IT Walk-Up Service Centers: Optimizing Satisfaction and Productivity

By Tom Vetterani, CompuCom Vice President, Strategy & Messaging, and Steven Pike, Portfolio Product Director

More organizations are augmenting traditional service desk support with walk-up technical support capabilities. Here’s why your organization needs walk-up service centers — and how to make them work for you.
If you’re a mobile worker with multiple devices — a laptop, a smartphone and maybe even a tablet — chances are you need your devices to work together and allow you to easily access key applications. When it comes to configuring your devices, which would you rather do? Call the service desk and work through a complex series of steps over the telephone? Or meet face-to-face with a technical support expert, who specializes in mobile technology, to quickly resolve your technology issues?

If you’re like a growing number of users, you might prefer the real-time, face-to-face option, at least in certain situations. The traditional service desk can be highly effective in supporting desktop devices, applications and connectivity issues. But users increasingly want an in-person support option that is similar to what they receive for their personally owned devices. And many mobile devices lack remote diagnostics, which means the traditional service desk can’t always provide adequate support for handheld devices.

One-half of large enterprises will offer IT walk-up services by 2018. — Gartner

That’s why more and more IT organizations are rolling out walk-up service centers. In fact, Gartner estimates that 50 percent of large enterprises will offer walk-up services within the next three years.

Walk-up service centers promise to offload traditional service desks, significantly improve user satisfaction and, ultimately, increase employee productivity. But to get the most from walk-up service centers, you need to implement them carefully, operate them effectively and measure the right results.

1 & 2. “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015

What Are IT Walk-Up Service Centers?
IT walk-up service centers are on-campus, in-person facilities where employees can stop by to get help with their IT equipment. Walk-up service centers specialize in supporting technology devices the end user carries — smartphones, tablets and laptops. Inside the walk-up service center, technical experts offer on-demand or by-appointment support for issues like hardware repairs, technology refreshes and software upgrades. Employees can choose to wait for their devices, or drop them off for later pickup.

50%
Workforce on the Move

Walk-up service centers augment but don’t typically replace the traditional service desk. The service desk remains a vital component in supporting employees with their desktops, laptops, network connectivity, software and related issues, and in driving optimum workplace productivity. But worker satisfaction with corporate service desks has been declining. There are two primary reasons for this trend.

First is the consumerization of IT. Today’s consumers demand easy-to-use software and mobile apps along with fast, friendly support — from online chat to the celebrated Genius Bar at Apple® retail stores — where they get efficient, personalized service.

Second is the rocketing use of mobile devices in the workplace. As end users become more mobile, they require more — and better — devices that they can carry. Smaller laptops, tablets and smartphones are in demand. Some 1.6 billion Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) devices were projected to be in use by last year, according to Gartner.3 And at least 70 percent of tablets and smartphones used for work are personally selected by the employee, Forrester reports.4 (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Device Ownership in the Workplace

All that mobile technology is creating significant challenges for traditional service desk models. Employees have more devices to support. They use their own devices at work, and they download their own apps, whether or not those devices and apps are sanctioned by the company or are the best way to get their jobs done. Service desk technicians aren’t trained to support the multitude of devices, operating systems and apps they run. And, many mobile devices lack the automated tools to allow remote diagnostics.

In fact, “BYOD can end up costing more than a traditional corporate-owned device strategy,” Gartner says, in part because “costs may actually increase as a result of having to qualify and support a greater number of unique devices that do not have standard configurations.”

Walk-up service centers offer an opportunity to create a hybrid model that combines traditional service desk support with on-campus, in-person support. They respond to the growing crossover between enterprise and personal devices. They deliver support for the multitude of devices that employees carry as they become more mobile. And they address emerging preferences for a more consumer-oriented support experience.

**Walk This Way**

Walk-up service centers enable employees to benefit from real-time, in-person IT support. They can also allow employees to drop off devices, rather than having to wait for service to be performed. Organizations should decide the mix of devices their walk-up service center will support, such as handling traditional hardware like laptops in addition to the new forms of mobile technology.

Walk-up service centers can offer troubleshooting, break-fix support, technology refreshes and software upgrades through either scheduled appointments or ad hoc requests. They can also provide an opportunity for additional services, including how-to training and employee exposure to the latest technologies and capabilities. As Gartner points out, “these services are excellent channels for marketing and creating awareness of new IT offerings and services.”

