

IT Help Desk Support Structure

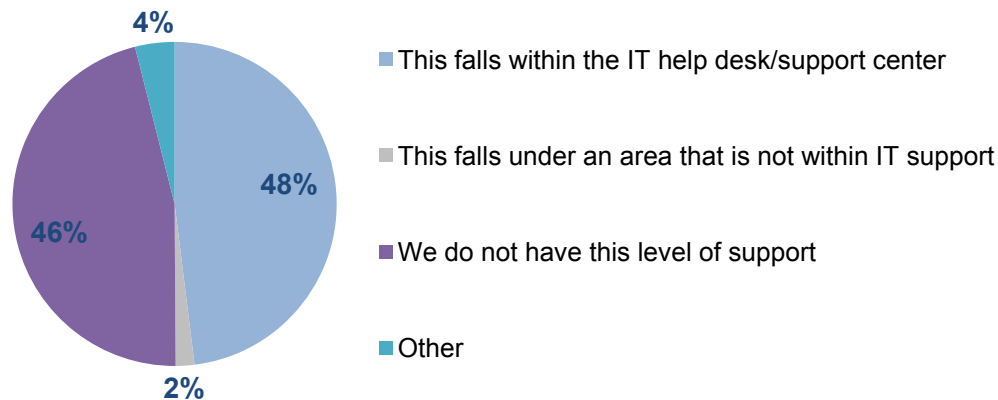
Jenny Rains, Research Analyst, HDI

To find out about current trends in help desk support staff structure HDI asked its members to share what they are currently doing in their support centers. Results are based on responses from 486 support professionals. Data were collected via an on-line survey which members responded to from February 11, 2009 through February 17, 2009.

In order to develop a picture of the current help desk trends, HDI asked where each of the following responsibilities fall within the company: Call Screener/Dispatch, Level 1 Support, Level 2 Support, Level 3 Support, and Desktop Support Technician. Each level of responsibilities was defined for the survey participant as seen in this report. For each level, they were asked if the position existed in their company, and if so, if it fell under the IT help desk, somewhere else in IT, or in another area that is not under IT at all. The results are as follows.

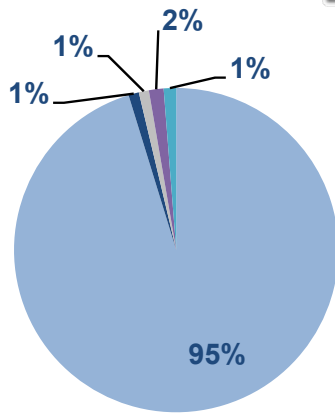
Where do each of the following responsibilities fall within the company?

Call Screener/dispatch



Call Screener/Dispatch Definition: *Collect information from the caller including contact information and details about the incident or service request, then route the call to first-level support or other appropriate contact. Call screeners/dispatchers differ from first level support in that they are expected to resolve very few problems.*

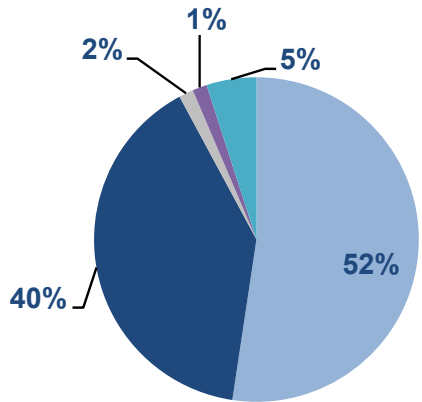
Level 1 Support



- This falls within the IT help desk/support center
- This falls under another IT support area
- This falls under an area that is not within IT support
- We do not have this level of support
- Other

Level 1 Support Definition: *The first group of agents/analyst who receive an incident. This individual attempts to provide customers with needed information, resolve the problems, or provide specific service. This group is generally staffed with technical generalists who are expected to resolve a high percentage of common problems or route service matters.*

