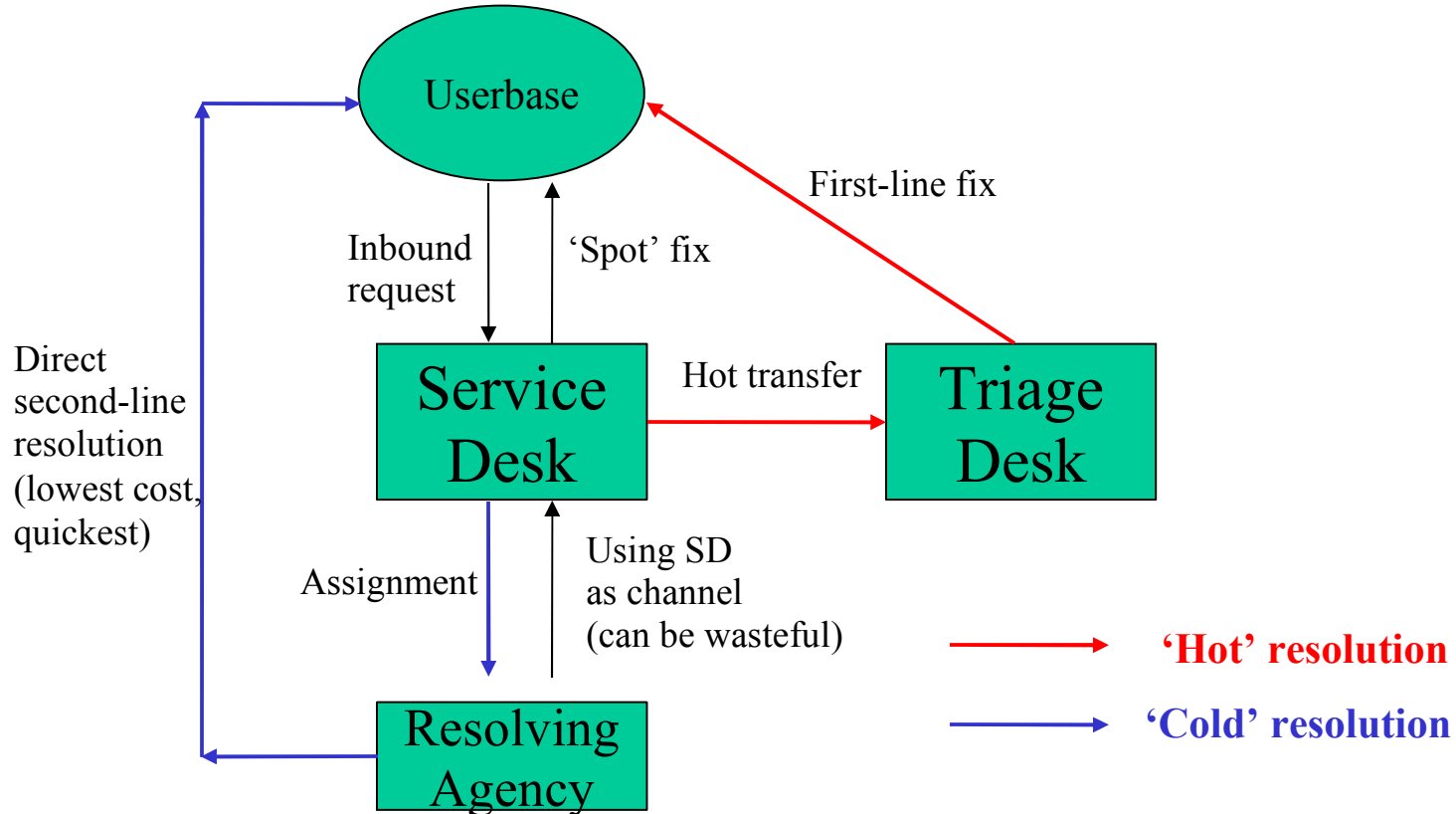
Staff availability does not match shape of day

