



**University of San Diego's
2007 Help Desk Survey**

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Purpose

This survey came about due to the University of San Diego's (USD) Information Technology Services' seeking to improve their Technical Support Center by examining the best practices of similar organizations. After looking through the Help Desk Institute's information and surveys such as the MIT-Stanford Help Desk Benchmarking (<http://web.mit.edu/ist/about/benchmarking/index.html>) it became apparent that the existing data was not broken down by campus size.

The survey was created after looking through similar surveys and discussing which questions were most relevant to the USD Tech Support Center (TSC). The intent was to create a brief survey that would not greatly encumber respondents while still providing the key useful information that the TSC was seeking. Relevant questions were narrowed down to six topics: Help Desk Layout, Budget, Hours of Support, Support Staff, Success Criteria, Services Charged For, and Customer Interaction.

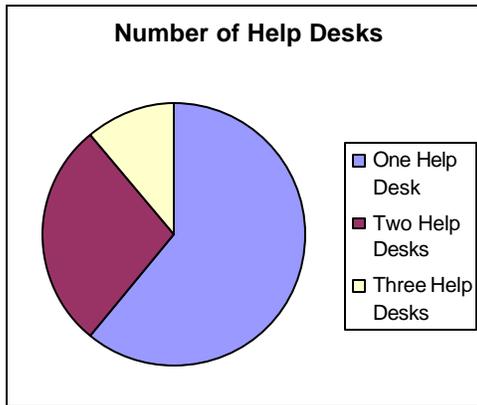
Note that this report was prepared by Chris Palmer during an internship at the University of San Diego. This report has not been sanctioned by the University, nor should any facts or opinions stated here be taken as representing the University of San Diego. While much credit is due to other people, all mistakes remain the responsibility of the author.

Participating Organizations

After ranking Colleges and Universities, mainly on the size of their undergraduate student body, twenty-nine campuses were found to be similar to the University of San Diego. The survey was sent to all twenty-nine, of which seventeen responded. For purposes of this report, information from the University of San Diego is also included, bringing the total number of participating organizations to eighteen.

Thank you to all who responded! Names and information have been removed from this public version, but the impressive willingness of the academic support community to help with something like this can not be overstated. Also thanks to Loraine Graves for the knowledge, inspiration and helping hands that she provided and to Rosy Vacchi for starting this whole project and then lending support, help and editing along the way.

Help Desk Layout



Respondents With One Help Desk: 61%
Respondents With Two Help Desks: 28%
Respondents With Three Help Desks: 11%

Seven of the respondents (39%), reported that they had more than one help desk. Most of those with multiple help desks did this either due to having more than one physical campus or because they provided a walk-in help desk which was separate from the call center. For this report, call centers were also counted as help desks.

The majority of campuses support a single help desk, with three of those having recently combined two help desks into one. In all three cases, this was combining the Faculty/Staff and Student help desks from separate facilities into one.

Budget

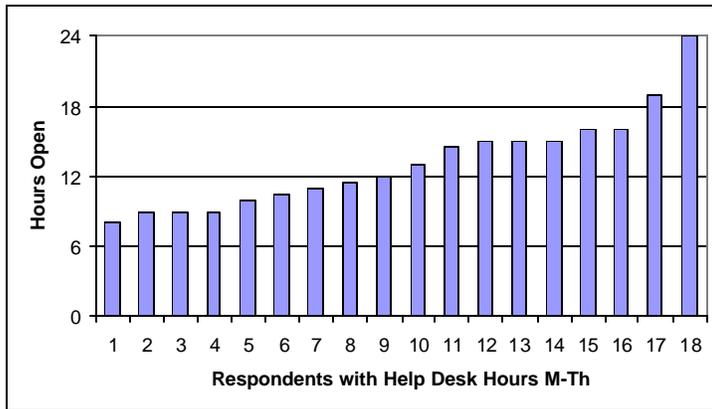
There was some debate about including a question on budgets when this survey was being created. There was some uncertainty about the willingness of other organizations to share this data. While most organizations gave some feedback to this question, only three were able and willing to share complete numbers, and even these were difficult to compare. Most schools expressed an interest in responding but many simply don't break out this information from their overall IT or other budgets. In addition, shared employees often make these calculations difficult.

There were not enough responses to find much in the way of trends. Annual budgets ranged from \$450,000 - \$900,000, although there were indications that at least a couple of schools would have had budgets lower than this if the full numbers had been available. The reported budgets ranged between 0.2% and 0.4% of the schools endowment.

