

# HR's Shifting Service Mindset

How a customer-centric approach can improve efficiency,  
productivity, compliance, and engagement

# Reconsidering HR Priorities

The HR function is at an inflection point. SaaS technologies are enabling organizations to transform the way they attract, hire, engage, and communicate with employees. In 2015, HR Information Systems (HRIS) in the cloud surpassed on-premise solutions for the first time, with over 50 percent of those purchased being SaaS solutions.<sup>1</sup>

The question for most organizations isn't whether to move to the cloud but where to start. Core HR functions typically take priority—payroll, benefits, and HRIS. Depending on an organization's needs, the next steps could be recruiting, performance management, or learning management. Then there's still compensation management, succession management, and employee recognition, just to name a few. The journey usually takes years. And it's usually broken up into phases that require prioritization.

In this mix of choices, it's almost easy to understand how support solutions such as an HR help desk can be seen by some as a "nice to have" rather than a "must have." An HR help desk may seem almost tactical.

In its 2016 Global Human Capital Trends report, Deloitte asserts that HR needs to move toward more "human-centered design" to improve employee productivity, engagement, and satisfaction within HR services.<sup>2</sup> HR help desk services are just one way organizations can begin to approach this opportunity and simultaneously offer other strategic benefits to an organization.

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<sup>1</sup>"HR Systems Survey," 2016, Sierra-Cedar

<sup>2</sup>"Human Capital Trends," 2016, Deloitte

However, implementing an HR help desk solution actually offers a number of strategic benefits to an organization. Some of the benefits include:

### Increasing Efficiency and Productivity

# 51%

Organizations that leverage HR help desk solutions (which are typically included in shared service centers, HR portals, and mobile access) service 51 percent more employees per HR administrative head count than organizations that don't, on average.<sup>1</sup>

### Improving Compliance

In a period of increasing regulation, organizations need to address risks quickly, consistently, and accurately. Case management allows organizations to address issues before they grow into crises.

### Offering a Better Employee Experience

Today's tech-savvy workers can easily and quickly get the answers they need, either on their own from a self-service portal or with a prompt response from the help desk.

### Unlocking Data-driven Insights

# 39%

Today, 39 percent of organizations are now doing some level of HR analytics.<sup>1</sup> Aggregating and analyzing data from self-service portal and help desk usage can yield key insights about the workforce. Data-driven organizations are 26 percent more likely to have a centralized shared service function.<sup>1</sup>

### Complementing HR Technology Solutions

Help desk and self-service functionality can improve the adoption, implementation, and effectiveness of new HR solutions. Employees have a place to turn for questions, and HR staff have more time to focus on more strategic work.

Even though the value to an organization can be significant, the status quo methods of HR case management—typically email and spreadsheets—still prevail in many organizations. In this paper, we'll discuss the pitfalls of the status quo approach, the benefits of finding a better way, and how an improved help desk function empowers HR and engages employees.

# How the Status Quo Fails HR, Businesses, and Employees

HR help requests and questions can be a time-consuming part of the job in HR. “We are always looking to see how can we free up our team and prevent tracking down answers from taking too much time out of our day,” said one HR leader who works for a management consulting firm that Zendesk spoke with.

A request could be something mundane and simple, such as filing a form to change an address. It could be something serious, such as a harassment allegation. Here’s the reality about the HR case management status quo in most organizations: It’s usually a decentralized and ambiguous process. HR questions—large and small—come in via email, phone, or even an offhand question at the water cooler. Does the employee get an answer? Do they get the correct answer? Does the question indicate a larger trend or issue? Too often, there’s no way to know.

If anything gets recorded, it’s usually locked in a spreadsheet—or multiple spreadsheets. This is the typical decentralized approach to HR help desk solutions. This status quo has been such a long-standing model, and the expectations around HR help desks in many organizations are set so low, that many practitioners and employees simply accept it as a reality. However, this painful reality fails HR and the organizations it serves in a number of ways.

“When you have a team of 20 serving 2,000 employees, email doesn’t work anymore. People in HR have a desire to serve employees quickly and accurately while also making the best use of their own time.”