Unfair loading makes rotation necessary

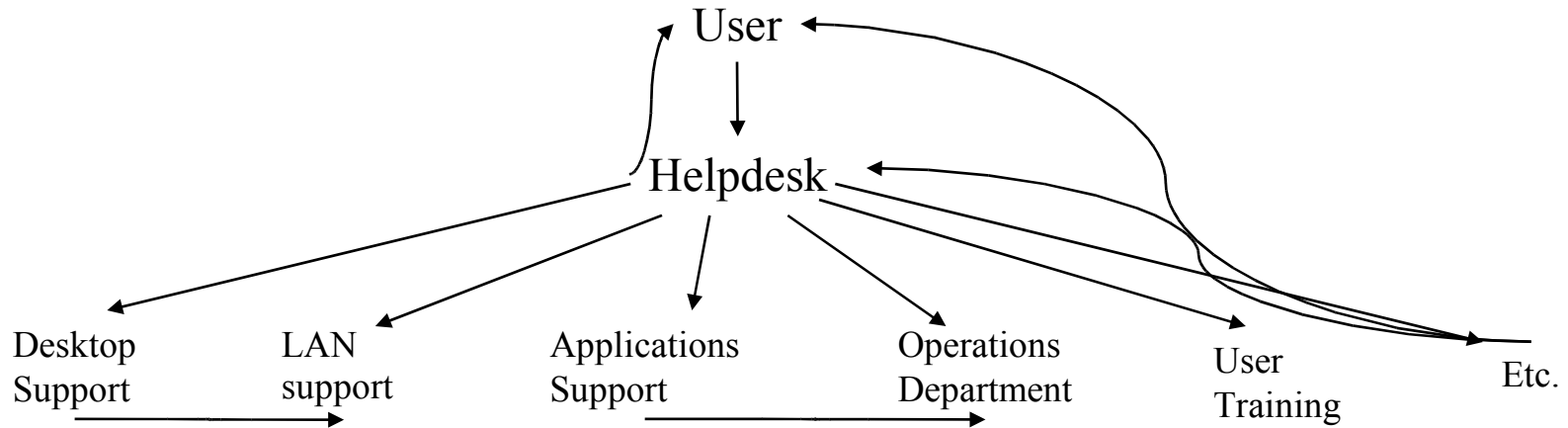
Extended-hour shifts may lack breaks

| | Calls | Staff | Calls/head | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 06:00 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | | |
| 07:00 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 1 | | | | |
| 08:00 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 09:00 | 22 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 10:00 | 30 | 3 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 11:00 | 28 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 12:00 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| 13:00 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| 14:00 | 8 | 3 | 3 | | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 15:00 | 12 | 4 | 3 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 16:00 | 14 | 3 | 5 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 17:00 | 8 | 2 | 4 | | | | 1 | 1 |
| 18:00 | 6 | 1 | 6 | | | | 1 | 0 |
| 19:00 | 4 | 1 | 4 | | | | | 1 |
| 20:00 | 4 | 1 | 4 | | | | | 1 |
| 21:00 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | | | 1 |
| Total | 173 | AVG | 5 | | | | | |
| <i>Calls per head per day</i> | | | 33 | | | | | |

