



The Secret to Legendary IT Service

About the Author



Mike Cannon-Brookes

Co-Founder and Co-CEO,
Atlassian

Mike Cannon-Brookes is the co-founder and co-CEO of Atlassian, a collaboration software company that helps teams organize, discuss and complete shared work. More than 50,000 organizations use Atlassian's tracking, collaboration, communication, service management and development products to work smarter and deliver quality results.

Mike has received international recognition for his work, including the "Australian IT Professional of the Year" award in 2004, and "Australian Entrepreneur of the Year" in 2006. The World Economic Forum has honored him as a Young Global Leader in 2009.

An active angel investor, Mike is also a non-executive director of Tyro, a technology-focused Australian bank. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the University of New South Wales' School of Computer Science and Engineering.

Contents

Introduction	The Service Triple Threat	4
Chapter 1	Helping Customers Succeed	6
Chapter 2	The IT Service Desk	14
Chapter 3	Streamlining Service Management Across the Enterprise	19
Conclusion	Always Innovate	22
Epilogue	About Atlassian	24

Introduction

The Service Triple Threat



We haven't always been a worldwide company. But, you could say service has always been in our DNA. When Atlassian first started, we were just two guys and a credit card, across the world from the rest of the tech industry. We built our first product, JIRA, for project tracking but ultimately for customer support. 14 years later, we've grown a bit since those humble beginnings.

We've learned a lot over the years, but one lesson has remained: never get complacent with processes. We needed to disrupt, innovate and aim higher than ever.

With Atlassian's growth, we've had to make sure our service remains legendary by dedicating ourselves to the evolution of three areas of Atlassian's business:

- Service to our customers
- Internal IT support
- Service outside of IT

Our customers are the heart and soul of Atlassian; we're always working to improve their experience. When it comes to our employees, we believe in treating them just as well as our customers. By making our internal processes easy, our employees are happier and more productive.

And when it comes to service outside of IT, we wanted to take the principles of what we've learned and apply them to various other departments in the business that provide services, from HR to finance to legal.

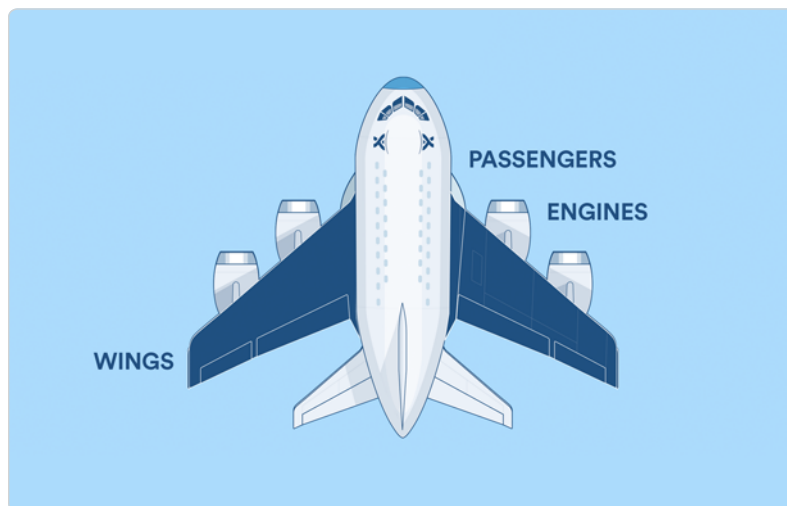
We hope our experience will be helpful to you as you look at your own businesses and teams.

"Your products are the engines that move your plane forward. But it's the experience that forms the wings that make your plane fly."

—Mike Cannon-Brookes, Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Atlassian

Chapter 1

Helping Customers Succeed



To fly, you'll need to build a better plane. When we first started, our plane was a two-man operation. Today, we have 1,700 Atlassians around the world, with more than 50,000 customers. We have tens of millions of end users in 160 different countries, and 250 people providing end-user support.

At the same time, we have 80 people internally providing IT service to our employees. And many of those employees provide non-IT services such as HR, legal, finance and even marketing services. So we're taking the lessons we've learned from customer and IT support, and applying them to these other internal service teams.