— DAVID HANRAHAN, ZENDESK’S  
VICE PRESIDENT OF HR

### **Inefficiency Wastes HR's Time.**

As one HR process consultant said, “With one client, when we did the analysis, we found tons of time going into putting out fires and answering the same questions. The natural question is: What could we do if we found a technology solution for this?” Aside from the waste of resources, spending time on redundant work is a demotivating experience.

### **Lost Productivity Has a Price Tag.**

When employees can't get the answers they need about payroll, benefits, or anything else that impacts their lives and families outside of work, how can they focus and engage productively at work? When employees can't find the answers they need to their questions, it wastes their time. This hurts productivity, which can cost more than you would think. Imagine if every employee in a 20,000-employee company wasted one hour per year searching for the answer to an HR question instead of working. If we assumed the average employee's hourly wage is \$25, the cost would be a staggering \$500,000 in lost time.

### **Lack of Process Increases Compliance Risks.**

How do organizations know questions are being answered correctly or consistently? Without a process to get questions to experts or draw from established, validated knowledge bases, you don't. In complex, multinational organizations, this risk only multiplies.

### **Poor Processes Hurt Employee Satisfaction with HR Service.**

According to Deloitte, it's imperative for HR to shift from an HR-centric view to an employee-centric view of the world.<sup>3</sup> Why? Although organizations need to engage every generation in the workforce, the importance of the employee experience is especially concerning when it comes to engaging and retaining tech-savvy millennials. According to PwC research, this group will account for nearly half of the global workforce by 2020. Among these workers, technology can be a catalyst for intergenerational conflict in the workplace—especially when millennials feel held back by outdated working styles.<sup>4</sup> “The workforce of the moment consists of employees who expect and want to be able to self-serve,” said Fidelma Butler, HR director for EMEA at Zendesk.

“Employees aren't always sure who they need to talk to. Will they get the right answer? A solution to this problem has always been a high priority for me.”

— HR PRACTITIONER WHO HAS WORKED AT SEVERAL GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS

# Finding a Better Way

Without a doubt, core HR functions such as payroll, benefits, and a master employee data record in an HRIS are natural places for HR functions to adopt technology that will create value for the organization and its employees. HR help desk services are a natural next step.

Research from Sierra-Cedar—one of North America's largest IT services companies with an area of focus on HR technology—shows that for companies that implemented core HR technology and achieved a level of administrative excellence, next steps are typically self-service applications such as employee and manager self-service and other HR help desk functions.<sup>1</sup>

## An effective HR help desk can serve as a critical supplement for many essential aspects of HR operations.

### HR ROLE **Talent (Hiring, Engaging and Retaining)**

**BENEFITS OF A CENTRALIZED HR HELP DESK** Managing and organizing all communications tasks that happen during recruiting, onboarding, periodic communications, and even during the exit process when someone decides to leave.

### HR ROLE **Compliance**

**BENEFITS OF A CENTRALIZED HR HELP DESK** With a self-service help center, employees can find answers for themselves by using a web portal. They can use it to find articles from the employee handbook, summary plan descriptions, or other documents stored by the HR team. HR staff can draw on the same information when responding to help tickets that employees file. This knowledge base protects institutional knowledge and ensures consistency.

### HR ROLE **Strategic Business Partnering**

**BENEFITS OF A CENTRALIZED HR HELP DESK** Being able to complete inefficient and time-consuming tasks quickly frees up HR partners to focus on the more value-adding activities, such as strategic discussions with senior leaders about their long-term talent needs.

### HR ROLE **Process Efficiency**

**BENEFITS OF A CENTRALIZED HR HELP DESK** If an employee can't find answers on their own, it's easy to submit a ticket or help request. Even a small HR team can serve a large number of employees quickly and easily by avoiding:

- **Redundancy:** No more having a question worked on by different staffers at the same time.
- **Lack of coordination and accountability:** Never miss following up with an employee and reduce response times.
- **Inaccurate information:** Everyone can work from the same knowledge base and questions get to the right person in HR to answer.