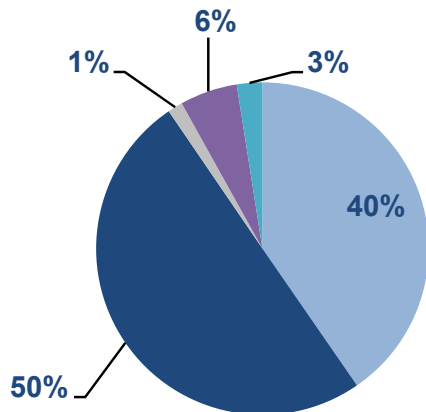
Level 2 Support



- This falls within the IT help desk/support center
- This falls under another IT support area
- This falls under an area that is not within IT support
- We do not have this level of support
- Other

Level 2 Support Definition: *These professionals have greater technical skills to solve specific problems than first level support personnel. Calls not resolved by the first point of contact are routed to this group. Second level support has the ability to resolve more than 90% of all problems.*

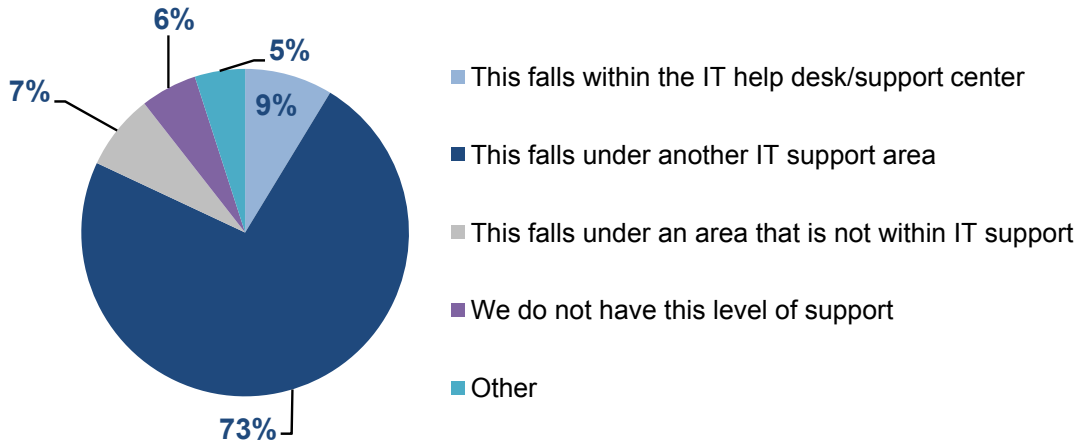
Desktop Support Technician



- This falls within the IT help desk/support center
- This falls under another IT support area
- This falls under an area that is not within IT support
- We do not have this level of support
- Other

DST Definition: *This position describes the person that spends much of their day visiting individuals with problems at their workstations. They might perform their work in a combination of physical visits and assisting via remote control technologies. This individual would most likely be involved in new workstation installs and migrations.*

