





Gamifying the Service Desk

Real value beyond the hype

Barclay Rae







Introduction

Gamification is being used and promoted more and more as a means with which to manage and motivate, as well as monitor, staff performance – and in particular in Service Desks and the IT support industry.

Whilst this looks an interesting and useful management tool, many staff and managers still see this is a 'dangerous trivialisation' of work and motivation, which 'shouldn't be taken seriously'.

Yet, we also hear that most young people (generation Y) coming into work are completely accustomed to using technology with this 'gaming' element as a key component. So isn't gamification a great idea to help motivate people in what are often dull jobs using even duller systems?

Many IT Systems for business tasks and work are now using 'social' elements that were similarly regarded as trivial just a few years ago, so why shouldn't the same be the case with gamification?

This paper sets out these issues and arguments and provides practical ideas and advice around gamification – what it is; how it can be used effectively; and also how to manage and deal with the issue and challenges that it raises.





2 What do we mean by 'gamification'?

This is an essential point to clarify – there is a lot of misunderstanding and misconception around what 'gamification' actually means.

The application of typical elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service: (OUP – Oxford Dictionaries)

Gamification is the use of game thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts to engage users in solving problems. (Wikipedia)

There are many similar definitions – in essence the concept is around applying the approach and mechanisms of games to the workplace, to improve the quality of interaction and engagement by those working there. This in turn improves personal job satisfaction and reward, as well as providing a more efficient and quality delivery of operations and services. It also brings a bit of fun and interest to the workplace, which isn't always terribly exciting or engaging – certainly for the Generation Y people coming into work who are used to living in rich, vivid game environments.

Gamification is not new - a very simple example of this already in place would be for sales and commission – the more sales a person makes, the more money that they earn. At home of course we use gamification often with our children – giving them points and scores for good behaviour and for completing shared family tasks, as well as using this as means to identify and discourage unacceptable behaviour and quality of work.

Educational institutions of course also use this approach to help motivate and also manage behaviour amongst children and classes, combining points systems (for behavioural and academic performance) that start with individual children and then roll up into class, grade and school level results.

2.1 How is gamification used in the workplace?

In recent years the growth and global acceptance and engagement with technology games has created both the environment and the opportunity to use this approach – using points, badges, ratings, open sharing of ratings and levels – for individual and team performance management and monitoring.





Retail and other businesses have employed gamification tools and created loyalty schemes and points systems for some time – supermarkets, airlines, credit cards, coffee shops – as a means to 'lock in' customers and ensure that they have additional motivation to choose their products over others.

The growing development use of personal tools for measuring and monitoring personal fitness, health, activity and beyond (e.g. monitoring heart rates, speech tone, stress levels, blood sugar etc.) is also leading the way to widen the scope of gamified activities – as well as blurring the lines of delineation between work and personal life.

Many social media interactions also are in effect using game elements – i.e. acquiring Twitter or Facebook followers/friends, recommendations, likes, re-tweets, Foursquare check-ins. These platforms also then bring in personal and work related 'stats' from monitoring tools as part of an individual's 'gamified brand' – so 'Here's my stats from Twitter this week – 40 new followers, 15 retweets', 'today I walked 12,500 steps and burned 500 calories', 'My Klout score just went up to 65' etc.

So if we are getting used to using gamification not only in games, but in our personal lives, surely we can use it to our advantage in our working lives too? – Plus this should help bring benefits to the organisations we work for?

In many operational units such as Call Centres and work processing teams, gamification can be used to set and manage targets for delivery, turnaround times, volumes of calls and transactions handled, SLAs and other Key Performance Indicators.

In the IT Support and Service Desk environment this can be translated into a number of similar potential activities such as; call handling, request processing, incident resolution, customer satisfaction scoring, knowledgebase building, and tool logging/updating.

In essence, if we can use tools and simple measurement techniques (not creating a major overhead) to provide multi-level and real-time performance monitoring, then this should help to improve individual and Service Desk team performance, motivation and job satisfaction – simple right?

There are of course many levels of this and also a number of challenges to face – particularly from a cultural and acceptance perspective, as many are still sceptical about the nature of gamification and, even more darkly, the driving forces behind it.

A common response is 'that might be OK for kids at school and teenagers on their X-Boxes but its inappropriate and patronising for business and won't work in our organisations'.





