Technology Awareness:

The Automated Service Desk of Tomorrow, Today

Smart Support Saves Time, Money and Productivity

If you've ever spent an hour on the phone waiting for help with a technical issue – and who hasn't? – you'll recall the maddening frustration and lost productivity. Multiply that singular experience by hundreds or thousands of employees and the impact of help desk inefficiency at major federal agencies becomes clear.

Agencies are keen to cut their help desk losses.

By automating the IT service desk, agencies can increase user productivity while lowering expenses and frustration. Research from the [Service Desk Institute](#) found that relying on more automated, self-service methods lowered call volumes by as much as 85 percent; decreased support costs by up to 62 percent; and raised user productivity by up to 43 percent. Not surprisingly, overall user experience improved, as well.

The Air Force was an early adopter of help desk automation. After migrating 250 separate networks into one (AFNet) in 2015, Air Force leaders realized that its existing enterprise service desk (ESD) could handle only about half of the help tickets, resulting in users routinely waiting on hold for more than 60 minutes.

About 40 percent of callers eventually gave up. Working closely with Akima, the Air Force now relies on the virtual Enterprise Service Desk (vESD), an automated system that streamlines resolution of email, network, software, hardware and phone issues, often without the involvement of IT staff.

The system **saved 200,000 support hours**, reduced the time to resolve many issues to under 10 minutes, and **saved the Air Force approximately $14 million** on user IT support, all in the first year alone.

To get the most out of an automated enterprise service desk, it's important to have a vendor that understands users' biggest pain points, which often center around upgrades, file corruption, and migrations. They can also be as simple as dealing with an overflowing email box.

With those pressure points in mind, Akima customizes its ACE™ (Automation for Complex Enterprises) process to build an automated service desk that works directly with an agency's ticketing system of choice. With the system in place, users who previously would have called the IT service desk have the option of using an automated menu to self-identify service issues. After answering a few questions, the system directs a user to an automated fix or a walkthrough, if available. If the fix works, the service desk avoids a call. If it doesn't, the system forwards the ticket to the ticketing system with all of the background information already available.

Once implemented, the automated service desk created through the ACE process can require very little maintenance, but requirements and issues do change, and requests for help tend to ebb and flow. A system upgrade, for example, could result in a flood of requests that subside after a month or two. To keep the system running as effectively as possible, the Akima team regularly meets with the technicians who work on the IT service desk. If a high-ticket item is no longer relevant, Akima can replace it in the automated system with one that needs more attention.

In addition to saving money, increasing productivity and improving customer service, automating the IT service desk allows technicians to provide better, faster service on issues requiring human intervention. Automated help desks are the future, and the future is now.