

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Support Workflow

Research Readout

Jonathan Nelson

jonathan.nelson@adhocteam.us

Rebekah Hickey

rebekah.hickey@adhocteam.us

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Background & Goals

Background

Without better understanding how Platform teams' time is spent on customer support work, we don't know what areas we could focus on to make improvements.

A standardized way to log customer support requests would enable us to use that data to identify roadmap initiatives that would give VFS teams the documentation and tools they need to successfully do their work without engaging with Platform.

Two solutions have been designed and these options seek to create a standardized way of logging customer support requests by using Slack workflows.

Background (cont.)

The customer support Slack workflow serves the following purposes:

1. Create a single destination for VFS teams to go for questions and requests of Platform
2. Makes requests/questions for Platform folks that are on-call more clear
3. Allows for easy reporting of customer support requests with the ability to download a csv for all forms completed in a Slack channel

Research goals

- The goal of this user research study is to test prototypes of the two workflow options and understand the usability of the flows.

Hypotheses to be tested

- Option 1 (topics) will align with the majority of use cases and result in faster help for Platform support staff.
- The length of I need help with dropdown will be difficult to scan and make the appropriate selection for VFS team members.
- Platform team members will be able to easily generate a dashboard showing the volume and type of support requests in a given time period.

Methodology

Methodology

Method

We conducted 13 remote interviews and moderated usability tests via Zoom with both Platform and VFS team members.

We tested 2 solutions to determine which aligns with the type of help VFS team members might need and makes Platform support streamlined.

Who we spoke with

- **6 Platform team members**

- 2 FE Tools
- 1 BE Tools
- 1 Ops
- 1 Analytics
- 1 Product Support

- **7 VFS team members**

- 3 FE Engineers
- 3 BE Engineers
- 1 Designer/Researcher

Research Findings

Platform Key Findings

Platform findings

1. Failed Deploys are a major blocker for getting PRs reviewed and approved within 24 hrs.
2. Platform participants were mixed on whether assigning a Topic to a support request is helpful or not.
3. Most Platform participants / teams maintain their own support documents and are willing to contribute to a knowledge base.
4. The workflow was similar to current behavior of Platform support. Workflow displayed information in a clear format.

Platform Findings

Research Findings

1. Failed Deploys are a major blocker for getting PRs reviewed and approved within 24 hrs.

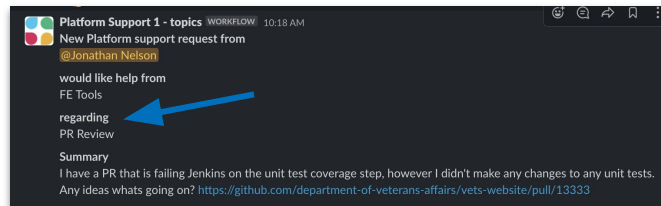
“When something big is going on - like a deploy fails - keeping up with support is hard. The deploy is so fragile and takes so long to complete, sometimes PRs can’t be approved [on time].” -- Platform participant

Research Findings

2. Platform participants were mixed on whether assigning a Topic to a support request is helpful or not.

- Some participants found the Topic unnecessary as the issue is covered by the summary section and could be misleading.

“I mean, it could be a little misleading, because it's asking for PR review but from the summary is really not a PR review...So I could be a little misleading.” -- Platform participant



- Other participants thought the Topic was useful.

“Knowing what they need help with is more important than them identifying ‘who’ they need help from.” -- Platform participant

3. Most Platform teams maintain their own support documents and are willing to contribute to a knowledge base.

- Most participants noted their willingness to continue to update and maintain documentation.

“Yes, team keeps documentation for users and will provide that link when relevant. We have a process for keeping docs up to date with commonly asked questions / issues.” -- Platform participant

- However, documentation can sometimes be neglected.

“It’s something we try to do now. Depending on how slammed you are. Probably gets overlooked more often than not.” -- Platform participant

Research Findings

4. The workflow was similar to current behavior of Platform support. Workflow displayed information in a clear format.

“I think this is great. The formality of filling out a form might encourage users to describe the problem/question more thoroughly.” -- Platform participant

“Will help teams know what requests they can ignore because they are in another team’s area.” -- Platform participant

“It’s simpler.” -- Platform participant

New Platform support request from

@Jonathan Nelson

would like help from

Ops

regarding

SOCKS

Summary

Help! I can't get SOCKS to work and need to QA this work.