2.2 Does gamification work?

Research and case Study data *on value and benefits is expansive and ever growing in this area and generally supports the theory that gamification can help to improve motivation and business performance, although this depends on the quality of implementation and has demographic variations – generally it's less popular with Generation X and older age groups, more acceptable in Generation Y and younger groups.

Some notable recent academic research** has identified that this is the case and that at not only does gamification help to improve performance but it does not affect 'intrinsic motivation'

'It seems that the implementation of points, levels, and leaderboards is a viable means to promote specific user behavior in non-game contexts.'

So it looks like it works and can be a real benefit. Whilst many organisations are embracing gamification in some way, there are still many sceptics who don't like or understand it and are still not inclined to investigate or implement it.

The GEN Y gamified generation is now 25% of the total workforce and this number will obviously continue to grow – so gamification is here to stay. Let's take a closer look at the machinery of gamification in order to dispel some of the myths.

2.3 Gamification Elements

There are 3 main areas of activity that crop up in most of the existing knowledge on gamification:

- 1. Performance
- 2. Achievement
- 3. Social Interaction





1. Real-time performance

We know that people need to have clear targets and goals set – people also appreciate having a continual process of feedback and progress. Often these things are not clear and transparent to staff and there is little enthusiasm for the old management technique of an annual appraisal – particularly since we all live in a 24 hour real time world.

Gamification allows the constant playback of target-based progress to be fed to individuals as well as being 'rolled up' for the organisation. This can benefit the individual in terms of their performance improvement and job satisfaction, as well as providing the organisation with more dynamic information about its performance – so it's a good management tool too.

2. Personal skills and achievement

Badges are the visible manifestation for many of their 'levels' achieved, which carries reputation, position and mastery connotations to participants. This can be developed for technical/business training, induction/on-boarding and as a means for the organisation to have clear visibility of skill levels across the team.

3. Social Behaviour and interaction

The combination of Social Media and gamified environments lead to a culture of competition, peer-group awareness and collaboration. Teams can be developed and cross-group interaction improved via a culture of transparent and positive competition.

Gamification uses Game Thinking to bring together key human drivers such as rewards and status, recognition and competition, self-development and self-expression.

This is combined with Game Mechanics like points, badges, attainment levels, personal challenges and real-time leader boards.

Both of these elements are then incorporated into operational business systems, often using social interfaces and actions (e.g. to 'like', 'watch', 'approve'). As a result many traditional operational activities then become 'gamified' – e.g. individual performance against SLAs, or call answering becomes an activity that can earn points, badges and status for Service Desk analysts, plus the organisation has visibility over team performance.





How can this be applied in Service Desks and across ITSM?

3.1 Service Desks

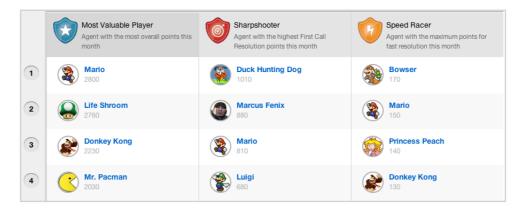
As with Call/Contact centres and other operational teams, gamification can be used to provide real-time monitoring and rolled-up metrics on individual and team performance.

These can be set as targets and reviewed dynamically for improved service quality and staff development. Service Desk staff can view their own can view their own scorecards, set against various levels of performance target – e.g. incident level, customer feedback level, task and proactive action level, project and goal level. In turn manager can then set clear and practical tasks at various levels and view ongoing performance in real time to review and manage performance.

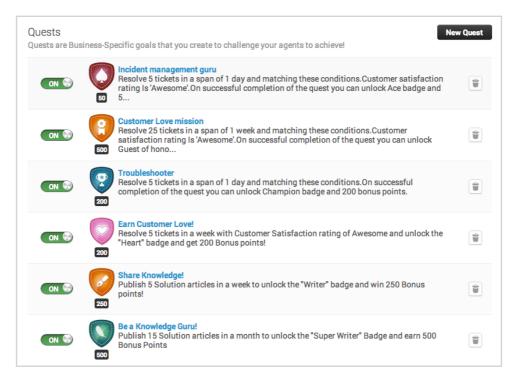
So there could be simple Service Desk targets set for:

