

Assisted Web-Based Customer Support
Five Ways to Make Your Helpdesk More Efficient

By Veer Gidwaney, Control-F1

Executive Summary.....	3
The Benefits of a Comprehensive eSupport Solution.....	4
Control-F1 eSupport – The Comprehensive Solution.....	12
Conclusion.....	13

Executive Summary

eSupport is the concept of delivering technical support via the Internet. Effective and efficient technical support has become as necessary as having an exceptional product. Today eSupport is a competitive advantage. Tomorrow eSupport will be a competitive necessity.

For corporations that depend on technology, downtime is lost productivity. Receiving effective technical support is critical.

Traditionally, there have been five methods of delivering technical support: on-site support, phone support, self-service, e-mail and basic online support such as live chat.

While all of these options are useful in some situations, there are certain scenarios in which they can be time consuming and inefficient, which leads to an overall negative support experience. On-site support is effective because a support agent has the ability, visually and in-person, to demonstrate and explain concepts clearly. However, it is time intensive, and it has high associated labor and travel costs.

Phone support is characterized by long queues, unsatisfied agents and limited service quality, as the agent is dependent upon the customer to obtain critical information and to execute the process of repair relying solely on verbal direction.

Self-service solutions, like newsgroups, lists of frequently asked questions (FAQs) or knowledge-base repositories are useful in certain situations, but they can be difficult to use and understand as well as time consuming.

E-mail has become a medium for technical support, but it lacks personality, power and real-time speed. Some companies offer interactive chat forums to facilitate the support process. The problem with relying solely on live chat is that it does not take full advantage of the Internet as a medium for communication, information transfer and Desktop Sharing.

This white paper outlines the benefits of employing a comprehensive eSupport solution. A web-based solution that enables organizations to lower support costs, while increasing customer productivity and satisfaction. Included are some of the components a solution should employ in order to realize these benefits.

The Benefits of a Comprehensive eSupport Solution

Organizations that deploy comprehensive eSupport solutions have found that their support operations have benefited in a number of ways. Below are some simple steps that eSupport innovators have used to make their help desk operations less expensive to operate and more efficient.

#1 -- Reduce the time spent on each incident

A challenging part of the support process is determining the cause of a problem. According to the Help Desk Institute, a computer services industry research group, up to 80 percent of support time is spent on problem diagnosis and gathering data. Verbally requesting the customer to provide system information is time consuming and in many cases can result in the transfer of inaccurate data. Using conventional remote control software for investigation can also be slow. Effective eSupport solutions provide diagnostic tools that are instant and accurate. Typically, these tools provide helpdesks with the ability to create diagnostic retrieval mechanisms so that they can capture information pertinent to the unique solution being supported. With the retrieval of diagnostic information made accurate and instantaneous, eSupport cuts down the most time-intensive portion of the support process.

Case Study: *Wavelength Automation, Inc.*

About the Company:

Wavelength Automation, Inc. is the creator of CapitolTrack (<http://www.capitoltrack.com/>). CapitolTrack is used to monitor the California Legislative process. Within the product, users can manage their positions for each legislative measure, track calendar events, and produce numerous reports. CapitolTrack is a fee-based subscription service with clients representing associations, lobbyists, and government agencies.

eSupport Results:

By using a complete eSupport solution, Wavelength has been able to reduce support time by about 75% and has greatly reduced the need for onsite support. Solving problems faster has boosted their image and improved their clients' satisfaction across the board.

#2 -- Increased employee /customer satisfaction

Having problems solved quickly, with minimal interference to customers' productivity and peace of mind, means that eSupport solutions are a major advancement in improving customer satisfaction. The same can be said for employee satisfaction. eSupport improves support agent satisfaction by providing tools that minimize the need for communication expertise, and that allow agents to focus on their job - fixing technical problems.

