



**The one tool
that will
streamline
your IT
department**

Making an impact with an IT ticketing system

Without a doubt, a formalized IT ticketing system can be the most transformative tool you implement for your IT department. While it can't eliminate all your IT problems, it can reduce as much as 1/3rd of the bottlenecks that are common to most IT teams, regardless of whether you have a team of 1 or 101. And bottlenecks are the main source of inefficiency and inconsistency for most IT departments.

IT ticketing systems let you manage the lifecycle of an individual IT request from submission through to resolution and beyond into reporting and benchmarking. Managing that process efficiently creates a preferred scenario for both your IT staff and the employees they support.

Your staff are the "customers" of your IT department. Employees who have IT concerns want their requests acknowledged, want to know someone is working on their issue, and want regular updates on the status of the request. Most importantly they want their issue resolved quickly and correctly. And, your IT team wants to provide that level of support in a way that doesn't hold them back from getting the job done. An IT ticketing system can help you do all of that.

Already have a ticketing system?

The tool is only as good as your team is at using it.

If you already have an IT ticketing system but still struggle with bottlenecks, inefficiency, and poor issue resolution, it could be that the ticketing system isn't be used the way it should be or your team hasn't implemented all the best practices that they could. We cover best practices below so you can help sharpen your team.

Getting started with a ticketing system

If you don't already have a ticketing system, you might not have to look far. Your current CRM or ERP system might already have the functionality you need to get started. If you don't have those features available, a product like Zendesk or Zoho are popular paid options. If you're looking for freeware, Spiceworks might be the way to go. Research your options and find the one that makes the most sense for your business. Someone on your IT team might have experience with a ticketing system to offer perspective and you can often get a free trial period to test out features and functions.

Stop managing requests with email

This is quite possibly the most beneficial feature of a ticketing system for your IT team. In fact, you might even see a jump in productivity by as much as 50% just by having your IT team work within the ticketing system instead of email. To be clear, employees can use email, phone or self serve portal to contact the IT team. However, the IT team can work and manage all this within the ticketing system. This approach leads to efficiencies in several areas, creating a more productive environment for your IT team and your employees:

- Individual requests can not get lost or forgotten
- No miscommunication about who is managing what request
- The portal requests enough information at the beginning so your team understands what's required and can get started right away
- Fewer manual processes or redundancies for documenting, prioritizing, and assigning tasks

Keep employees informed with automated messages

Another important feature for keeping your team productive, is the automation of emails informing employees of the status of their request. Depending on the system you use, these emails are often templates that can be customized by the IT staff assigned to an individual ticket. As the ticket moves from it's creation to being assigned an IT team member to being scheduled and resolved, the employee can be notified about the progress.

- Eliminates the need for your employees to check in on the status of their IT ticket
- Reduces the time your IT team spends sending emails to staff about their ticket
- Standardizes the message to employees so they become familiar with the process and expectations
- Opportunities for IT staff to customize the message specific to the concern or employee

Full documentation and audit trails

With an IT ticketing system, your IT team has a platform to document the employees issue and how and when it was resolved. So, if there are issues or concerns about specific outcomes, it's possible to review what happened and by who. Reporting features also gives management insight into the productivity levels of an individual or the team, including metrics like total tickets managed, response time, and resolution time.

Most ticketing systems are searchable using key words. Your IT team can use this feature to find other cases of tickets with similar keywords to help find efficient ways to resolve repeating issues.

Best practices to get the most out of your ticketing system

Here are some best practices for implementing an IT ticketing system that creates a more efficient IT department.

1. Every request gets a ticket

If you are going to invest in a ticketing system, it should become mandatory for all IT requests, big or small, to get turned into a ticket. If an employee uses the self-serve portal, a ticket will be generated automatically. However, you may choose to allow employees to call a help desk number to report an issue, or send an email to a centralized email address for the IT department. If you chose to allow these options, it'll become the responsibility of your IT team to enter the information provided into the system and generate the ticket. The creation of the ticket begins the process of prioritization, assignment, and communication.

2. Prioritize requests before assigning them

As requests come in, you'll quickly want to prioritize them and assign them to a member of the IT team. The sooner this happens, the sooner the ticket can be resolved. A junior team member can help facilitate this process with clear direction about what is a top priority. For example, a Priority 1 request might be the case of a server going down, Priority 2 is an urgent request affecting only one person, and Priority 3 is a common day to day request such as problems connecting to a printer.

You can also create categories of tickets that are prioritized for designated IT team members who might be specialists in certain areas.

*A centralized email for your IT help desk is a good practice. Something like **helpdesk@yourcompany.com** is a good way to ensure nothing gets lost in an employee's email, all requests are centralized, and your employees start to recognize consistency with IT communications.*

3. Respond to (not resolve) all requests within an hour

A response to a request doesn't mean the request is resolved, it means that the request has been acknowledged. Much like the emailed receipt you get when you purchase something online, it's your employee's way of knowing that they've done everything correctly to generate a ticket and the wheels are in motion.

The system automation can support this step with a template email either sent out immediately or customized by a junior member of your team after they have reviewed the request and prioritized it correctly. Target a response within 30 to 60 minutes from the time the ticket has been created based on the priority of the ticket. Here's a good starting point:

PRIORITY 1: a ticket is created within 5 minutes, response time within 15 minutes

PRIORITY 2: a ticket is created within 15 minutes, response time within 60 minutes

PRIORITY 3: a ticket is created within 60 minutes, response time within 8 hours or one business day

4. Use reporting features to measure success

The more you access the system to see how your team is resolving issues, the more strategic you can be about your IT department. You may notice trends related to certain departments or technology, or areas where you're lacking specialized expertise. The reporting features in your ticketing system can help you quantify the impact of your team and how it's structured.

5. Be sure your resources match your needs

This practice is related to #4 because many companies report that once they take a closer look at how their team is doing, they begin to take a different approach to the structure of their team. For some, it quickly becomes obvious that the pure volume of work, even in an efficient environment, is making it difficult for their IT team or employee to contribute to the bigger picture. And more and more companies of all sizes are looking for IT to become a more strategic contributor. With a ticketing system, you can objectively review the kinds of resources you need for the day to day and understand better if an outside partner with a strategic, senior staff member, for example, is a better fit.



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