- Telephone answering speed
- Volumes of call handled
- Volumes of emails/portal tickets handled
- Incident volumes handled
- Average Incident handling/resolution times
- Call Quality (scored by manager/peers)
- Customer Satisfaction from feedback
- First Call resolution
- Numbers of tips / routines produced
- Volume and quality of knowledge articles
- On target/exceeded SLA targets
- Compliments





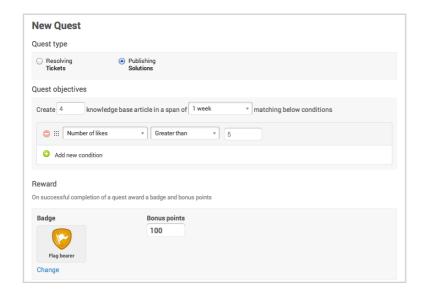
These can then be used on a real time basis by individuals to track their progress, and by management to review and monitor individual and team performance. For team members and managers this removes all uncertainty and drudgery from the appraisal process.



Individuals could have scores kept and updated for levels of proficiency and quality (replacing clunky Skills Matrices), with e.g.

Technical Induction and proficiency badges
Process proficiency badges – e.g. for specified processes or incident types
Summed up performance levels
Project tasks completed – targets met
Peer and customer feedback





Gamification is ideal for Service Desk operations – particularly larger desks, where it is difficult to clearly see what everybody is doing and e.g. where the skills shortages are. It's also useful in smaller desks too as a means of setting clear targets and expectations and then measuring these in a motivational and transparent way.

Overall gamification provides a fantastic opportunity for Service Desks and their

IT/ITSM colleagues to work better together – i.e. to collaborate. Real-time monitoring, combined with competition and the capability to 'bundle' activities into targets and scorecards, provides an open and transparent environment in which to work together to deliver a single customer experience.

The greatest opportunity from gamification across ITSM however is - due to the combination of transparency, competition and real time management – the opportunity to make ITSM, IT governance and management fun and interesting!

Many ITSM operations and projects fail due to the lack of adherence to simple process and task changes – which can be ignored or subverted by groups beyond the service desk. A gamified environment will expose this quickly and objectively (i.e. without direct personal acrimony).

E.g. support groups may have OLAs to fix incidents or respond to requests or to complete incident tickets to a certain standard – for whatever reason they may choose not to follow these standards, and worse still, get away with this. With traditional historical reporting these issues don't get spotted and escalated to senior management early enough and often these issues go unresolved.

A gamified environment will make these would force a higher level of compliance from all teams.

Improvements in governance and quality should be seen by all stakeholders – and particularly by management who may be hesitating about using gamification – as a key benefit.





3.2 Across ITSM

It's clear that the principle of gamifying daily work could be extended to other areas and processes across ITSM so e.g. for handling changes and requests, adding and updating Asset/CMDB records, reducing the number of incidents, pushing resolution to the front line etc.

The challenge for any organisation is not so much about what could be gamified, but more around how to achieve this from a cultural perspective. Also there are some areas and situations where gamification is not appropriate – the key is sorting out when and where it is right to apply gamification.

When is gamification appropriate/inappropriate at the Service Desk?

As with any incentive or monitoring based scheme, the goal is ultimately to drive certain desired changes in behaviour and performance. The simple rule of thumb must be that gamification should only be used where it will deliver these changes without significant cost in other areas – e.g. morale, staff attrition, industrial action, litigation.

Most importantly gamification must be set within the scope of positive customer satisfaction and customer experience. There is no point in implementing a gamified system that drives inappropriate or detrimental service levels and experience to the customer.

So e.g. whilst it may be great for morale and motivation if staff members are motivated to answer calls quickly, or for a set period of time, this would not be appropriate if this detracts from the overall service and experience that is needed for the customer.

Gamification must be tested to ensure that it does not drive the wrong behaviours from staff – it must be set as a tool in the overall customer experience journey, not as an individual point-solution or event that is detrimental to that experience.

Gamification must also be set in the context of a positive culture of continual improvement, not a 'Victorian workhouse' where poor performance is punished and creativity or diversity of opinion is not encouraged. It should not be seen as a stick to and the organisation to work better and in a more rewarding and engaging environment. So in ITSM terms, gamification is an excellent tool to deliver real practical CSI.





What are the challenges in making gamification work?

