

A good help desk portal should provide the following:

- » **Contact information for the help desk outlining all the methods a user can use to communicate with the support team:** Instead of just providing an email address, the Contacts section should include a link that creates an email message automatically addressed to the support team.
- » **A link that lets the user create a new support ticket:** The simplest way to do this would be to create a link that opens an email addressed to the support team, with the subject line prefilled to something like “New Support Request.” But a better alternative is to provide a simple form that allows the user to fill in fields to describe the issue. When the user clicks OK, the form creates a new support ticket that can be assigned to a support technician.
- » **A summary of the user’s current and previous support tickets, with links to pull up detailed information about a specific ticket:** For a current ticket, the user should have the ability to add a comment. For a closed ticket, the user should have the ability to reopen the ticket, in case the problem recurs.
- » **Links to open chat sessions or to initiate a remote assistance session.**
- » **A search field that enables the user to search the knowledge base.**
- » **Information about current or upcoming outages, recent upgrades, or other noteworthy stuff.**

If your company has a staff of web developers (or if you happen to be a web developer yourself), you can develop the help desk portal. Otherwise, you can find plenty of commercial options that will meet this need. (For more information, see the section “Using Help Desk Management Software” later in this chapter.)

Using Satisfaction Surveys

It’s always a good idea to follow up on every support request with a brief survey asking the user to rate his or her satisfaction with the help desk’s support. The easiest way to do this is to follow up with an email that contains a link to a survey page. Note that the survey should be short — just a few questions that can be shown on a single page.