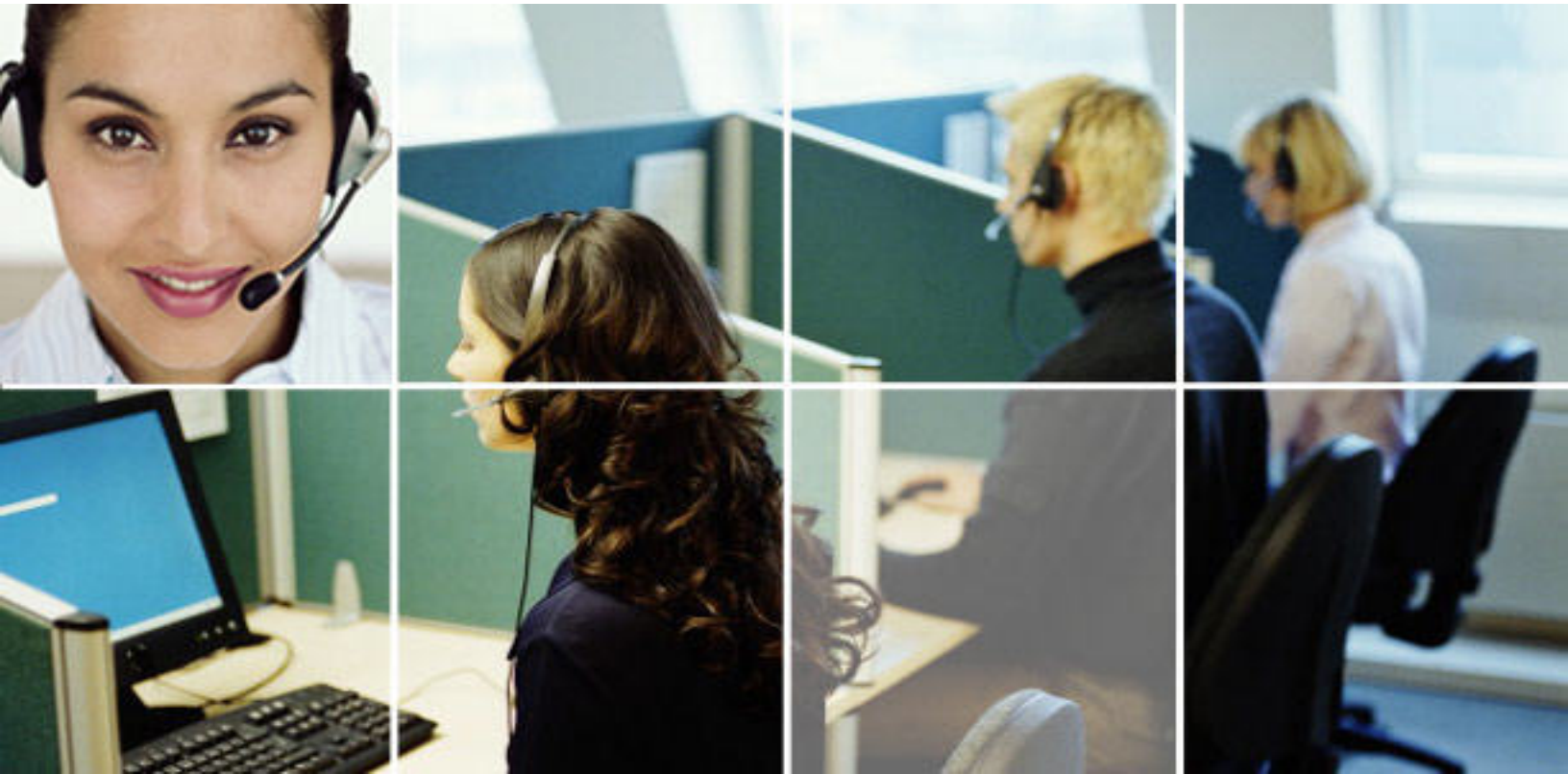**Novo Solutions, Inc.**
Innovative, Customer Support Solutions

NOVO SOLUTIONS

Seven Ways to Consolidate and Control Your Agency-Wide IT Assets and Service Requests through a Central Web Based Service Desk

A Novo Solutions Executive Business Brief

Seven Ways to Consolidate and Control Your Agency-Wide IT Assets and Service Requests through a Central Web Based Service Desk

Introduction:

This paper will discuss some of the key challenges facing today's Government CIO's and how they are effectively resolved utilizing the benefits of a central, web-based, Service Desk system.

The Problem:

Today's Government CIO's are facing increasing challenges managing their organizations as they seek to maximize the most beneficial information and computer technologies available. The "*2006 Federal Chief Information Officer - Top 10 Challenges Survey*" resource paper sponsored by the Association for Federal Information Resources Management (AFFIRM) lists several key challenges that Government CIOs are facing. Among these challenges are:

- Consolidating common IT business/mission functions (based on imperatives to generate cost savings for the organization)

- Hiring and retaining skilled professionals (turnover issues and lowering overall skill levels)

- Obtaining adequate funding for IT programs and projects (budget belt tightening is always an issue)

In this paper the following topics are discussed as ways to utilize a central IT Service Desk to address these concerns.

- Centralize and Automate Routing of Service Requests

- Maintain Control & Accountability of your IT Assets

- Maintain Change Management processes

- Maximize Knowledge Retention

- Maintain Compliance Standards (SOX, etc.)