Hours of Support

Help desks from different organizations are open for fairly similar times of the day. Every respondent but one used the same open and close times they had on Monday for Tuesday through Thursday. The one exception's help desk remains open an extra hour on Wednesday. This exception has been ignored, and the hours for Monday through Thursday are based on Monday's data.

Help Desk Hours: Monday – Thursday



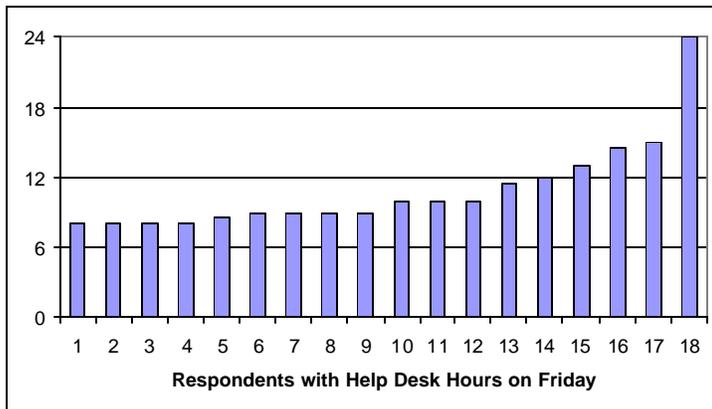
Median Open Time: 8am
 Median Close Time: 7pm
 Average Hours Open: 13.2
 Median Hours Open: 12.5

As shown in this and subsequent graphs, one of the respondent schools runs a help desk that is open twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

The weekday open hours were the most similar. Almost all schools opened their help desks between 7am and 9am and remained open at least to cover normal business hours. The variation in hours open mainly reflects the different closing times (ranging from 4:30pm to 2am).

The weekday open hours

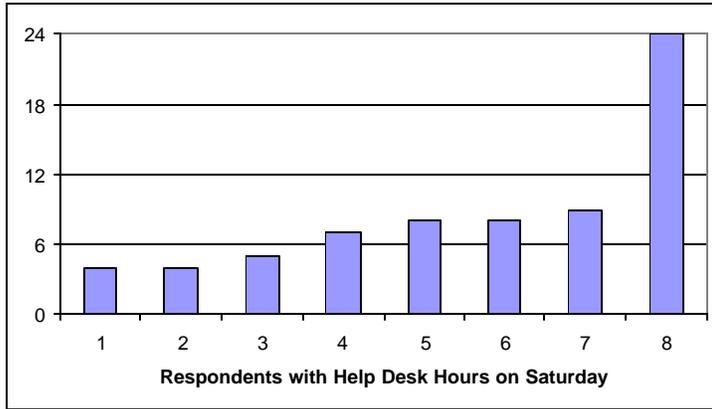
Help Desk Hours: Friday



Median Open Time: 8am
 Median Close Time: 5pm
 Average Hours Open: 10.9
 Median Hours Open: 9.5

Most help desks close early on Fridays, often around 5pm when the faculty and staff are done.

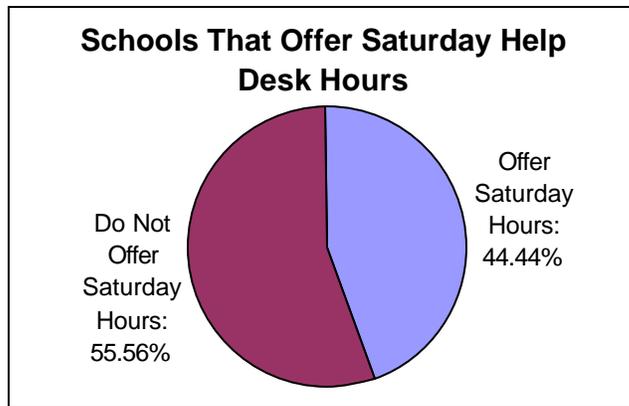
Help Desk Hours: Saturday



Median Open Time: 9am
 Median Close Time: 5pm
 Average Hours Open: 8.6
 Median Hours Open: 7.5

Less than half of the respondents noted that their help desks are open on Saturdays. Metrics above represent only those help desks that are open on Saturdays.