Resolution Paths

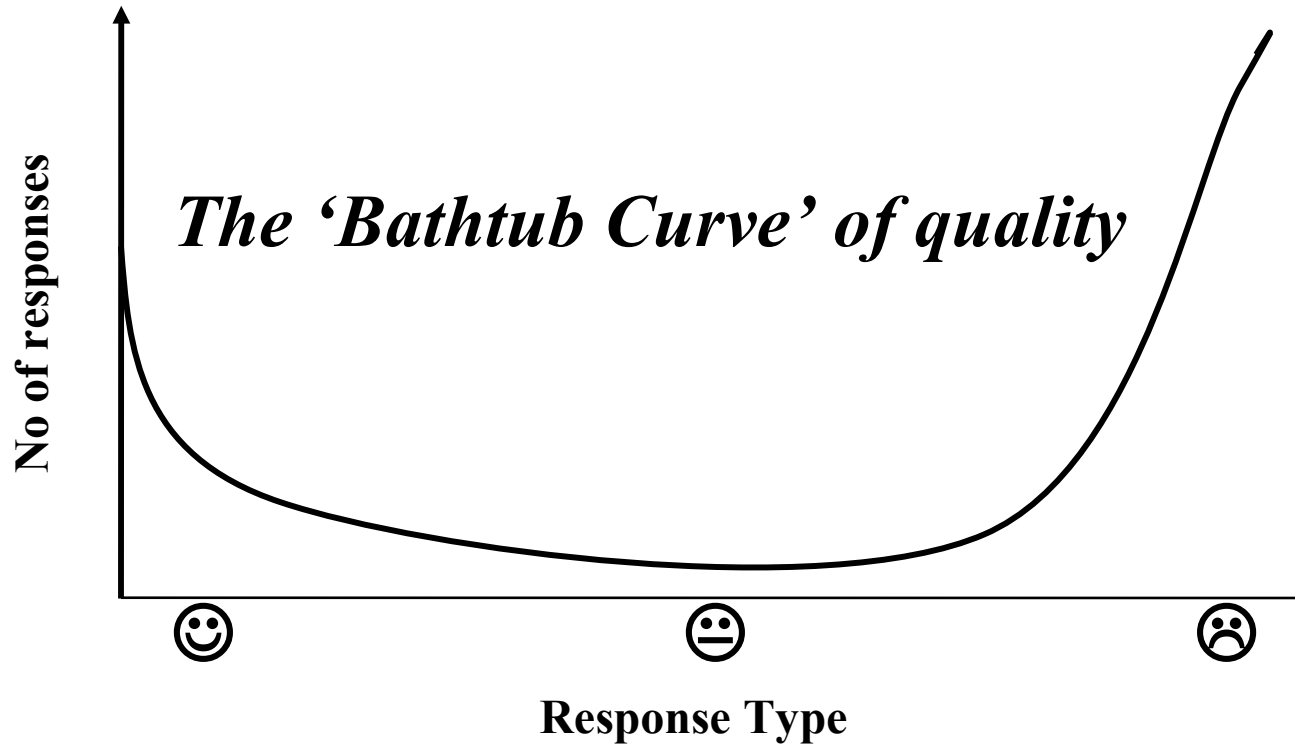


The Workable OLA?



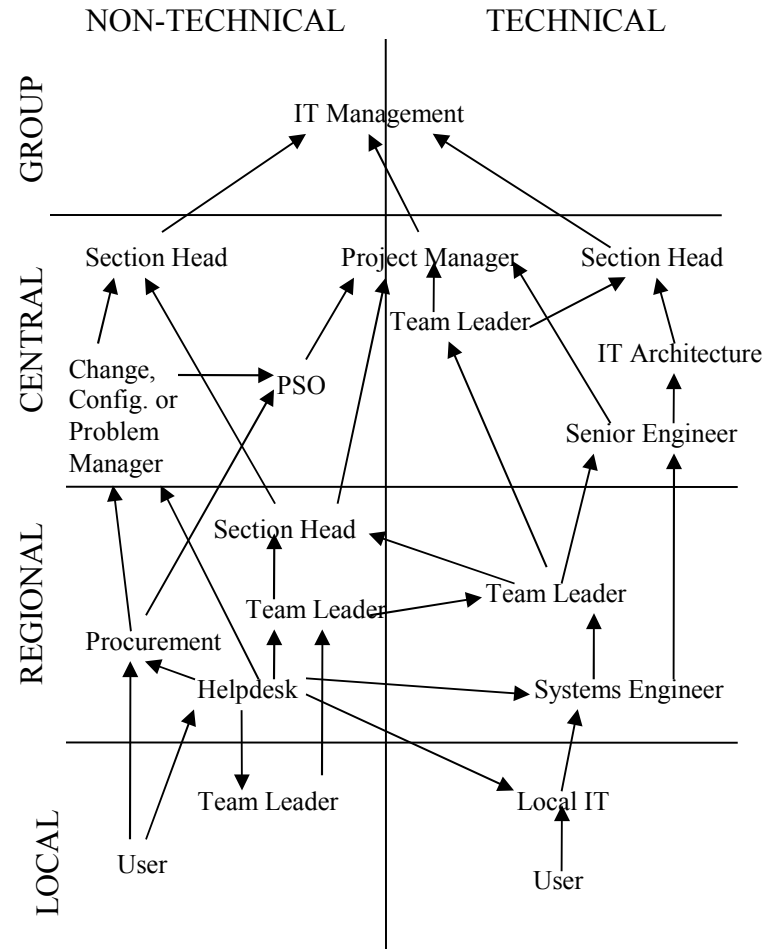
- Assignment can travel in any direction
- Without process, this can be confusing and duplicative
- Components must agree mutuality
- But number of OLA's is number of resolving agencies factorial

Assessing Quality



Recognise Career Paths

- Get past the ‘technocracy’
- Recognise service as well as technical and management skills
- Keep IT staff as long as users stay



Miscellaneous

- Hire a *really* good line manager
 - Leadership, Motivation, Identity, Standards
- Senior (your) role:
 - Have vision, state position, make decision, field derision – but don't get in the way!
- Humans wither when they have no control
 - Enable them to do structurally what they would do instinctively anyway
 - Gives human touch, but with organisation-style completeness

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