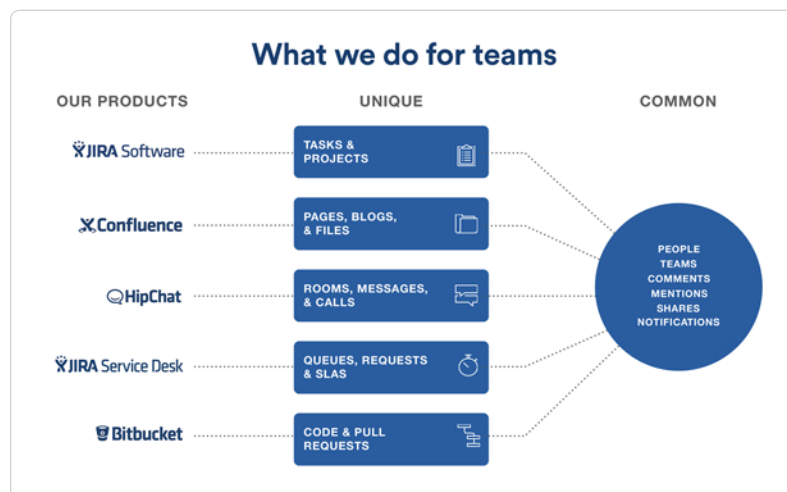
You could say we're jet-setting across the globe, all while constantly trying to upgrade from Learjet to a light-speed spaceship.

How is that possible?

Building the plane while you fly

It's important to think about what exactly makes up this theoretical plane:

Our products are the engines; they keep us propelled forward and cruising toward the next goal. But, without passengers, we wouldn't be going anywhere. Those passengers are our customers. The wings of our plane need to slice through the air, and those are our support folks. They keep the Atlassian plane rocketing toward the next destination.

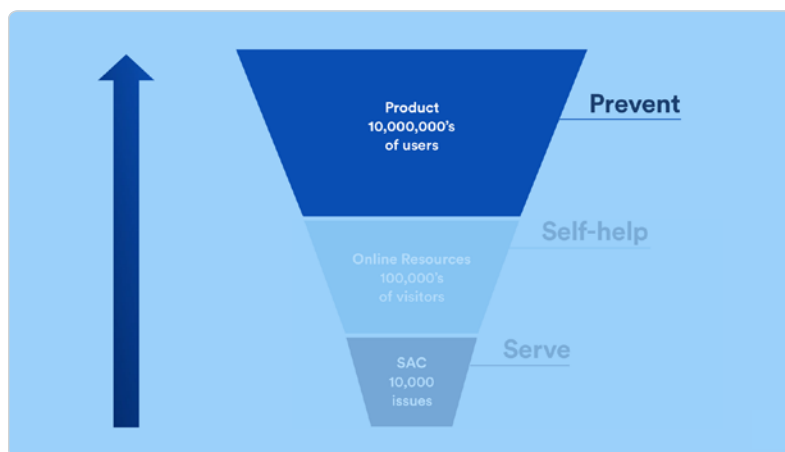


Our products are designed to help service teams be successful. Whether it's JIRA Service Desk as a control center for IT teams, JIRA Software for projects, Confluence for a knowledge base, or HipChat for messaging—they all focus on supporting teams.

Prevention comes first

When we think of technical support, it's all about helping the customer. How can we solve an issue and get our customers back to work as soon as possible? Prevention.

Given our 50,000 customers and tens of millions of end users, we have to trim the number of questions at each stage of the support funnel. We wanted to go from serving customers to getting them to serve themselves, and from solving problems to preventing problems from occurring in the first place.



Since 2002 we've used JIRA for bug reports and feature requests. We've had more than 160,000 comments, which is about 1,000 per month for 13 years. That's a massive amount of customer feedback. It helps build better products for everybody.

That openness is a big part of our prevention strategy. Recently, we began collecting NPS (Net Promoter Score) from end users. We get about 15,000 items of product feedback per month.

Enabling legendary service

All of this data collection comes back into our service enablement team, or SET. Their job is to look at the technical support requests, feature requests, bugs, and the feedback from customer satisfaction surveys.