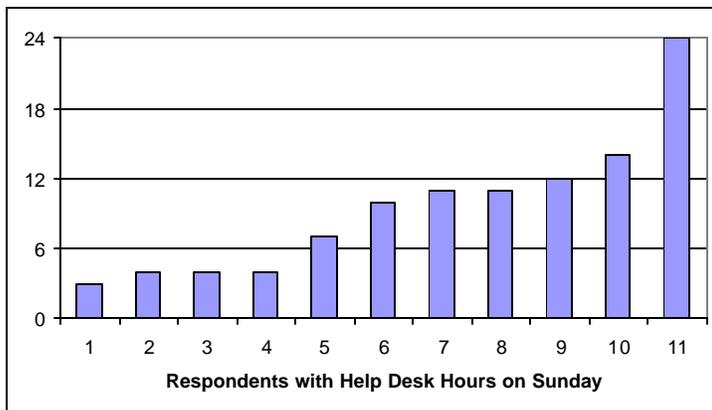
Schools That Offer Saturday Help Desk Hours



Help Desks That Offer Saturday Hours: 8 (44%)

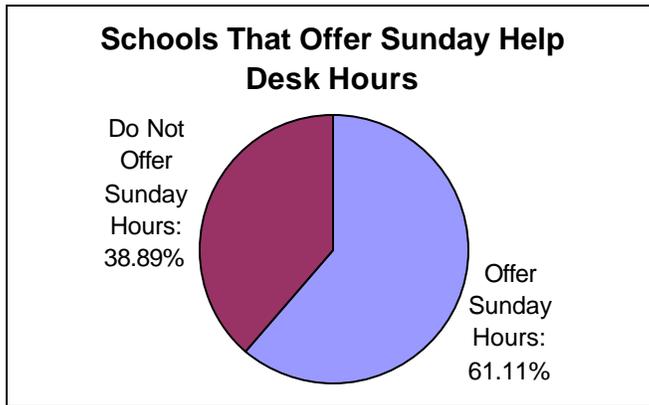
Help Desks That Do Not Offer Saturday Hours: 10 (56%)

Help Desk Hours: Sunday



Median Open Time: Noon
 Median Close Time: 8pm
 Average Hours Open: 9.5
 Median Hours Open: 10

Offering Sunday help desk hours was more common than Saturday, with over half the respondents reporting hours.



Help Desks That Offer Sunday Hours: 11 (61%)

Help Desks That Do Not Offer Sunday Hours: 7 (39%)

Employees

Help desk employees were divided into three types: Full-Time, Part-Time and Students. Student workers were almost always part time. “Part-Time” in the table below is solely staff. The average responses, based on the number of each type of employee, are below :

| Employee Type | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
|---------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Full-Time | 6.30 | 6 | 2 | 16 |
| Part-Time | 0.69 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Student | 18.43 | 13.5 | 0 | 70 |

A number of schools did not list how many student workers they had and so were left off the average number of student employees. As such, this average is pulled down somewhat disproportionately by the one school that does not employ any students in their help desk organization. Given the responses, it can be speculated that the true average number of student workers is likely closer to the mid-twenties per organization.

Full time employees usually included management, although sometimes these were not included, often because the management was considered to be mostly in a different department. Many organizations also have technicians that are assigned specifically to individual buildings or schools. These specialists are not included as help desk employees for the purpose of this report.

Customer Interaction

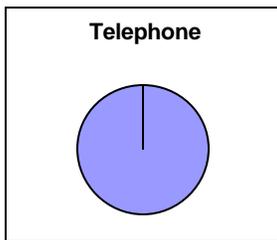
Customer interaction was measured by taking the percentage of respondents who support each of the following communication channels: Walk-ins, Telephone, Online Issue Submission, Email and use of a Knowledge Base.

Walk In



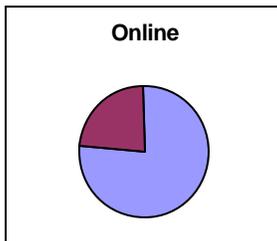
94% of respondents have the ability for students to walk in to one or more support centers. The one school that did not support this had an off-campus help desk. This school does provide on-site visits to student rooms and to faculty and staff offices, as well as providing “face-to-face service at the start of the school year for two weeks.”

Telephone



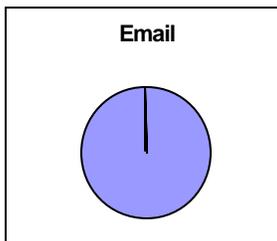
All respondents support phone communication with their help desk(s).