Diagnostic Tools

Using traditional methods of support means that support time equals downtime. That is, the customer is required to be involved in the diagnostic gathering process, and can therefore not continue to perform their work functions. A comprehensive eSupport solution leverages technology to minimize, if not eliminate, the interfering nature of diagnostic gathering.

System Management Tools

The comprehensive solution's system management tools, which are tools that provide agents with the ability to view, transfer, edit, and compare files and folders on the customer's system, will also work in the background so that any time it takes to repair the customer's system doesn't interfere with their productivity.

Customer Security

A customer's anxiety over the security of their system may deter them from participating in a web-based support process. Therefore, to get these customers to buy into the eSupport process, a comprehensive eSupport solution provides a full spectrum of security choices. Customers, who worry about the integrity of the agent and/or process, must be able set the levels of accessibility to their system. This includes the ability to restrict files, folders, and directories. Restrictions may seem to impede the ability of agents to do their job. However, in most cases, customers do not implement these options, but are satisfied having their security fears assuaged just by having them on hand.

Case Study: *Cromwell and Associates.*

About the Company:

Cromwell and Associates (www.cromwellassociates.com) is a consulting firm which provides technology solutions to clients in the Silicon Valley/San Francisco bay area and Oklahoma. Specifically they deal in the CRM, eCRM, SFA, and Service Optimization arena, providing training, technical and support services to their clients.

Current clients include Bank of the West, Simpata, Fujitsu, Electronic Education, Responsys, and Flipside.com. They are FrontRange's Consultant of the Year and one of FrontRange Goldmine's Top 10 Solution Partners in the US.

eSupport Results:

Utilizing an eSupport solution creates internal and external benefits. For Cromwell and Associates the first group to benefit was the helpdesk agents. When an eSupport solution was originally introduced the agents were less than enthusiastic... one more thing to learn. But once they saw it, the response was “we need this, when are we getting it”. From that point it was a short ride to getting it installed.

Cromwell and Associates’ customers also saw immediate benefits. Calls that previously took 30 minutes to implement, diagnose, and fix, were shortened to 10 minutes.

For Cromwell and Associates, eSupport has increased the satisfaction levels of both their customers and agents.

#3 -- Reduce total cost of technology ownership

Every company owns and employs some form of technology. When this technology fails to work at its maximum capacity, the cost of owning it increases. Providing quick, unobtrusive solutions that keep technology in top operating order means that eSupport lowers this cost. However, implementing and deploying an eSupport solution is technology ownership in itself, and a comprehensive solution is one that minimizes its cost of ownership.

Firewall Compatibility

Comprehensive eSupport solutions integrate easily within a company's infrastructure, with minimal initial productivity costs. In other words, comprehensive solutions are compatible with firewalls and proxy servers. When Delivering technical support over the Internet, customers and agents exist in environments foreign to each other. In most cases, these environments are protected by firewalls. If the solution is not built upon a process that is compatible with firewalls, it will be timely and expensive to configure, not to mention discard, the existing system. eSupport solutions that are firewall compatible allow quick implementation and seamless deployment, enabling agents to deliver live assistance over the Internet while maintaining the integrity of firewalls and proxy servers.

Browser-based Software

The ownership of technology, namely eSupport solutions, can also increase when their processes require uncommon applications to run. An eSupport solution that requires uncommon applications and configurations would require large amounts of time to download the required applications, and to make sure the configuration of each person delivering and receiving support were correct. Comprehensive eSupport solutions function using universally shared applications and configurations, namely a standard Internet browser to deliver and receive support.