They put all of that into a big pot and identify the top drivers of feedback and the biggest problems. They inform and lobby the engineering and product teams so they can make sure they prioritize these items on their roadmaps so those problems don't occur again.

The SET team is an investment. But we believe the SET team is an essential part of proactive support in preventing problems and improving customer satisfaction going forward. This way, our product teams and engineers focus on innovation, not fixes, while customers ask fewer support questions.

Ready, set, launch

Another important role of the SET team is ensuring launch readiness. When we ship new products, SET looks for patterns in old releases that caused support spikes. They help us learn from our mistakes and make sure engineering avoids repeating them before we launch a new product.

One way we categorize product issues is something we call RUF:

- R**eliability issues (X isn't working)
- U**sability issues (Not sure how to...)
- F**unctionality issues (I wish X did Y)

RUF is an excellent mechanism for sorting the vast, abstract blob of customer feedback we get, like discovering we spent a lot of effort reducing usability problems when we should be doing more on reliability issues.

Communicate in-product

Through our Cloud service, we notify customers of problems and workarounds as they occur. This in-product communication feature has resulted in a 70% reduction in support tickets.

Let's say we ship a bug that may affect all customers in Japan. Some Japanese customers raise the issue; the SET team determines that it's likely to be a big deal. We immediately put out an in-product communication saying, "Hey, if you're a Japanese customer, we've got this issue, we realize it's an issue, and we're working on it."

This way, we get fewer tickets, and we use the time we'd otherwise spend responding to tickets on actually fixing the problem.

Help yourself

We learned pretty quickly that you can't answer every question one-on-one because you'll end up answering the same question multiple times.

If 10 people ask the same question to 10 different support engineers, we'll use 10 units of time. If one person asks that same question publicly, the other 9 people can find the answer, and we've used one unit. This is why self-help or self-service is critical. For certain types of service, you need to move from one-on-one to a community-driven format.

Obviously, if the question involves sending us a log file or giving us sensitive data, we can't do one-to-many. But, most of the questions we get are typically like:

"How does this work?"

"Is this broken?"

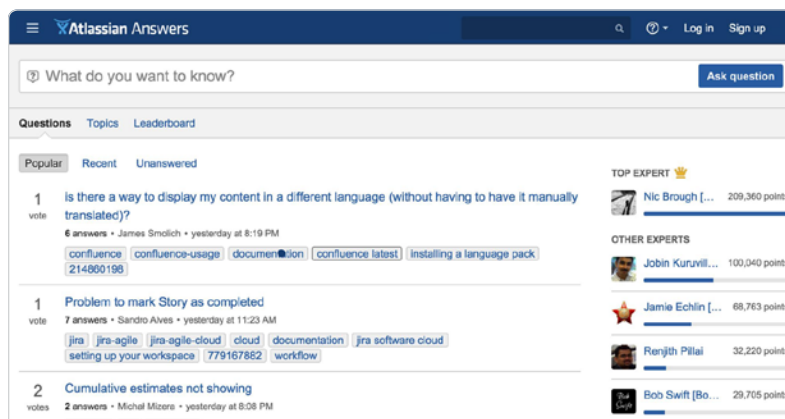
"People in my organization are confused by this."

These questions can be asked and answered by the community, including other customers as well as our staff.

Atlassian answers

In evolving our self-help community, we moved from forum-based software to answer-based software, to eventually using our Confluence collaboration software.

We call it Atlassian Answers, and it's been a great success. With millions of visitors per year, more than 100,000 questions and an 85% answer rate, about 40% of those questions get answered in less than one hour.

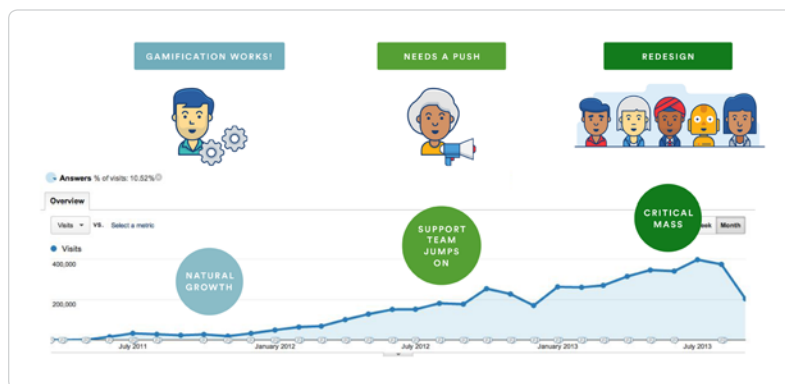


Gamification works

When we started the community in 2011, the first thing we did was gamification. We awarded points, badges, t-shirts, swag and so on, but it was really all about people wanting to share knowledge with other community members.

