ITIL – A guide to request fulfilment

What is a service request?

The term service request is used as a generic description for many, varying types of request from users that are made to the IT department. Many of these service requests are actually small changes – low risk, frequently occurring, low cost, etc. Examples of service requests include a request to install an additional software application onto a particular workstation, a request to relocate some items of desktop equipment or maybe just a question requiring information. Their size, frequency and low risk nature means that they are more appropriately handled by a separate process, rather than being allowed to congest the normal incident and change management processes. This process is request fulfilment.

The purpose and scope of request fulfilment

Request fulfilment is the process of dealing with service requests from the users. The objectives of the request fulfilment process include:

- To provide a channel for users to request and receive standard services for which a pre-defined approval and qualification process exists
- To provide information to users and customers about the availability of services and the procedure for obtaining them
- To source and deliver the components of requested standard services (e.g. licences and software media)
- To assist with general information, complaints or comments

The process needed to fulfil a request will vary depending upon what is being requested but can usually be broken down into a set of activities that have to be performed.

Requests should be handled differently to Incidents – an Incident is usually an unplanned event whereas a service request is usually something that can and should be planned.

In an organisation where large numbers of service requests have to be handled, and where the actions to be taken to fulfil those requests are very varied or specialized, it may be appropriate to handle service requests as a completely separate work stream – and to record and manage them as a separate record type.

Many service requests can and should be handled by the Service Desk so long as they have sufficient resource, time, tools and skills.

Value to the business/organisation of request fulfilment

The value of request fulfilment is to provide quick and effective access to standard services which users can use to improve their productivity or the quality of business services and products.

Request fulfilment reduces the bureaucracy involved in requesting and receiving access to existing or new services, thus reducing the cost of providing these services. Centralising the process also increases the level of control over these services.

The principles of request fulfilment

Many service requests will be frequently recurring, so a predefined process/procedure can be devised to include the stages needed to fulfil the request, the individuals or support groups involved, target timescales and escalation paths.

The ownership of service requests resides with the Service Desk, which monitors, escalates, dispatches, and often fulfils user requests.

The activities of request fulfilment

Menu selection

Service requests can be requested by users via the Service Desk; however, request fulfilment offers the opportunity to use self help practices where users can generate a service request themselves using technology that links into service management tools. Users should be offered a menu type selection via a web interface, so that they can select and input details of service requests from a pre-defined list.

Financial approval

Some service requests may need an additional step to add financial approval. The user may need to seek approval up their management/financial chain.

Other approval

Some service requests may need further approval such as compliance related or wider business approval. Request fulfilment must have the ability to define and check such approvals where needed.

Fulfilment

The actual fulfilment activity/activities will depend upon the nature of the service request.

Some simpler requests may be completed by the Service Desk, acting as first line support, while others will have to be forwarded to specialist groups and/or suppliers for fulfilment.

Closure

When the service request has been fulfilled it must be referred back to the Service Desk for closure. The Service Desk should check that the user is satisfied with the outcome before closure takes place.

Metrics

The metrics needed to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of request fulfilment will include the following:

- The total number of service requests (for trend analysis)
- The breakdown of service requests at each stage (e.g. logged, work in progress, closed, etc.)
- The size of the current backlog of outstanding service requests
- The mean elapsed time for handling each type of service request
- The number and percentage of service requests completed within agreed target times
- The average cost per type of service request
- The level of client satisfaction with the handling of service requests (as measured in some form of satisfaction survey)

Each metric will need to be broken down by service request type, and for a stated period.