Level 3 Support

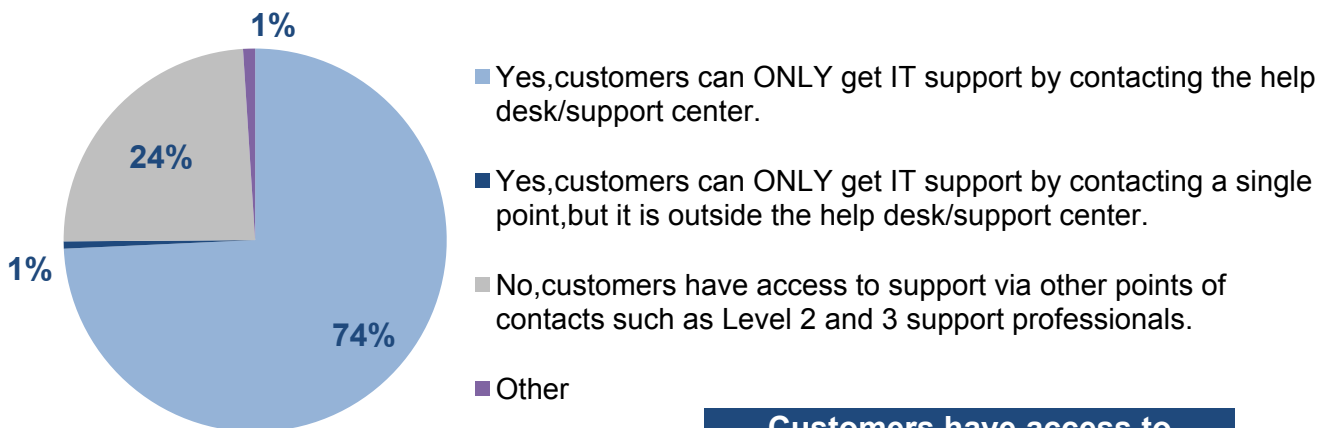


Level 3 Support Definition: *This group of individuals builds, maintains, and enhances products. They are involved in specific customer problems only when the problem cannot be resolved by the first or second level of support professionals.*

Single Point of Contact

Most support centers have a very strict structure with the help desk being the first line and only line of contact for support, while about a quarter have a bit more flexibility for customers to contact higher levels of support directly. Even though three-fourths of the industry adhere to a Single Point of Contact in theory, many reported that even with this practice in place, customers are still finding ways around it to directly reach other support professionals. Below the results are displayed for all respondents as well as for the industries that had at least 30 responses to the survey.

Does your IT support organization have a "Single Point of Contact?"



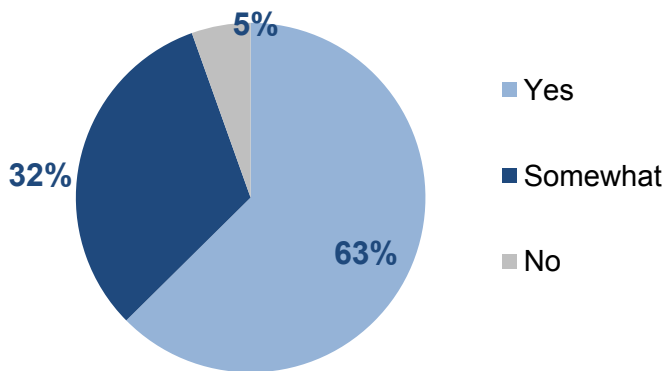
Customers have access to support via other points of contacts such as Level 2 and 3 support professionals.

Banking	38%
Education	9%
Government	24%
Healthcare	21%
Insurance	14%
Manufacturing	21%

Tiered Help Desk Structure

Currently, there is some buzz in the industry about going from a traditional help desk structure to a non-tiered structure. However, it has not been implemented by many at this point. Only 5% report to have a completely tier-less structure in their support organization. Results are reported below for all respondents as well as by industry.

Does your support organization have a tiered structure?