Case Study: *Jamcracker.*

About the Company:

Jamcracker™, Inc., the complete web-based workspace for IT and business applications, services and support, leverages the power of the Net to help medium-sized companies use technology to its full potential. Jamcracker aggregates and integrates best-of-breed web-based applications and services from a variety of providers into a single, secure and scalable platform, giving customers the flexibility to select the services that work best for them. Jamcracker monitors, manages and supports service level agreements for multiple vendors, giving customers a single point of accountability for web-based IT services. These services are available around the clock, through a single sign-on, secure service delivery workspace. Jamcracker, founded in 1999, is based in Cupertino, Calif.

eSupport Results:

Jamcracker realized fairly early on in their eSupport test cycle that the remote diagnostics features were quick to invoke and get results back. Because access

involved the Internet, they initially thought it would be less than optimum, but the reverse is true. Jamcracker can solve problems quickly, efficiently, and with minimal disruption to the client.

Without using eSupport, a support call takes Jamcracker 10 to 15 minutes. With eSupport it takes half that time. Jamcracker can get right to the point and solve a problem. This makes it very useful and cost-effective, especially in trouble-shooting scenarios.

One of Jamcracker's company directors was having an issue with his DSL settings. Because he travels a lot it was difficult to contact him during normal work hours. So a Jamcracker support agent connected with him from home and invoked the eSupport solution. Because the agent could actually see the director's settings, they were able to find the issue, deal with his DSL provider and solve the problem. Without eSupport, the agent wouldn't have been able to find it.

#4 -- Optimize Customer Relationships

In many Helpdesk situations, eSupport is only one component of the technology infrastructure. A comprehensive eSupport operates seamlessly with complementary technologies, namely Knowledge Management software and Helpdesk Incident Tracking/CRM software. A truly comprehensive solution would be one who has partnered with leading companies in the knowledge management and enterprise customer relationship management industries to ensure seamless operation, and development maintenance throughout product upgrades or feature additions. Integrations with CRM software solutions should be the focus, as the resulting integrated solutions facilitate optimal customer relationships while extracting maximum value from all CRM investments.

Case Study: *High Line Corporation.*

About the Company:

High Line Corporation (www.highlinecorp.com) is a privately owned company that, since 1974, has set the industry standard in Human Resource and Payroll application software, offering private and public sector clients highly flexible, functional solutions. Hundreds of medium to large sized companies across the United States and Canada have benefited from High Line's comprehensive software coupled with their extensive business knowledge.

eSupport Results:

The flexible nature of the High Line product gives rise to a multitude of potential difficulties during the set up process. In the past, this meant the only option was to set up the applications on-site. The costs and lost opportunities associated with on-site support were immense. They realized that eSupport technology was rendering this practice obsolete, so it was the obvious solution for them. In fact, it paid for itself within the first month just by eliminating the costs associated with sending agents on-site.

High Line had a client who was experiencing database problems. They had been working on their problem for two weeks prior to implementing an eSupport solution, with no success. Once an eSupport solution was up and running, High Line agents used it to fix the customer's problem within 30 minutes. This wasn't a onetime situation either. It has become a typical story for High Line ever since eSupport was incorporated into their helpdesk.

#5 -- Reduce Cost to Deliver Support

More efficient and effective support means that more requests can be taken over the same period of time, consequently lowering the cost to deliver support. Comprehensive eSupport solutions also lower costs by reducing communication and travel costs.

Communication Tools

Communication between the customer and agent is imperative in any support scenario. The customer must have the platform to explain the history of related issues, how the issue originated, the quality of support, and the customer's impression of the overall operation. The agent must have the platform to extract any information from the customer that may be required, and to keep the customer aware of any actions taken, or that should be taken. Internet technologies provide a number of inexpensive ways to communicate, including live chat, VOIP, and desktop sharing.

Desktop Sharing

Desktop Sharing (remote control) greatly reduces the need for travel. By providing agents with tools that allow them to visually demonstrate and explain concepts remotely, the time and travel costs associated with onsite support are eliminated.

Case Study: *QSupport Technologies.*

About the Company:

QSupport Technologies provides technical support solutions that enable Organizations to deliver high quality support to their customers and employees at optimal costs.

