

White Paper

The CSat KPI: A Buyer's Guide to Identifying the Best Value IT Support Services

The Importance of Personalised IT Service for Today's Technology-enabled and Dependent Businesses



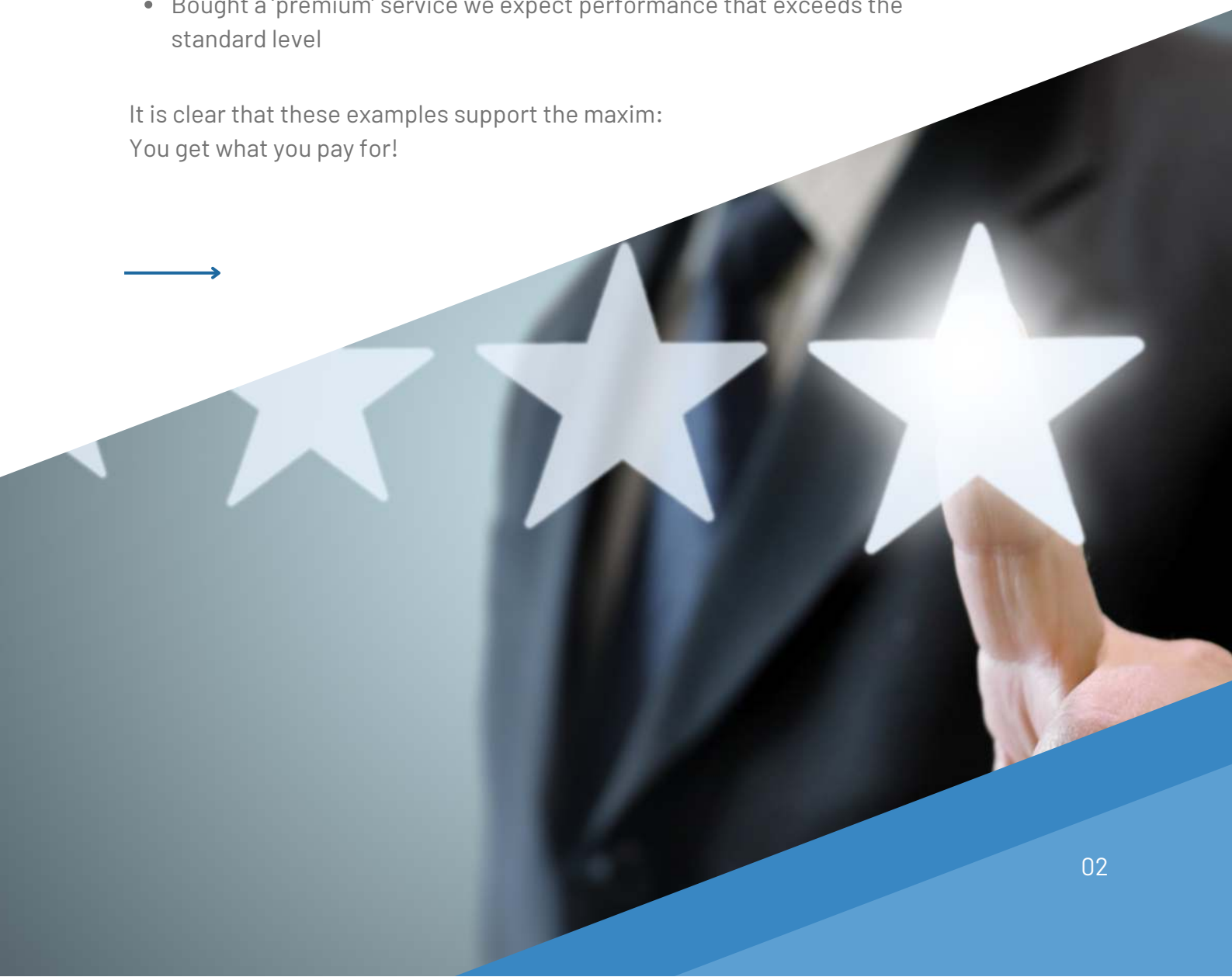
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Customer Satisfaction and Service Expectation

The theory of customer satisfaction (CSat) and customer service best practice are well-established. Quite simply, expectation is shaped by value perceptions. For products and services, if we believe we have:

- Purchased 'entry level' services our value perception is likely to be low; we only expect a minimum standard of performance
- Paid the 'going rate', then we expect an average or standard level of performance
- Bought a 'premium' service we expect performance that exceeds the standard level

It is clear that these examples support the maxim:
You get what you pay for!



Today businesses need to grow in highly competitive marketplaces. Larger providers of business services often leverage economy of scale. As these businesses compete for market share this leads to the development of service commoditisation and price becomes a differentiator.

To maintain margins and profitability some support providers with commoditised business models may 'hollow out' the components of the service, a process which ultimately impacts the Quality of Service.

If we are discussing services which are less business-critical than others, this may not be a pressing issue. However, the vast majority of today's businesses are technology-enabled and dependent.

Where businesses need IT services they can trust, commoditisation spells 'buyer beware'. In this guide we discuss the benefits of selecting an IT support provider that offers personalised service.





1. Project Management

What's the problem?

When it comes to the technology deployed across a business it is rare to encounter two businesses with an identical technology fabric of IT infrastructure and software. For IT support providers, this means the requirements of each customer are different. The inflexible one-size fits all approach which characterises many commoditised services simply won't do.

Why a project management-led approach matters

Each supported environment requires a project management-based approach to document the site and to identify the needs of the customer. A 'break-fix' oriented support company that comes out when a fault is reported in an effort to resolve the issue often won't be satisfactory. A more considered approach is needed to ensure customers receive the level of service required to meet the needs of the business.