It should be clear from the points made above that gamification is a great opportunity for improvement, but that it also requires careful thought and planning, as well as sensitivity to the needs, concerns and capabilities of the people who will be 'gamified'.

Many people working in IT see it as a patronising and autocratic imposition by management – as they see themselves as professionals who do not need to be 'nannied' or managed like schoolchildren. That may very well be the case in some situations and management should at very least be aware and respectful of their own senior and experienced staff.

However, most of these individuals will probably go home at night and play some sort of computer games and so they will be used to the environment. In addition there will always be room for improvement in service performance, where many IT organisations are still organised in technical silos and key elements of end-to-end service delivery and customer experience are simply not appreciated by individuals or individual technical; teams. Introducing appropriate levels of competition and performance indicators across teams and for all IT staff can usually help to increase performance levels as well as sort out many issues and cultural challenges.

Understanding culture is the key to successful gamification – this needs some awareness of current challenges and a clear set of aspirational guidelines as to the sort of IT organisation that is being worked towards.

As a general tip, it is usually easier to implement gamification in a service desk environment that to the whole of and IT organisation – staff members are generally younger and also the working environment is more accustomed to metrics and SLA targets in the workplace. So it's a good approach to introduce this tactically in the Service Desk first as a means of proving value and results.





What are the normal objections/concerns regarding gamification? How can these be answered?

Objections

This is for kids, not for me, I'm a professional

This will drive the wrong behaviours from our staff

We don't need measures and badges to motivate us

This will cost a lot of money and be an overhead to manage

How can we make older and more senior people follow this

Responses

Well you use games outside of work right?

But also are you sure that you can't improve on quality and motivation, as well as being able to measure and monitor the things (like customer experience) that really matter?

Only if it is poorly implemented – i.e. if the wrong type of targets are set and customer experience is not a driver

That's fine if everything is working to optimum levels – can you prove this?

If not then this is worth trying to improve quality and visibility of IT service and service issues

It will usually save money by improving Service Desk quality and is easy to manage once set up – i.e. automated, real-time

If the rest of the Service Desk team is younger and more game-accustomed, then they should still give it a try – but they need to be carefully supported

It may not be appropriate of course – it's not for everyone





It will create a culture of selfish behavio	ur
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Not if it's poorly or insensitively implemented

Selfish behaviour will be exposed and outlawed via gamification

We're working very well thank you

Can you prove that in a consistent and transparent way across the organisation?

Are there clear customer / business metrics that support that? If not then its worth trying a new approach

How can an organisation adopt gamification?

Clearly this is not something that can be just dropped unplanned on an organisation – although it is now relatively straightforward with integrated tools to adopt some aspects of this – e.g. in the Service Desk and introduce the concept gradually to show some value.

As a guide, since there are opportunities to combine tasks and goals into individual bundles, gamification can be introduced in an holistic way to cover a variety of an individuals' tasks.

As mentioned care should be taken in terms of how to introduce and sell the concept – by making the goal and workings of the process clear and transparent. Here are some questions to consider as a checklist before implementation:

- 1. What issues would we want to fix with gamification?
- 2. Create a CSI register to prioritise these issues
- 3. What benefits will we expect to receive? Financial, morale, customer satisfaction
- 4. Is there clear and visible support from management for this? Do they understand and see the value? If not they need to sell to them
- 5. What/Who will be the key operational areas and people affected?





- 6. Clarify the 'bundle' of activities that might be gamified e.g. telephony, incident handling, FCR, Customer Feedback, project targets
- 7. Review the cultural demographic of the team and readiness for gamification
- 8. Identify areas that may resist this and plan mitigating actions, education, communications
- 9. Define and socialise the success criteria for the project
- 10. Identify a short trial area to test before full implementation review results, lessons learned and promote successes
- 11. Identify market options for tools before implementation
- 12. Get started!

What sort of benefits and value can be achieved?

There are many case studies* and research papers** available on the actual benefits achieved via gamification; productivity, cost reduction, increased profitability agility/speed of implementation, improved people engagement and morale, better teamwork, improved management, visibility of metrics and targets, simplification.

For Service Desks and ITSM the benefits are simple:

- Better more rounded metrics on which to measure performance staff and Service Desk
- Improved work culture through visibility and real time performance measurement
- Ability to combine service desk tasks with project goals and bundle these for individuals
- A practical model for delivering Continual Service Improvement across IT/ITSM processes
- Opportunity to drive governance across an IT organisation
- Automation and improvements in some time-consuming and difficult management tasks e.g. appraisal
- Provide a more enjoyable working environment we all know that Service Desks are stressful workplaces!