We had 10 people just working on answers to support cases, and we found that this one-to-many format saved us the equivalent of more than 10 support engineers versus the old one-to-one queue. After about a year and a half of learning, we did a big redesign, and that was when answers hit critical mass.

By 2013, we had 400,000 visitors per month, and our community continued to expand.



Enter Hercules



Here's another example of how we've applied innovation to service problems, with a little robot called Hercules.

We put Hercules on one-on-one support questions, so when someone asks Atlassian a question, and they give us a log file, we can parse the data and answer them with a correct response.

Hercules scans log files, cross-references knowledge-base articles, looks at tags and answers about 50% of the questions.

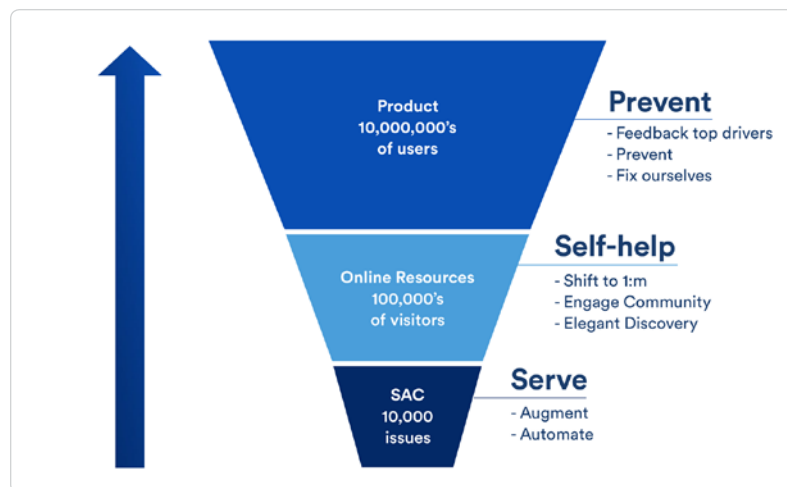
He's very considerate of his responses as to not certify he's all knowing, just in case the answer doesn't apply to the problem.

He says "These answers might be helpful to you," instead of "This IS your answer."

Hercules is rules-based and has been awesome. The robot often answers questions before our support engineers get to them – they love it. At first, they worried the robot would take their jobs, but that was never going to happen. Clearly, the AI is nowhere near the level of a support engineer. What Hercules does do is let the support team focus on the important problems rather than routine ones.

The bottom of the funnel

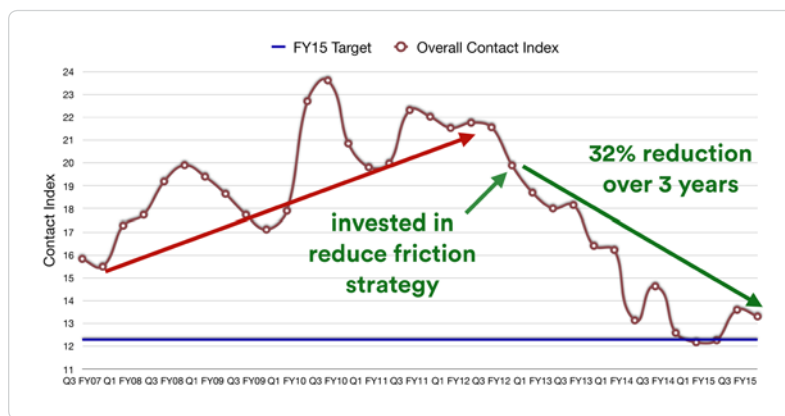
After we prevent as many problems as possible, and provide self-service for as many customers possible, how do we serve customers at the bottom of the funnel?