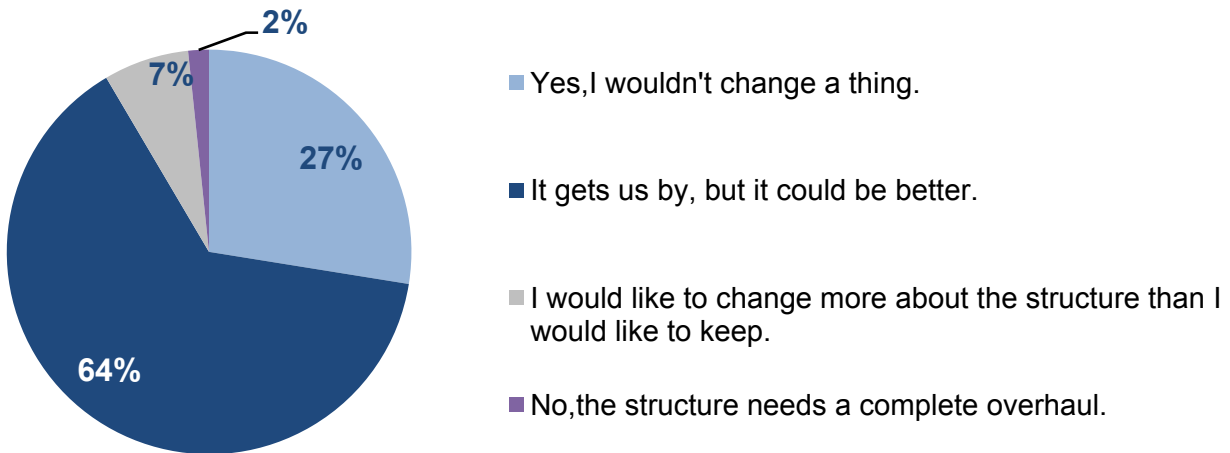
Tiered Structure by Industry

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Banking	59%	37%	5%
Education	71%	26%	3%
Government	46%	52%	2%
Healthcare	70%	26%	4%
Insurance	68%	32%	0%
Manufacturing	66%	24%	10%

Satisfaction with Current Structure

Most of the industry seems to be content with their current structure, but does believe it could be better. About 2% would like a complete overhaul to their current structure. And just over a quarter of the industry is happy with their current structure and would not change a single thing. Below are the results for the industry and a closer look at those who “wouldn’t change a thing.”

Do you feel that your current help desk/support center structure works well?



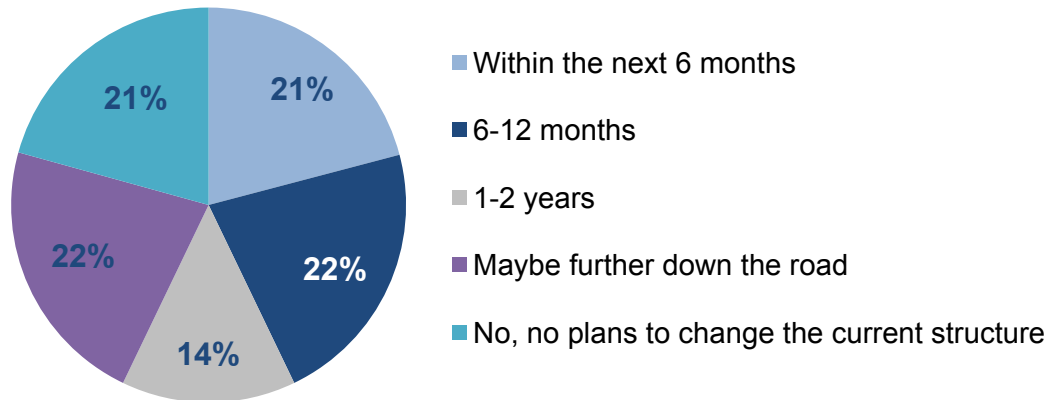
27% Say they wouldn't change a thing about their structure. The table to the right gives an idea of what that segment looks like. More have a tiered structure and Single Point of Contact than the industry as a whole.

Tiered	
Yes	79%
Somewhat	18%
No	3%
SPOC	
Yes	81%
No	17%
Other	2%

Future in Help Desk Structure

About 21% of the industry has no plans to change their current help desk structure. Seventy percent (70%) of those are support centers that are happy with their current structure and wouldn't change a thing. Interestingly, half of the support centers that reported needing a complete overhaul to their support structure have no plans to change their current structure. When analyzing the current structures and who has plans to change, there does not appear to be any correlation between tiered support and plans to change.

Do you foresee changing the help desk/support center structure in the near future?



Summary

Tiered support and Single Point of Contact are prevalent practices in IT support organizations. Almost half of the industry has moved away from a call screener/dispatch position in their organization. For those who have this level of support it falls within the help desk along with Level 1 support. About half of the support centers contain level 2 support, but higher levels of support, such as level 3 and desktop support, often fall within another area of IT support. About 43% plan to make changes to their structure in the year to come and about 43% have no current plans to change.

Related resources:

[HDI Members Tool Box](#)

[Focus Book: The Support Center in 2011: A Report on the future Trends Facing the Support Industry](#)

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