The key point is that there is no single magic bullet benefit or business metric that comes from gamification. You need to be clear on your issues and expected benefits, which will vary by organisation.

This is a great opportunity to develop and embed CSI into your organisation and that requires awareness and understanding of the wider service 'bundle' of activities and tasks, not simply individual activities that are automated and gamified in isolation.

So gamification needs a holistic approach – however you can start small on the Service Desk to show some value!

3.8 What are the potential future applications and developments in this area?

As we have noted, the Service Desk is an ideal place to start for IT, however there are many more areas that can be gamified:

ITIL/ITSM processes - problem creation/updating, change approval/updating/Cl updating/SLA achievement / knowledge article creation/updating

IT Efficiency – achievement of: financial goals, (e.g. cost per call)/service delivery (SLAs) met, Service Improvement goals (reduction in incidents, reduction in fix times), improvements in use of knowledge management and self service

Customer experience – customer approvals ratings, Net Promoter Score ratings, compliments, use of self service, suggestions, complaints (a sign of engagement)

Areas beyond IT/ITSM – more organisations are extending the use of ITSM processes and tools for collaboration and in many cases * these are being gamified.

'Service Management' as a practise is extending to other internal departments like HR, Finance, Marketing, facilities. Often in the past this has been attempted but the nature of the tool sets and the processes around them has been clunky and not user-friendly.

With gamification there is a great opportunity to open up and extend these activities on a consolidated platform and to use tools such as gamification and social interfaces to make this attractive and user-friendly.





So, there are many opportunities for applying gamification across the organisation – let's start by focussing on the Service Desk!

Barclay Rae September 2014

3.9

Specific Service Desk examples where gamification can improve quality

Incident and SLA management

Team members can be allocated points for delivering to KPIs, such as call answering, incident logging, call closing, customer feedback etc. Points can vary in terms of expected delivery, delivery over expectations and of course under-delivery. This provides a means to track performance in real time for managers and the staff member themselves, as well as their peers if appropriate.

So this provides an incentive and also dynamic environment for the individual, as well as providing a workplace model that establishes clear expectations for all staff – all of which should help to deliver high quality service to customers.

Development and use of Knowledge

Individuals can be encouraged to use their initiative to define and implement knowledge articles – this of course helps future resolutions and can speed up the service to customers. Points can be achieved by delivering these and also having voting take place by peers on the quality and effectiveness of the articles.

Bundles of activities for success and status

All of the above examples can be defined in 'bundles' for each team member – e.g. creating articles, solving incidents within SLA, carrying out project and background tasks, getting positive feedback from customers, management and peers. The points here can then be used to achieve badges, proficiency levels and 'guru' status in specific areas as well as becoming rounded members of staff across disciplines.

So the rolled up points and status levels provide a dynamic and interesting means to build objectives, goals and to then manage performance for the individuals and whole team.





4 References

*Research - ROI Examples

- 1. **SAP:** The SAP Community Network regamified its already-mature reputation system, increasing usage by 400% and community feedback by 96%"
- **2. SAP Streamwork:** added gamification in brainstorming groups and grew generated ideas by 58%
- **3. Onmicare:** introduces gamification to its IT service desk, getting a 100% participation rate from teams members
- **4. Astra Zeneca:** gamified medicine training gets 97% of their large network of agents to participate, with a 99% Completion Rate
- **5. Callogix:** reduces attrition by 50% and absenteeism by 80%. The company saves \$380,000 per year
- **6. Slalom Consulting:** participation of employee name recognition program increased from 5% to 90%, and recognition scores improved from 45% to 89%
- **7. Galderma:** pharmaceutical company, uses gamification to train their sales division regarding new products. Despite the voluntary participation, nearly 92% of targeted employees ended up playing
- **8. Deloitte:** leverages mobile SDK along with a mobile social rewards program with Yammer to bring on 50K of their 200K Consultants to socialize and share knowledge with each other
- **9. Spotify and Living Social:** replaced annual reviews with a mobile, gamified solution with over 90% of employees participating voluntarily
- **10. Objective Logistics:** the company motivates the employees through behavioral rewards and increases their profit margin by 40%
- **11. Inside view:** gamifies their employee social media usage an dincreased Twitter updates by 312%
- **12. Keas:** employment wellness program that increased employee engagement with healthy activities by 10,000% (100x)
- **13. Danske Statsbaner:** through their "Engaged" platform, employees share their actions that support the value and strategy of the company, resulting in 92% positive ratings in content