First, we moved support from Atlassian.com to the JIRA Service Desk tool. JIRA Service Desk pulls answers from the knowledge base using more than 60 different rules that apply when someone asks a question. This helps our support team answer questions faster and more effectively.

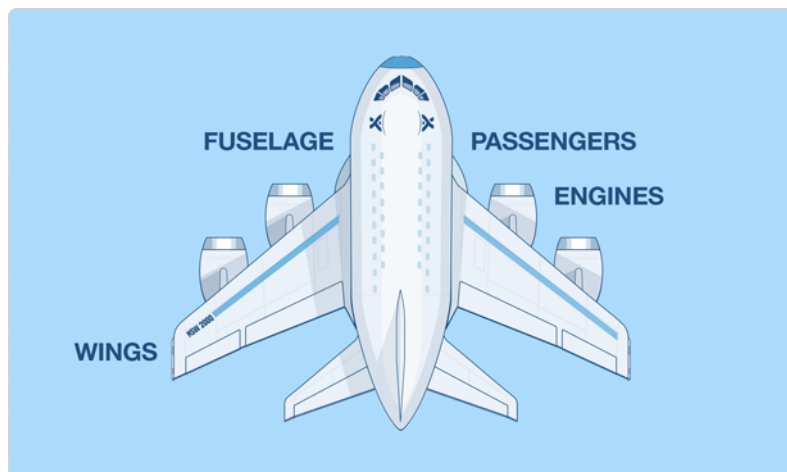
The contact index

How do we measure success? We look at the contact index, which is the percentage of our customers who ask a question at any given time. Over the last three years we've had a 32% reduction in the contact index. At the same time, the organization has grown massively. We believe that's a good indication that we're doing the right things.



Chapter 2

The IT Service Desk



fu-se-lage

(fyoo'sə-lāzh', -zə-)n.

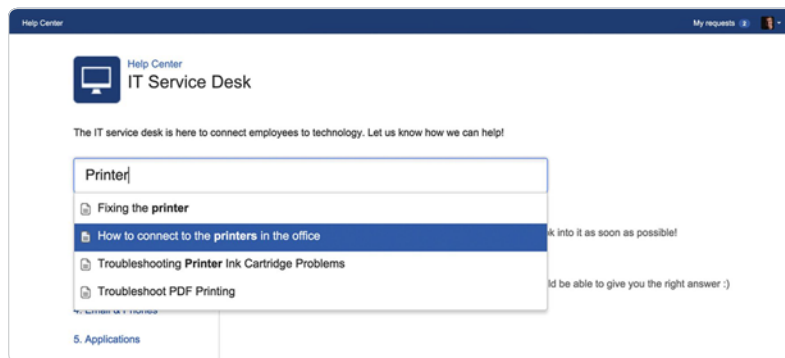
The central body of an aircraft, to which the wings and tail assembly are attached and which accommodates the crew, passengers, and cargo.

Think of the IT service desk as your plane's center of gravity.

We've talked about customer support, which is the foundation of our business. Our next most important effort is internal IT support. The first thing you'll notice about our IT support function is we don't have any telephones. You can't call IT. There are no phones on anybody's desk.

What do we do instead? We apply the same strategies we do with customers, beginning with prevention and self-help. We use chat, email and other more-scalable ways to communicate internally. Want to update a printer? Read this document. We

don't want people coming to our support team with such basic questions, because 95% will solve their own problem by reading the knowledge base article.



Get smarter with machine learning

Ensuring your service desk is working smarter not harder, we introduced smart graph. It's a hybrid algorithm combining keyword search and machine learning to provide better search results from your service desk. Each time a new request is created, smart graph learns associations between keywords in the request fields and the request type—all done via JIRA Service Desk.

Because smart graph is always learning, it could be used to provide better insights into common problems. The next time you see a surge of tickets on Monday morning, JIRA Service Desk could summarize the underlying problem and let you know that all the complaints about the Wi-Fi probably indicate a network issue.

Rather than sending Wi-Fi requests to desktop support, smart graph learns who the topic experts are and automatically assign tickets to the best agent.

Resolving 50% of requests via swarming

One key to legendary IT support is what we call swarming. Swarming is about creating topical areas where people can get assistance.