The solutions integrate personalized support services with the very best in technologies for knowledge management and automated support. Global Organizations have leveraged QSupport to increase customer satisfaction and improved operational efficiencies; in deploying product support call centers and IT help desks.

QSupport's expertise spans across 500 products in the desktop, Internet, server and networking domains. QSupport address over 2 million end users in 23 countries through voice, email, chat, self-help resources and remote support technologies.

eSupport Results:

eSupport has made functions like getting details of the user's PC configuration and gaining access to the registry, which are a staple in the engineer's support process, possible remotely. QSupport can now provide more efficient customer support solutions by proactively getting user's hardware configuration details, taking control of the user's desktop, and having the QSupport agent solve the user's problem remotely. These capabilities have enabled a significant cost reduction for QSupport and QSupport's clients, as the number of engineer onsite

visits has decreased, and has also resulted in greater customer satisfaction in getting prompt, unobtrusive resolutions to their problems.

QSupport has not done a formal ROI analysis to date, but they expect savings in the range of around 35%.

Control-F1 eSupport – The Comprehensive Solution

Control-F1 offers a comprehensive eSupport solution that empowers organizations with the ability to deliver unparalleled technical support, while decreasing costs and increasing overall profitability.

Control-F1 eSupport is easy to use and easy to understand. It incorporates all of the basic components of a comprehensive solution and wraps it into a seamless package that is easy to use, and easy to deploy.

By deploying Control-F1, helpdesks will witness:

- Less time spent on each incident.
- Greater capacity to manage incidents.
- Increased rate of incident resolution
- Increased employee /customer satisfaction
- Increased corporate productivity
- Lower total cost of technology ownership
- Increased first call resolution.
- Reduced need for call escalation.

Control-F1 is quick and easy to implement. Our ASP Model allows organizations to have their eSupport infrastructure hosted by Control-F1 and up and running within 24 hours. However, if the preference is to host the infrastructure within an organization, Control-F1 will provide the required technical expertise to implement and manage your environment within 48 hours.

If you would like to view a flash demonstration that will guide you through the process of using Control-F1, visit <http://www.control-f1.com/demos/Control-F1TechnicalDemo.html>.

If you would like to arrange a web demo provided by one of our expert representatives, visit http://www.control-f1.com/company/w_demo.htm.

Conclusion

eSupport will increasingly be relied on to enable the communication between demanding end-users and technical experts. From the viewpoint of helpdesks considering web-based support tools, the high cost of user support is prompting companies to look for ways to reduce the time element and ensuing costs associated with traditional technical support delivery mechanisms, such as the phone, on-site repair, and e-mail. IDC estimates that the average telephone based software support call costs from \$30-\$50 per call. Forrester Research states that Internet-based customer support can result in a 43% savings in direct labor costs. Furthermore, the supportindustry.com eCustomer Interaction Management study found that of the organizations surveyed on the benefits achieved from deploying an eSupport solution, 35% cited increased efficiency, 27% greater customer satisfaction, 15% lower call volume, and 6% decreased costs/greater profitability.

Companies that want to fully leverage the potential of online support should take a close look at the solutions on the market, and figure which can provide their helpdesk the highest value at the lowest risk.

About the Author

Veer Gidwaney is co-founder and CEO of Control-F1 and a leading authority on eSupport. Control-F1 is his second software startup, in 1997 he co-founded DDES Corporation that develops and markets 'Classrooms Network Teaching Tools', a leading network training software. Veer can be found at trade shows around North America, speaking about the eSupport Revolution.

About Control-F1

Control-F1 (www.control-f1.com) is an eSupport software company that empowers helpdesks with the ability to deliver live technical support via the Internet. An extensive set of secure web-based Communication, Diagnostic, System Management and Desktop Sharing Tools equip support agents to solve problems faster and more effectively.

The need to provide exceptional technical support has become a critical requirement in building customer relationships. Control-F1 helps enhance customer satisfaction and brand reputation, while decreasing the cost of support and increasing overall profitability.