---

5 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
7 “BYOD Will Fail to Meet Expectations,” Gartner, August 2014
8 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
Walk-up service centers are appropriate for large enterprises with multiple campuses, or with 1,000 or more employees at a single location. Organizations that employ highly mobile end users should also consider walk-up service centers. Even midsize companies that have many centralized workers or that have a specific need to optimize their IT support can benefit from walk-up service centers. Gartner reports that industries such as healthcare and higher education in particular are already benefiting.

Enterprises working to implement walk-up services effectively must address several key issues, Gartner notes, from managing demand to staffing with the right people. Based on its extensive history and expertise in operating service desks, ongoing assessment of customer needs and experience implementing more than 20 walk-up service centers, CompuCom offers the following best practices.

1. **Plan carefully**: First, think about the services you’ll offer. For example, you might retain your traditional service desk for desktop devices and applications, and focus your walk-up service center on technology that end users carry — laptops, tablets and smartphones. Decide whether you should offer only break-fix and troubleshooting support, or whether it makes sense to broaden the experience to include services such as user training and mobile technology “test drives.”

2. **Select the location**: Carefully consider the location and layout of your walk-up service center. Positioning the facility near a cafeteria, for example, gives employees easy access and allows them to stop in during lunch breaks. Office real estate is always at a premium, but dedicating enough space to enable employees and technicians to interact in a

---

**Figure 3: Walk-up Service Challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing demand &amp; tickets</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the right people</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the business case</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing the service</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining executive support</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner, October 2014.

---

The average smartphone owner uses 26.8 apps per month. — Nielsen

---

9 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
10 “Smartphones: So Many Apps, So Much Time,” Nielsen, July 2014
3. **Staff appropriately**: You might not be able to staff your walk-up service center with existing service desk technicians. Walk-up service experts will likely require specialized knowledge of mobile hardware and software. Keep in mind that the average smartphone owner runs more than 25 apps on a regular basis, according to Nielsen.11 If you do leverage existing resources, invest in the specialized training that will make your walk-up service center successful. “Many organizations use representatives of the Level 2 end-user support team,” Gartner reports. “Others opt for rotating Level 1 individuals through the center, as they often have the right personality and customer skills, and are often very keen to get time off the phones.”12 If you lack the appropriate talent in-house, consider partnering with a service provider that can staff your walk-up service center effectively.

4. **Emphasize customer service**: A key reason for investing in walk-up service centers is to optimize employee satisfaction. The best way to achieve this is by resolving user problems quickly and effectively. But equally important is the overall user experience. Provide a walk-up service center that employees find welcoming and appealing. Deliver walk-up services that employees are eager to take advantage of. Says Gartner: “It is paramount to ensure [technicians are] able to fulfill the duties required in a friendly and customer-centric manner.”13 Make sure staff are skilled in understanding user needs and interacting with them face-to-face, lest your efforts to improve employee satisfaction fall short.

5. **Offer flexible engagement and services**: Walk-up service centers should deliver support the way employees want it. When a technician isn’t available for real-time interaction, such as after normal business hours, employees should be able to drop off and pick up their devices using secure lockers. Consider allowing employees to register for service by swiping their ID badge. Send an email notification when their device is ready for pick up.

6. **Market your services**: Your investment in walk-up services won’t deliver optimal returns if employees don’t know how to take advantage of the offering. That means you need to market the services internally. Work with your internal communications team to deploy a multi-touch promotional campaign.

7. **Measure your results**: Finally, you need to define your objectives and measure your progress. Document your goals, such as a reduction in service desk calls, an improvement in employee satisfaction with IT support, or the ability of technicians to handle a higher number of service tickets. Then be sure to capture data on performance — especially details that might otherwise go unrecorded in face-to-face interactions. Send automated email surveys after employees receive service to measure their experience. Don’t neglect qualitative results: If technicians meet SLAs for response time but are unpleasant to work with, you won’t move the needle on employee satisfaction.

### Get In the Zone

CompuCom provides IT walk-up service centers as a branded offering called Solution Café®. Reflecting proven best practices, Solution Cafés feature up to five “zones” for comprehensive service and support:

- **Greeting Zone**: This is the entry point for scheduled or ad hoc walk-up services. In the Greeting Zone, a Solution Café representative welcomes users, quickly identifies their needs, and connects them with an available technician. For after-hours service, users can use a kiosk to schedule an appointment or enter a service request. They can also access secure lockers where they can drop off and pick up their devices.