Online Issue Submission



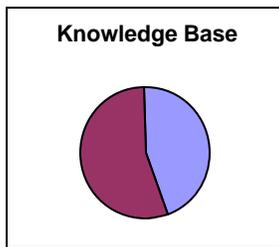
76% of respondents support online submission of issues to their help desk(s). This is relatively new for a number of organizations, and two of the respondents reported that they were currently creating this or about to. Schools that noted they were opening online submission channels in the immediate future were counted as having them active. Given the notes that accompanied the responses, this percentage will continue to increase as time progresses.

Email



All help desks either accept email submissions or are implementing this feature at the moment.

Knowledge Base

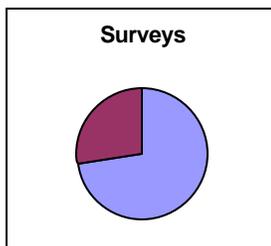


Allowing students to access some form of self-service knowledge base was the only communication channel not supported by the majority of schools. Eight (44%) respondents report that they currently use or are setting up some form of knowledge base. While a couple of schools noted plans to look into this in the future, a number indicated no such plans. A few schools are running knowledge bases purchased from third parties, but many are simply filling them in from knowledge provided by the help desk or other internal sources.

Success Criteria

How help desks measure their success was tracked by four concepts: customer surveys, metrics, service level agreements (SLA) and calling the customer post-issue resolution for feedback. Unfortunately, the survey did not mention using metrics specifically, but it is included here due to the numerous responses that cited it.

Customer Surveys



Help Desks That Utilize Customer Surveys: 72%
Help Desks That Do Not Utilize Customer Surveys: 28%

Most of the respondents reported that their organizations utilized customer surveys. Frequently, if the help desk was using an issue tracking system, customer surveys were sent out automatically to all, or a random subset of customers whose issues had recently been closed. In addition, many schools supplement more frequent surveys with an annual survey.

Of the five schools that do not use surveys, one noted that surveys sent to customers tended to over-emphasize those customers happy enough with the help desk to return multiple times.

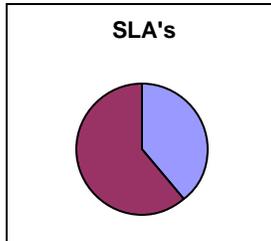
Metrics

While only six respondents noted using metrics as a tool for improvement, because metrics were not mentioned specifically, this report does not include percentages. Metrics cited include:

- Abandoned calls
- Age of open issues
- Average time to close issues
- Constituency
- Geographic distribution of customers
- Number of issues opened

- Time to respond (often measured by callers' average time on hold)

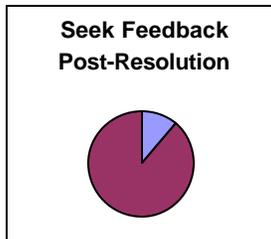
Service Level Agreement (SLA)



Help Desks With A Service Level Agreement: 39%
 Help Desks Without A Service Level Agreement: 61%

A number of the respondents who are listed here as having an SLA are actually in progress of creating one. Of the seven respondents listed, only two currently have a fully formed SLA. The other five are in process or about to start defining them.

Post-Resolution Calls



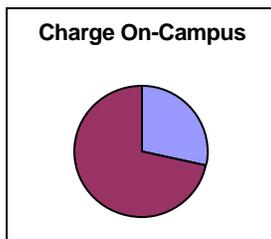
Help Desks That Call Customers After Resolution: 11%
 Help Desks That Do Not Call Customers After Resolution: 89%

Two respondents mentioned that they actively follow up on resolved issues by calling customers and requesting feedback. One of the schools sends customer surveys as well, while the other uses telephone responses as the primary form of measuring customer satisfaction.

Charging Customers

The majority of organizations do not charge any group of students, faculty or staff. Personal computers for the faculty or staff are typically not supported, although some schools provide limited support and a few charge for these services.

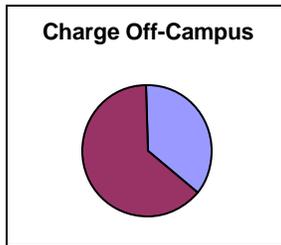
Charge On-Campus Students



Help Desks That Charge On-Campus Students: 29%
 Help Desks That Do Not Charge On-Campus Students: 71%

Four schools are listed as charging on-campus students, although one of those technically does not charge at the moment but is in process of changing this.

