

Facilities Management from A to Z



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H elp Desks

Help Desks are generally designed to provide a central point which a user of a service can contact to get help with a problem. In many organisations, the help desk is simply one person with a phone number and some form of process for passing on the problems that come in. In some instances, the help desk may consist of a team of experts using a software based system to record and track the status of problems. This may be linked to or an integrated part of other special software for raising work orders or even allowing remote resolution of issues as they are reported.

Some facilities management service providers operate national help desks from central call centres as part of their commercial offering while other service providers provide the Help Desk alone as a specialist independent outsourced solution. As desktop technology becomes ever more sophisticated many of the software solutions now offer a self-reporting automated help desk offering which cuts out the need for telephone operators and gives the user much more control and real time information.

The introduction of a basic helpdesk can be problematic for many facilities managers and their customers who are used to making direct contact. The benefit to the FM is easily demonstrated as reactive calls are reduced and resources can be deployed more effectively. However if the help desk is little more than a communication intermediary it can be difficult to show the benefit to the end user. The theory is that the help desk will actually help the end user not just help the FM team.

This is where IT systems can help if properly designed and implemented. The helpdesk function of an FM department can be a valuable interface with internal customers that aids communications and can improve levels of service by providing additional information, deploying resources more effectively or adding value by identifying trends or repeat problems.

It is important to set clear objectives for the helpdesk to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between service improvement, compliance monitoring, operational efficiency and other potential benefits. Helpdesks can be very time consuming and expensive to administer and benefit greatly from dedicated and informed management.

The Facilities Management User Group (Formerly known as The Facilities Management Special Interest Group - FM SIG) is an independent group of FM software users who provide advice and support to others www.fmug.org.uk