### HR ROLE **Return on Investment**

**BENEFITS OF A CENTRALIZED HR HELP DESK** A truly centralized HR help desk goes far beyond the benefits of employee self-service. With mobile and other enabling technologies, a centralized HR help desk can service 33 percent more employees on average per HR administrative head count than organizations with basic self-service support.<sup>1</sup>

## Beyond core HR operations, the people and business objectives HR serves can also benefit from improvements to HR self-service and help desk functions through:

### Ease of Use

HR is in the business of people. Easy-to-find and easy-to-understand communication can help strengthen relationships with employees and improve satisfaction. The functionality of help desk technology can also assist if it mirrors how familiar consumer websites work. By doing so, employees will find it easier to access information.

### Multiple Communication Options

Not all employees have access to email and web chat, while some employees simply prefer a text or phone conversation. A variety of communication channels means employees can access information in a way that's easiest for them.

### Time Savings for Everyone

Employees can self-serve as much as possible and contact HR if they need further clarification. Apps within the HR help desk function can even search for additional articles relevant to a particular question and perhaps circumvent the need for additional follow up. With mobile functionality, HR staff can do their work on the go. "When I am on my commute to the office, I can open up the app and review tickets, see what each team member is working on, who has tricky tickets, and who needs help," said Butler.

### Detailed Operational Insights

When everything is in a centralized system, HR leaders can have clear and readily accessible insight into team operations and employee satisfaction. One example in Zendesk is the Pathfinder app, which shows which articles the employee looked at before they contacted the help desk.

### Faster Onboarding and Training for HR Staff

With a database of closed tickets, companies also have a valuable training resource. New hires can read closed tickets, which gives them valuable clues about frequently asked questions. They can increase proficiency and productivity faster and have the right answers to questions when they get new tickets.

"HR help desk solutions increase accountability and make sure that issues are handled in a timely manner. That's completely absent with email and spreadsheets."

— DAVID HANRAHAN, ZENDESK'S VICE PRESIDENT OF HR

### Employee Satisfaction Measurement

The belief that employee satisfaction is improving and having the data to show it is a critical distinction. Pinging an employee with an email after every query delivers that insight. "We have had one employee who has had a negative experience over tickets," said Butler. "We were late getting back to him and got back to him with a question, not an answer." As a result, Butler was able to follow up with that employee, apologize for the delay, and use the episode as a valuable teaching moment for the team.

Today, HR is better off thinking of employees as customers. Sierra-Cedar has picked up on this shift in mindset from administrator to service provider and improving the employee experience. HR's adoption of help desk technology will be key to this outcome.<sup>1</sup> Relationships between HR and employees will be based more on partnership. Likewise, great things can happen when HR chooses the right service delivery partner.

# Conclusion

In its latest report on global human capital trends, Deloitte writes that HR's new digital focus is not simply about technology. It's about changing the way HR serves and supports employees.<sup>2</sup>

The benefits of shifting this mindset can be significant and strategic. Sierra-Cedar found that an effective HR help desk has the potential to support three of the four most critical HR outcomes: HR cost efficiency, employee engagement, and employee and manager productivity.<sup>1</sup>

## Consumer-quality Help Desk Solutions Create a Platform That:

- Provides ongoing innovation through an apps marketplace.
- Offers rapid time to value and implementation in weeks, not months.
- Gives employees access to a variety of channels.
- Allows administrators to manage inquiries through a unified system.
- Allows leaders to oversee the needs of the workforce in a holistic way, glean data-driven insights, and guide business decisions.

The result is technology that everyone—HR, managers, and employees—loves using.

"Digital is the world our employees live in and, if we do not become part of it, then we cannot really do our jobs."

— DELOITTE 2016 HUMAN CAPITAL TRENDS

To see how an HR help desk can benefit your organization with little or no upfront cost, obligation or risk, **contact Zendesk today.**

1 "HR Systems Survey," 2016, Sierra-Cedar

2 "Human Capital Trends," 2016, Deloitte

3 "10 Key Predictions for 2016," 2016, Bersin by Deloitte

4 "The Future of Work: Reshaping the Workplace," 2016