Charge Off-Campus Groups



Help Desks That Charge Off-Campus Groups: 36%

Help Desks That Do Not Charge Off-Campus Groups: 64%

Five respondents note that their organizations charge off-campus groups. These are the same four that charge on-campus students, plus one whose services are funded as part of the fees on-campus students pay. Therefore, off-campus students are charged for technical support.

Appendix A: Survey Reproduction

What follows is a copy of the survey that was sent to all schools:

Question #1 – Help Desk Organization

How is your support center or centers laid out? Is there one central help desk or are there multiple help desks? How big is your clientele? For example, USD has one Tech Support Center that serves both 2,000 University employees and 7,500 students.

Question #2 – Hours of Support

What days and hours does your organization provide live support? How did you determine these hours? For example, USD's support center is open for walk-ins and calls during the school year: M-Th 7am-7pm, F 7am-5pm. During summer and intersession: M-F 8am-5pm. These hours were determined based on historical demand.

Question #3 – Support Staff

How many people do you have in your help desk support department? How are they organized? If you staff at off-peak hours, does your staffing change (ie: only students after 8pm, etc.). For example, USD employs: 6 full-time, non-student staff (1 Director, 1 Manager, 1 Assistant Manager, 3 Technicians (one of which is part-time)) and 20 part-time students (6 Lead Technicians and 14 Technicians).

Question #4 – Budget

What is your annual budget for the help desk? This can be an amount or in terms of percentage of the overall budget of the school or IT department. For example, at USD the help desk budget in 2006 was \$450,716 which made up 4.66% of the overall IT budget. We think this is an important metric, but at the same time understand the sensitivity some institutions have about this topic. Please disclose only what you feel is appropriate.

Question #5 – Success Criteria

How does your organization measure success? Do you have a service catalog and is it published? Do you have SLA's and OLA's? At USD customer satisfaction is measured with customer surveys, with a service catalog currently being developed.

Question #6 – Charging for Services

Do you charge for services (such as virus removal, computer repair, etc.)? For example, USD only charges off-campus students. Please check all that apply.

- We charge on-campus students
- We charge off-campus students
- We charge faculty
- We charge staff

We have other groups we charge or do not charge:

Question #7 – Customer Interaction

What are all the ways your customers interact with your support organization? For example, USD allows all of the below.

- Walk in
- Phone
- Online Issue Submission
- Email
- Knowledge Base (self-service)

We have other forms of customer interaction:

The survey was created using [phpESP](#).

Appendix B: 24 x 7 Support

One of the questions under discussion by the staff at the University of San Diego is whether schools are moving towards having the help desk open at all times. Of the survey respondents, only one school utilizes “24 x 7” support. This school is the largest school in the survey, as judged by number of undergraduate students. After looking through the websites of the twelve schools that did not respond, only one of them offers continuous help desk hours, and for that school it appears that late night and early morning hours are supported by voicemail which prompts a callback. A number of other schools do offer voicemail and callback for emergency issues, but these are typically only system wide issues (network down, etc.) and so not counted for the purposes of this report.

While only 6.7% of comparable schools offer 24x7 support hours, further investigation was done on PC Magazine’s “Top 20 Wired Campuses” (see <http://go.pcmag.com/wiredcolleges>). Six of these “Top 20” were already included in the original survey (with three responding). The rest of the schools are too large or otherwise not comparable to the survey group. The “Top 20” schools were chosen as an easily identifiable group of schools that should, at least in theory, be “ahead of the curve” in terms of technology and support. Of these twenty, three offer continuous help desk coverage with a fourth offering twenty-four hours a day coverage during the weekdays. The average number of undergraduate students for these four schools is almost twenty thousand, indicating that the schools that do offer 24x7 coverage are significantly larger than those surveyed. The one school that was almost comparable in size (it has under 1,500 students) has an endowment of over one billion dollars. The average endowment for schools surveyed was under two-hundred and fifty million dollars.

Continuous help desk coverage does not appear to be a trend coming to schools compared in this survey. Support organizations appear instead to be tailoring their hours closer to student working hours, for example becoming more available on Sundays but less on Friday evenings. Given the financial resources and student size of surveyed schools, greatly expanding help desk coverage is reasonably not a priority.

About The Author

Chris Palmer is currently an MBA candidate at the University of San Diego. Before attending USD, he spent seven years working in support departments of a software company and was responsible for reorganizing the communication process between the help desk and the support developers. He can be contacted at ardenstone@ardenstone.com.