- **14. DWP:** Saved up to \$41 million by letting employees send and discuss ideas to improve their work environments
- **15. Google:** Designed a Travel Expense System resulting in close to 100% of employee compliance for travel expenses
- **16. Deloitte:** Training programs that are gamified took 50% less time to complete and massively improved long-term engagement
- **17. Engine Yard:** Increased the response rate for its customer service representatives by 40% after posting response-time leaders to all employees
- **18. Nextjump:** Uses gamification to get 67% of their employees to go to the gym
- **19. Bluewolf:** Gamified online conversations and posting increased employee community activity by 57%
- **20. Ford Canada:** Gamified its learning portal for employees and increased actions per user by 100% within 5 weeks
- **21. Wellivolution:** Team gamified system resulted in 80% of employees participating in at least one wellness program, and 50% of employees dropped smoking behavioral
- **22. Allstate:** Saved \$18 Million per year by adapting a gamified social innovation platform
- **23. Idea Street:** The Department of work In UK used game mechanics to get 120,000 people to contribute 4000 ideas, with 63 of them implemented in the marketing department
- **24. EMC RAMP:** With their gamification platform, the company rewarded positive behavior from employees, partners and customers which led to a 10% increase in documentation, 40% more videos watched and 15% more discussions
- **Do points, levels and leaderboards harm intrinsic motivation?: An empirical analysis of common gamification elements Authors: Elisa D.Mekler (University of Basel, switzerland), Florian Bruhlmann (University of Basel, Switzerland), Klaus Opwis (University of Basel, Switzerland), Alexandre N.Tuch (University of Basel, Switzerland and University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

Abstract

It is heavily debated within the gamification community whether specific game elements may actually undermine users' intrinsic motivation. This online experiment examined the effects of three commonly employed game design elements - points, leaderboard, levels - on users' performance, intrinsic motivation, perceived autonomy





and competence in an image annotation task. Implementation of these game elements significantly increased performance, but did not affect perceived autonomy, competence or intrinsic motivation. Our findings suggest that points, levels and leaderboards by themselves neither make nor break users' intrinsic motivation in non-game contexts. Instead, it is assumed that they act as progress indicators, guiding and enhancing user performance. While more research on the contextual factors that may potentially mediate the effects of game elements on intrinsic motivation is required, it seems that the implementation of points, levels, and leaderboards is a viable means to promote specific user behavior in non-game contexts.





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Barclay delivers strategic consultancy and mentoring, as well as media analyst services to the ITSM industry. He created 'ITSMGoodness' – a set of practical steps and guidelines for success.

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Barclay provides analyst services to the ITSMReview – reviewing market products and vendors. Current reviews are on Service Catalogue and knowledge management. He also delivers media content for ITSM review, including a podcast and TV interviews – following on from previous experience on ITSMTV and the ITSM rest of the world podcast.

He is also a regular speaker at conferences in the industry, in the UK and globally, including, SITS, SDI, itSMF, Pink Elephant, Fusion, UCISA, BCS and others. Details of forthcoming speaking engagements are on the website homepage.





About Freshservice

Freshservice is an online service desk that takes a fresh approach to ITIL. A plug and play solution for organisations that are trying to make everyday IT operations simpler and more efficient, Freshservice boasts of powerful ticketing and asset management capabilities on top of a refreshing user experience. With ITIL best practices out of the box to help IT organisations and professionals get started quickly, Freshservice gives organisations the ability to scale their IT support by leveraging the asset discovery module and CMDB.

Freshservice has been designed to take advantage of the SaaS and cloud platform, turning your focus to things that matter most - delivery exceptional customer service.

To make things even simpler, Freshservice is also integrated with other popular apps like Google Apps, Dropbox, Freshbooks, Harvest, Pivotal Tracker, SurveyMonkey and more. From the makers of popular customer support software Freshdesk, Freshservice is the IT service desk of the future, on a quest to take the boring out of IT.

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