- **Technology Zone**: Experts specifically trained to support mobile devices provide hardware fixes, technology refreshes and software upgrades. Depending on the service request and on technician availability, they can provide services in real-time while the user waits. They can also interact one-on-one with users to share tips and best practices.

- **Lounge Zone**: Users can relax or take advantage of shared workstations while their device is being serviced. A well-designed Lounge Zone can give the walk-up service center a consumer-oriented look and feel, while helping to “rebrand” the IT department as up-to-date and customer-centric.

11 “Smartphones: So Many Apps, So Much Time,” Nielsen, July 2014
12 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
13 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
• **Product/Demo Zone**: Walk-up service centers can help employees become familiar with and “test drive” the latest company-sanctioned devices, peripherals and apps. This zone might be stocked with complimentary laptops or mobile equipment that employees can sign out while their devices are being serviced. Intelligent vending machines can make available user-enabling peripherals such as flash drives, cables and headsets. If appropriate, the Product/Demo zone might feature “demo days” when IT vendors can help employees learn about the latest technology.

• **Learning Zone**: The IT department shows users which devices and apps the company supports or recommends as most effective, how to better manage their devices on their own and how to use technology to do their jobs most effectively. The Learning Zone can also be the place where new hires are trained on company technology or existing employees are educated on new functionality.

**Walk Right Up**

For most organizations, there will be two primary objectives for implementing walk-up service centers. First is improving quality of service to users and, hence, employee satisfaction with IT support. Second is optimizing the performance and availability of devices and, along with that, user productivity.

Measuring employee satisfaction should be straightforward, through SLA metrics and user surveys. Capturing an increase in user productivity directly related to your walk-up service centers may be more difficult. But optimal use of mobile devices, with employees spending less time struggling with their smartphones and tablets, will clearly play out in higher worker productivity and effectiveness.

And while a walk-up service center requires upfront investment, you may well achieve an overall reduction in IT support costs. With walk-up technicians able to interact directly with employees, there’s tremendous opportunity to educate users on device troubleshooting, where to find the most effective apps, and how to best leverage technology to do their jobs better. Over time, employees should become more self-sufficient in their use and knowledge of technology. In many cases, a single visit to the walk-up service center results in an end user solving more than one problem. This creates a very pleasant experience for the end user and results in return visits to the center. Organizations may also be able to influence employees in their choice of devices they want to purchase themselves and perhaps use at work.

Early adopters of walk-up service centers can point to these advantages and more. Gartner found that walk-up services can increase the effectiveness of Level 2 technicians, enabling a walk-up expert to take on 15 to 20 support tickets a day where a service desk expert might have handled only five to 10.14 The Gartner findings are reflected in the results achieved in the more than 20 walk-up service centers CompuCom already manages. As one example, a global pharmaceutical company that recently implemented walk-up service centers reports that service desk calls have decreased 25 percent, user satisfaction has increased 10 percent, and technicians are able to handle twice the volume of support tickets compared with their service desk roles. In this case, the organization required end users to use the walk-up service center for “any device you can carry.”

Across industries, in organizations large and small, business is being transformed by the use of emerging technologies. It should be no surprise that IT support is part of that transformation. IT walk-up service centers meet a growing need for innovative IT services. They position the IT department as a visible, customer-centric business partner. They promise to radically improve user satisfaction with IT support. And they help employees take greater advantage of technology to advance the business.

14 “How to Establish IT Walk-Up Services,” Gartner, April 2015
ABOUT COMPUCOM
CompuCom Systems, Inc., a global company headquartered in Dallas, Texas, provides IT managed services, infrastructure solutions, consulting and products to Fortune 1000 companies committed to enhancing their end users’ experience. Founded in 1987, privately held CompuCom employs approximately 11,500 associates. For more information, visit www.compucom.com.

©2016 CompuCom Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. CompuCom, Solution Café and ClientLink are registered trademarks of CompuCom Systems, Inc. All other trademarks and product names mentioned herein are the property of their respective owners in the United States, Canada and/or other countries. The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. All articles quoted herein are quoted with permission of the author.