Here's the situation: Wi-Fi is down. IT will get 55 different requests within minutes. Responding to each individual isn't effective. When we introduced a VPN, there was a demand for VPN support. We created an online room where users can read logs and ask questions in a one-to-many format, while exchanging information.

Recently, we introduced a new idea at Atlassian: a consistent user name, password and two-factor authentication across a whole series of applications. We rolled it out over several months to different offices and staff. This was a classical, long-term change management IT project.

Every single communication that went out said, “If you need help, go to this room.” Now, people could identify and solve problems by sharing links to documents in a group scenario. They could learn what went wrong with the staff ID rollout in one office before rolling it out to the next one.

Swarming has helped us reduce support tickets by about 50%. Questions are still asked, but they’re answered on HipChat, rather than email. It makes for faster, more immediate resolutions and a higher level of customer satisfaction. Our IT department measures customer satisfaction in the same way to ensure they’re continually improving their service.

Customer satisfaction

4.3

Average rating

Comment	Rating	Key	Agent	Received
Thanks for putting the fire out. It's much easier to print without the flames.	★★★★☆	CSAT-138	Will Turner	Yesterday
I am all set up with my new computer.	★★★★☆	CSAT-99	José Vela	2 days ago
Thanks for the speedy turnaround.	★★★★★	CSAT-126	Mia Kennedy	3 days ago

1-3 of 3

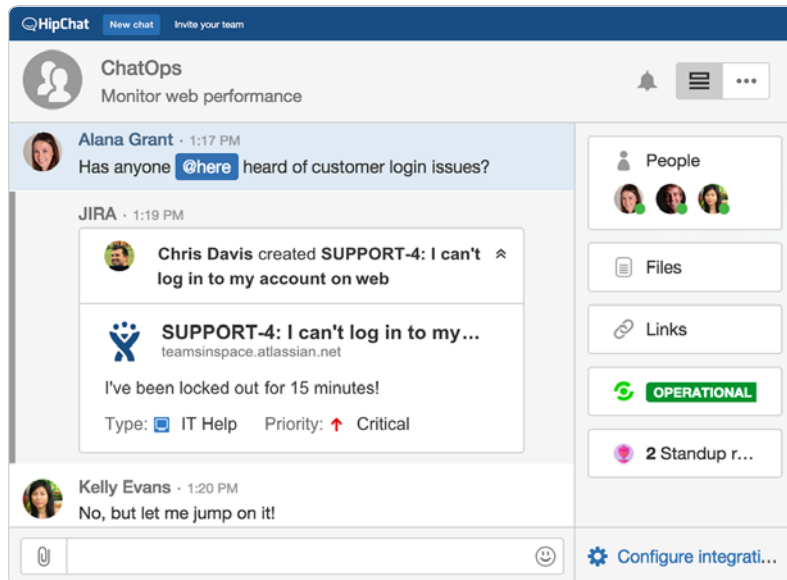
Past 7 days

ChatOps for internal support

Chat is another secret weapon of service, it's a power tool propelling innovation in business, technology, science, and beyond. There's even a name for this phenomenon: ChatOps.

We make sure all the different monitoring tools and infrastructure events are on HipChat, which allows teams to see the health of services and resolve incidents much faster.

HipChat is where we discover issues, discuss them, triage them and ultimately resolve them. This enables a collaborative form of issue solving, hacks down email.