- Optimize System Usage and Efficiency

- Justify your utilization of resources

The Solution:

A central IT Service Desk is a highly efficient tool that can be employed to address and manage these critical concerns. A centralized Service Desk will allow you to:

1. **Centralize and Automate the Routing of Service Requests**
   A centralized Service Desk (a single phone number, email address and Intranet application) can be effectively utilized for consolidating and managing IT service requests provided that the software solution being utilized has appropriate functionality to adapt forms and routing rules for the various groups using the system. In many cases different departments or types of service requests require their own specialized web forms to appropriately gather the information required on the initial submission of the request. This not only helps optimizes the effectiveness of the Service Desk personnel but it also makes it easier on the end user because the form is asking for information they are familiar with answering.

   Another key factor for optimizing efficiency and effectiveness is for flexible Business Rules to be utilized to automatically route requests to the appropriate team members and, in some cases, initiate custom Work Flow Tasks to start a process along with the appropriate alert notices. When these functions are centralized, it allows for much tighter control of business processes and greatly aids in reporting.

2. **Maintain Control & Accountability of your IT Assets**
   The first step in controlling your IT Assets is bringing them into a centralized Asset Management or Configuration Management solution. Ideally this solution is web based so that the appropriate personnel can easily view, change and report on the assets. Theses assets should be categorize by type, location and any other way that helps you maintain control and the appropriate views of the assets.

   Assigning the assets to specific end users or departments that use those assets also helps in maintaining control and accountability. It is also helpful for end users and department managers to be given view only access to the asset records so that they know the assets they are responsible for.

   Another important factor is in keeping track of the service requests associated with each asset. Having this service history helps justify fund requests for replacing equipment.

3. **Maintain Change Management Processes**
   Managing IT related changes to ensure service availability (i.e. email, records management, etc.) is critical. A benefit from centralizing IT functions is that appropriate Change Management processes can be implemented much more effectively. A key technology enabler to this is Work Flow automation. To maintain appropriate reporting capability, however, Work Flow automation should be integrated into the Service Desk solution so that the starting point of any work flow can be an incident, problem or any other type of service request.

   Though Change Management related work flows can be initiated manually, to maximize efficiency they will typically need to be triggered by business rules. An example of this is:

   > IF (Category equals x OR y) AND (Status equals b), THEN start the work flow. The work flow would then auto create tasks and assignments in sequence or in parallel or a combination of both.

4. **Maximize Knowledge Retention**
   In the midst of any IT staff turnover, it is crucial to retain certain job related knowledge so that it does not walk out the door when someone leaves. An easy to use, web based Knowledge Base solution can be very helpful in making it easy for team members to document key knowledge (such as software/server configurations) and provide a way for this information to be easily accessible (and searchable).   To maintain data security, a Knowledge Base solution should provide the ability to share knowledge among appropriate personnel based on roles and groups. Permissions should be easy to assign so that information is disclosed based on assigned roles thereby allowing confidential knowledge to remain secure.

   An additional benefit to knowledge retention is that new hires can be given immediate access to key information, enabling them to become much more productive in a shorter time period. The faster "ramp-up" time of newer employees equates to savings by lowering training costs and requiring fewer "overhead" admin hours to be invested, as is often the case when senior employees have to be pulled away from other priorities to assist with training

5. **Maintain Compliance Standards (SOX, etc.)**
   Maintaining an Audit log of ALL changes to asset and service request records is very important not only for external audit purposes but to have an appropriate view of what changes were made (i.e. for troubleshooting purposes, knowing how to back out a change that was made, determining the movement or end of life for assets, etc.).

   An effective Service Desk solution will automatically keep track of changes made to records and log the date/time stamp and the person who made the change.

6. **Optimize System Usage and Efficiency**
   Authentication technologies such as Microsoft Active Directory (and related smart cards, etc.) can greatly simplify user management. To effectively leverage centralized user management, it is important that any software solution provide integration to these technologies to enable a single sign on (SSO) environment.

   One factor that can impair system usage and efficiency is the complexity of the system and the learning curve involved to effectively utilize it. Many of the high cost solutions that have long implementation schedules can go underutilized, and in some cases, never get fully implemented because of the complexity. Service Desk solutions that are web based can not only be easier to use but can typically be implemented much more rapidly and, as a result, have a quicker ROI.

7. **Justify your Utilization of Resources**
   With tightening IT budgets, flexible Ad Hoc reports are crucial for helping justify and maintain funding in critical areas.   Detailed reporting relates back to having an integrated Service Desk system so that all of the data can be reported on. If this data is in multiple systems, reporting can be a challenge.

   With appropriate reporting capabilities, requests for increased funding can be more effectively managed and the need for upgrades can be supported by the data . (i.e. with detail agency-wide service request reports by department, category, etc.).   Also, built-in capabilities within the software will be easier to use and will require fewer interruptions of database administrators who are often tasked with creating special reports.

The Benefits of the Novo Service Desk Support System:

The Novo Service Desk fully supports all of the management tasks listed above. Because it is web based, it is easily accessible from central or remote offices. Its ease of use and quick implementation allow the system to be up and running in hours instead of weeks or months. The Novo Service Desk is available for in-house licensure, as well as via a (SaaS) Software as a Services, hosted solution. Our proven support software system is currently in use in multiple state and federal agencies, serving from 10 to 20,000 end users.

Conclusion:

Many challenges facing government CIO's are efficiently tackled by using a Service Desk System. The ROI is rapid when considering the savings in manpower alone. In addition security standards are maintained, information is controlled, and business processes are streamlined for efficiency.

Contact Novo Solutions, Inc. to learn more about how our robust, flexible and easy to use web based solutions can help you solve key problems related to providing customer or technical support, capturing and sharing knowledge and managing IT and other related assets.

Novo Solutions, Inc.
(888) 316-4559 USA
(757) 687-6590 USA
sales@novosolutions.com
www.novosolutions.com