What Every IT Help Desk Needs
By Donna Payne, PayneGroup, Inc.

Imagine if every time you picked up the telephone or read an email, the person on the other end was angry or frustrated? And what if every call presented a problem that you were expected to solve? Welcome to the life of a help desk professional.

Unless you are employed by an IT organization, help desk professionals are rarely the rock stars or rain makers of an organization. They are normally housed in the least desirable part of the building – often in windowless low rent space within the office and are expected to respond to every irate caller with calm, unflappable patience.

To celebrate these unsung heroes, here are a few things to keep in mind that every help desk person deserves. By the way, have you hugged your help desk staff today?

Gratitude

It might seem like common sense to say thank you to someone who is trying to help you, but amazingly, we often forget to convey our appreciation under circumstances that typically precipitate a call to the help desk. As a result, it's good practice to seek out those individuals who help us on a regular basis and let them know we appreciate what they do for us. Or better yet, write a thank you card, pick up a Starbucks or other coffee card, and leave it on their desk (yes, you'll need to venture in the dark recesses of the building to find their desk, but that, too, will be viewed as a wonderful gesture).

Clearly Delineated Job Description

No one wants to feel devalued, but sometimes people in a service capacity end up being treated as such. At one organization that we've worked with, the help desk is there to help in all capacities – taking care of business as well as personal needs, sometimes even providing technical assistance to extended family and other non-employee individuals. Organizations can help eliminate this problem by clearly identifying the duties and responsibilities associated with the help desk role.

If, on rare occasion, you need to ask for a favor outside their normal duties, an additional token of appreciation is warranted. Keep in mind that these types of requests should really be the exception rather than the norm.

Backing from Management

The phrase "I've got your back" was never more appropriate than for what a manager should do for their direct reports. A key responsibility of management is to support and encourage the people working for

them. This type of supportive relationship is essential for a positive working environment and for the overall benefit to the company. If an employee is being mistreated by someone in the company, it's the manager's obligation to find a suitable resolution to the situation. Always give the employee the benefit of the doubt when conflicts arise and don't rush to judgment until both sides are heard and all avenues exhausted.

Set Up to Succeed

In this day and age of BYOD (that's bring your own device), help desk personnel are expected to be an expert on more software and hardware than ever before. The current software release cycle for companies is quarterly, which means new features and functionality need to be learned quickly, typically with little formal training or support. Invest in classes from trusted companies, finding classes that go beyond the typical user level knowledge and instead focus on troubleshooting and high end cause and effect scenarios.

Another way to help your team is to join organizations and communities that provide similar or complimentary information. Pay for conference attendance, or at the very least, don't force them to take vacation time to attend a conference that will help them professionally in their current job or enable them to grow within their organization.

Conclusion

Your help desk staff have the expected goal of "helping people." Since this function is their primary title and job responsibility, it's time we ask them "how can we help you?" A little bit of appreciation can go a long way – contributing to higher morale, greater productivity and lower employee turnover rates.

About the Author

Donna Payne is CEO at PayneGroup. The company has authored 13 books on Microsoft Office, develop globally used products and offer training and professional services worldwide. In addition to products and services, PayneGroup offers services designed around optimizing the help desk performance. These services include evaluative recommendations, training, supplemental staffing and more. For information on how PayneGroup can aid your help desk or organization, contact us at info@thepaynegroup.com.