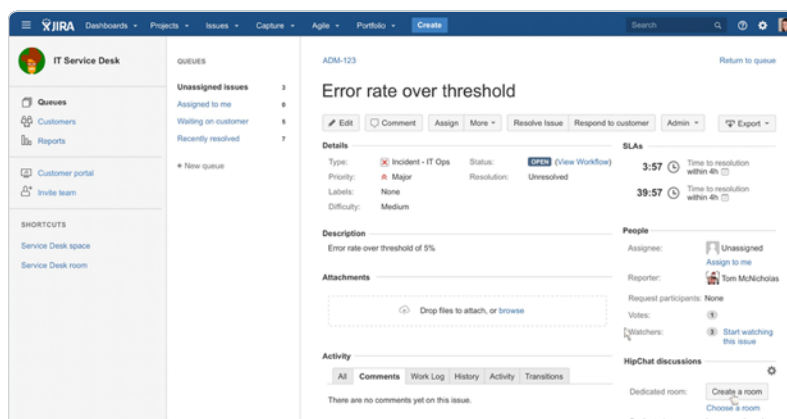


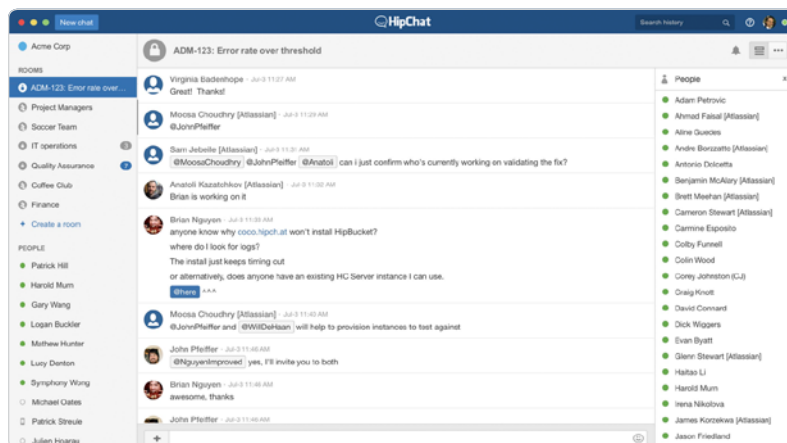
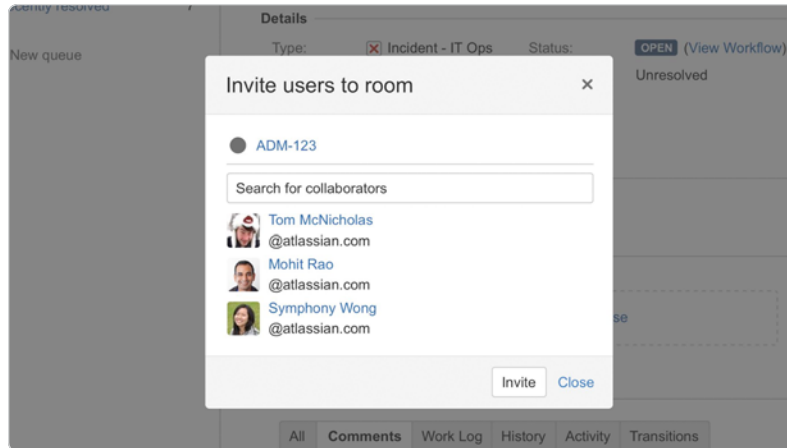
We've built a whole series of HipChat Connect add-ons for our specific operational tools, such as PagerDuty. There's an API for Big Panda, who shipped their HipChat Connect add-on, to aggregate alerts, get specific details about an incident and trigger appropriate actions

Turning tickets into rooms

One of the things we do with large-scale incidents is turn tickets into rooms so we can get swarming to happen quickly.

If there's an error rate over the threshold, we can click a button in JIRA Service Desk to create a new room dedicated to this incident. This gathers the right people together to solve a problem in real time.





The product teams and engineers get together and start using other HipChat Connect add-ons for data that may be relevant to this issue. At the same time, any issue updates get piped into the room so everyone's on the same page.

Chapter 3

Streamlining Service Management Across the Enterprise



After customer support and internal IT support, there's a huge opportunity to streamline service management across the enterprise, including areas like facilities, HR, finance, interactive marketing and lots of others.

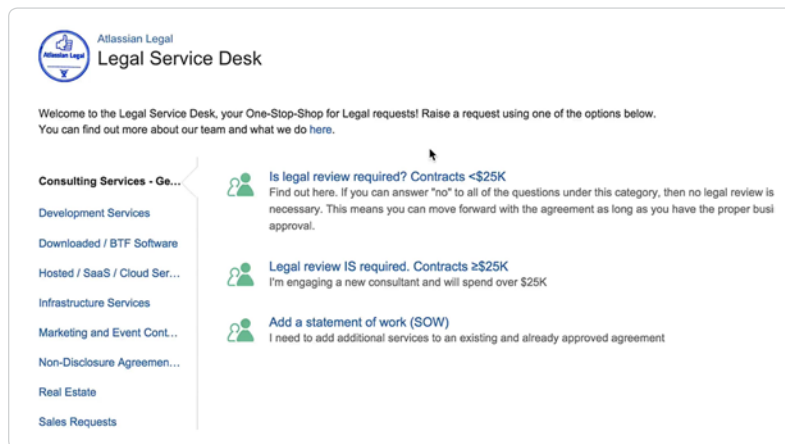
"51% of organizations have service desks outside of IT."