2. More Personal Service

What's the problem?

Account director... Customer service representative... Relationship manager... Technical support manager... Service engineer... What's in a name? There are a range of job titles that may be involved in delivering support services. However, good support isn't always about having layers of management and differentiated roles with specific titles.

The value of more personal service

Each support environment is unique. An important component of this is the relationship between those who provide and those who receive support. Interpersonal relationships are built over time and through multiple contacts. Individual contact experiences knit together to create a fabric of recognition and understanding. More personal service means support is provided by someone the customer's team comes to know and respect.





3. Nominated Engineering Team Members

What's the problem?

Many enterprise scale support companies operate a system that uses large field engineering teams to cover lots of sites for many different customers. While such an approach may be efficient for support company resource utilisation, it promotes discontinuity and is unsympathetic to the rapid resolution of problems because it prevents engineers from becoming familiar and 'at home' with each supported environment. It also breaks up the natural requirement for customers to see a recognisable face, undermining the interpersonal dimension of the relationship.

The advantage of a system of nominated engineers

Providing the same nominated engineer to each customer enables a highly trained professionally qualified technology expert to become familiar with the requirements of each individual site and the needs of the customer. The specialised needs of specific customer sites may be matched with the appropriate skill sets of the right technology experts. Providing continuity like this is important because it means different engineers don't have to spend time learning a system that is new to them.



4. Proactive Approach

What's the problem?

Many providers of support services operate by using the 'break-fix' model. Technology breaks, the customer reports it, the support company turns up to fix it. However, from the customer perspective this is highly inefficient and of intrinsically low relative value.

The benefit of a pro-active operational model

Providing technology support services by using a proactive model is superior to a 'break-fix' approach. There are a number of dimensions to the pro-active model that deliver far better value to the customer. The use of monitoring to identify minor issues before they become business critical problems, whole of system awareness, and enabling the business to develop it's road map for the future use of technology are key advantages embedded within a pro-active model. Quite simply, using a proactive model is far more efficient and delivers greater customer value.





5. 'Virtual' Team Member

What's the problem?

Provisioning for IT support may be a bit of a conundrum. Smaller businesses may need a flexible spectrum of skills. At one extreme this might be to look after servers and infrastructure and at the other end supporting user problems or addressing training issues. For larger businesses specialisation in a specific area may be the requirement.

Finding the right mix of full time, part time or freelance/ad-hoc personnel to meet the needs of the business isn't easy. Above all there is a need for a joined up approach.

Consider a pro-active operational model

When the same familiar face is on hand, the support functionary is perceived as a 'virtual' team member. The continuity this provides enables greater efficiency in managing the ongoing support requirements of the systems and users. Support is simply more effective when it is delivered by a technology expert who is regarded and who actually works as part of the internal team.



6. Performance related bonuses

What's the problem?

The performance of many roles is incentivised with bonus schemes. Typically sales roles are often the first ones that spring to mind, linking the effort to make each sale. However, sales bonus or commission schemes reflect the cash value of business that a sales agent has secured. When it comes to support there are other metrics that may be used to determine the performance of a support engineer.

Customer satisfaction and reward schemes

CSat surveys are useful tools for determining the performance of individuals, especially where a single engineer is responsible for end-point service delivery in a customer's support environment. This enables the customer to provide direct input to highlight anything relevant to service delivery and to play a role in determining whether the support engineer's performance merits financial reward.





7. What's Your Pricing Structure?

Budget considerations are essential when outsourcing any service, including IT support. Gain a clear understanding of the company's pricing structure.

Are they offering a fixed monthly fee, pay-as-you-go pricing, or a combination of both? It's crucial to uncover any potential hidden costs that might arise during the course of your engagement.

In addition to the basic pricing, inquire about any extra charges for emergency support, software updates, or hardware replacements. A transparent pricing structure will help you assess the financial feasibility of partnering with the IT support company.

Best Advice for Businesses Seeking Better Value from IT Support Services

When it comes to selecting providers of technology support services some useful tips include:

- Engaging with a prospective provider to let them understand your requirements
- Obtaining a detailed proposal for the services to meet your specific needs
- Agreeing on deliverables for supporting technology such as a road map
- Avoiding those using the 'break-fix' model and look for a preventative approach
- Understanding how support engineers are assigned within the support team workflow
- Checking the credentials of prospective providers of technology support services
- Examining case studies and preferably asking to speak to referral sites



Why is HTL Support a Preferred Technology Support Provider

HTL provides a range of services to support the use of technology in today's businesses. Whether it is infrastructure and user support, internet connectivity or voice communications, we provide the high degree of personalised service that enables clients to obtain more value from business technology. Each client is assigned a dedicated lead engineer who project manages the account and normally attends to all requests for support.

Websites are increasingly important. As the focal point for marketing and for inbound lead generation, or for e-commerce, we are able to support websites, to ensure they continue to meet the needs of our clients' businesses.

Our ability to re-configure our services to act as your IT department operating under your IT Director or other internal sponsor, or to work alongside and support your internal support function means we are vastly experienced in tailoring support to the specific requirements of each client.





About HTL Support

HTL Support was initially founded in 2009 by Managing Director Justin Dean, to provide specialist IT support and IT consultancy services to financial services sector clients. Since its launch, HTL has rapidly evolved to offer a full range of cutting-edge, integrated and flexible products and services to a worldwide client base across all industries. Our experience and professionalism has been endorsed both by our clients and by many of the world's leading hardware and software manufacturers.

All companies need to know that their IT support provider is not going to let them down when it comes to important projects. We will always find the right solution and are equally happy either functioning as project managers for your internal IT department or providing an experienced team to work under your own IT Director or project leader.



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