VFS Findings

VFS Key Findings

VFS findings

1. Most participants seek support for build issues and PR reviews.
2. VFS participants were mixed on whether selecting a Team is helpful or not. None of the VFS participants were confident in selecting a team.
3. Some VFS participants indicated they aren't always sure what they need help with and selecting a Topic can be difficult.
4. Most participants noted that the preview of the Relevant URL adds a lot of noise to the channel.
5. Some participants wanted a way to indicate priority or urgency.
6. The workflow matched the expectations of most participants. However, some participants noted the workflow was not an improvement.

Research Findings

1. Most participants seek support for build issues and PR reviews.

“Can I get eyes on a PR, it’s been a while.” -- VFS participant

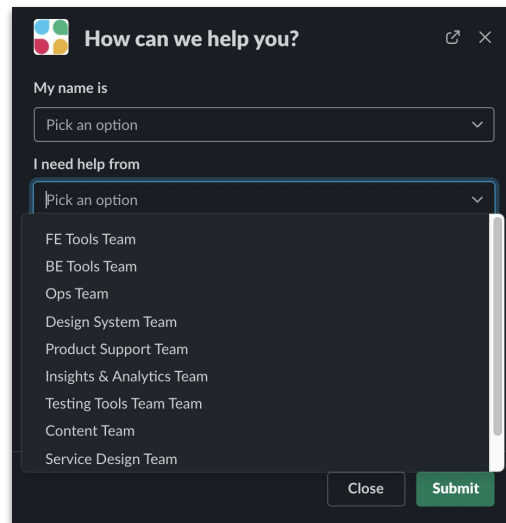
“Build issues mostly. PR pushed up code, build fails, need to contact them to push it through pipe.” -- VFS participant

Research Findings

2. Participants were mixed on whether selecting a Team is helpful or not. None of the VFS participants were confident in selecting a team.

“Tag team...I'm not sure if this is my team, or the platform team. FE tools, product support. Sounds like it's the tools but maybe also product support...” -- VFS participant

“Ah, I don't know. Well, that's the first thing is maybe the deploy didn't go because I didn't pass in which case like back end tools might be the thing, but maybe the deploy didn't go for other reasons like maybe the front end deploy doesn't go because of content...I'm thinking the back end didn't go. I'll start with back end tools, and maybe they'll escalate to ops.” -- VFS participant



The screenshot shows a dark-themed help form titled "How can we help you?". It contains two dropdown menus. The first is labeled "My name is" and has a placeholder "Pick an option". The second is labeled "I need help from" and also has a placeholder "Pick an option". Below the second dropdown is a list of team names: FE Tools Team, BE Tools Team, Ops Team, Design System Team, Product Support Team, Insights & Analytics Team, Testing Tools Team Team, Content Team, and Service Design Team. At the bottom right are "Close" and "Submit" buttons.

How can we help you?

My name is

Pick an option

I need help from

Pick an option

- FE Tools Team
- BE Tools Team
- Ops Team
- Design System Team
- Product Support Team
- Insights & Analytics Team
- Testing Tools Team Team
- Content Team
- Service Design Team

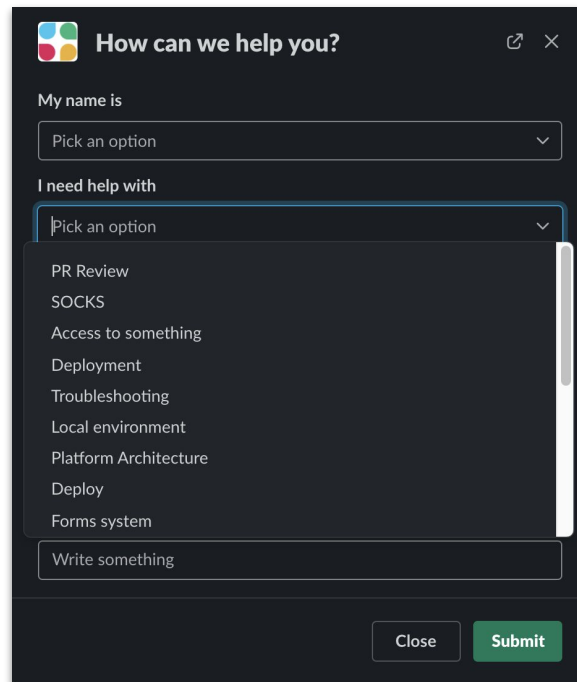
Close Submit

Research Findings

3. Some VFS participants indicated they aren't always sure what they need help with and selecting a Topic can be difficult.

“Would pick ‘Something else’ rather than guess and pick wrong and have it routed to wrong team.” -- VFS participant

“Not sure what value it’s providing me because that info will be in his first sentence in summary. It’s another thing I have to do before I can get help.” -- VFS participant



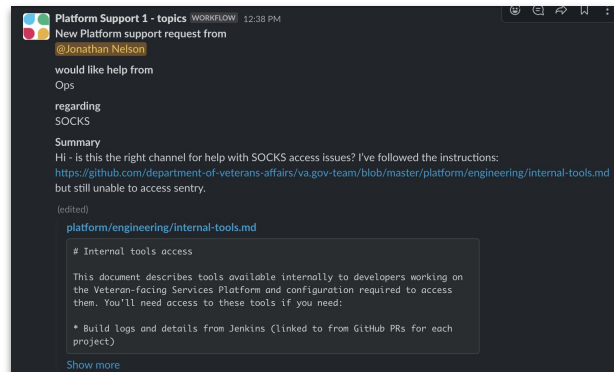
The image shows a dark-themed user interface for a help form. At the top, there is a logo with four colored squares (blue, green, yellow, red) and the text "How can we help you?". Below this, there are two dropdown menus. The first is labeled "My name is" and has a placeholder "Pick an option". The second is labeled "I need help with" and also has a placeholder "Pick an option". Below the second dropdown, there is a list of topics: "PR Review", "SOCKS", "Access to something", "Deployment", "Troubleshooting", "Local environment", "Platform Architecture", "Deploy", and "Forms system". At the bottom of the form, there is a text input field with the placeholder "Write something" and two buttons: "Close" and "Submit".

4. Many participants noted that the preview of the Relevant URL adds a lot of noise to the channel.

- Participants would typically remove previews after posting. Some participants also indicated they would provide multiple URLs and would probably put them in the summary.

“So when you open up and you add links like this Google link I can't get rid of this, this preview. Oops. That's the only thing that I wouldn't like, and some of these, some of these PR people open have like really long text and it just kind of muddies up the channel.” -- VFS participant

“I don't know if I'd ever use it [relevant URL] because I'd just probably put any relevant links in the summary...I have many URLs, I have many links...I need this, I need this document...I very rarely just how one.” -- VFS participant



5. Some participants wanted a way to indicate priority or urgency.

- This is especially true after:
 - seeing the Slackbot response that all requests have a 24 hr response time.
 - realizing the form doesn't actually @mention a Platform team/ team member.

“I would like to be able to indicate whether it’s urgent or not. Some requests aren’t urgent, but when they are, I want to see eyes emoji as soon as possible.” -- VFS participant

Research Findings

6. The workflow matched the expectations of most participants and match VFS current behavior. However, some participants noted the workflow was not an improvement.

- If more information or clarification is needed, participants would start a thread within Slack.

“Someone would take a look and add any questions they had in the thread if they had any.” -- VFS participant

- Some participants noted the workflow was not an improvement.

“I could tag a team member on support to do the same thing today. This is a lateral change, not really a step forward.” -- VFS participant

“I don't know but the step in the right direction. I don't know if it's a step backwards either. I think it's a very much like a lateral step, at this point.” -- VFS participant

Additional Insights

- Lightning icon not currently used today, but behavior was easily learned.
 - VFS participant automatically went to the lightning icon for their second test.
- Most VFS participants routinely check contacts listed in the support channel description to tag the right support person / team.

Recommendations

Recommendations

- Design an experience that allows VFS team members to submit the request quickly and easily.
- Add descriptions of Platform teams to the Tag a Team / I need help fields.
- Refine topics to better meet VFS and Platform team's expectations.
- Ensure the Slack workflow can support multiple URLs.
- Iterate on workflow so Platform support teams / team members will be notified of support requests.

Next steps

Custom Slack App

- Gives us the ability to:
 - Notify and route requests to the appropriate Platform teams
 - Simplifying the form inputs
 - Automatically track data