—HDI

Here at Atlassian, we have more than 50 different service desks running throughout the business. We use them for procurement, HR, legal, finance and elsewhere.

How the Atlassian legal team does support

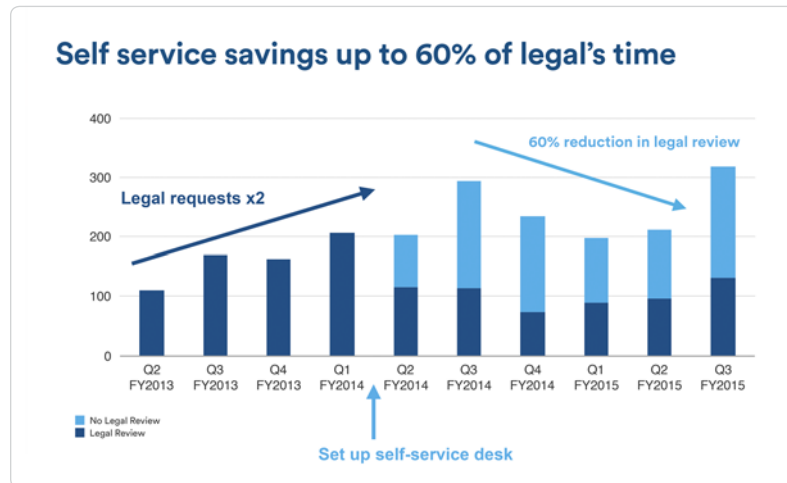
We have a four-person legal team serving more than 1,700 customers. Those customers require a lot of service from legal, and legal is trying to streamline how they deliver those services so that they can focus on top-priority, urgent business.



Someone might ask, "Do I need legal review on a certain document?" Or, "I have a statement of work from an outside consultant, do I need an NDA?" These are common questions that can be optimized on the legal service desk. We can increase customer satisfaction by delivering faster responses, while we boost morale on the legal team because they have the process organized and can see into their queues.

It helps our legal team to ask for more staff. When they present data that shows how much we've optimized our process, they can make a really good ROI case to the business about why we need more lawyers.

Self-service has resulted in huge time savings in legal. Legal requests have doubled over this year, but many didn't require legal review. In fact, through JIRA Service Desk we can see an overall 60% reduction in the number of items requiring legal review.

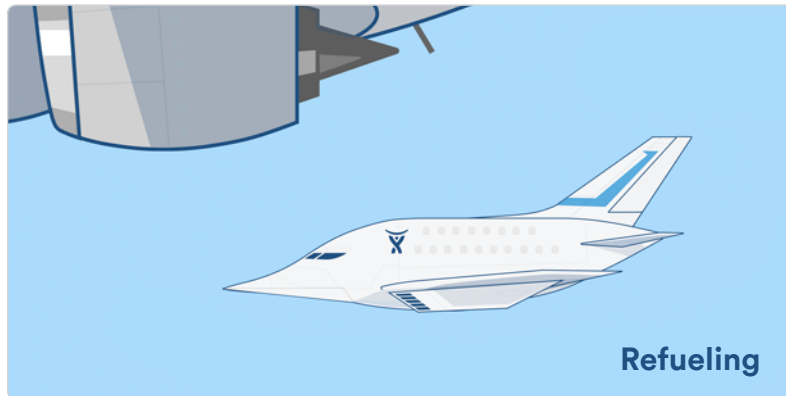


This gave us a 15% reduction of legal operational costs. This is just one example of our 50 internal service desks. This kind of efficiency lets us hire more engineers to build products rather than spending on back office functions.

Many of our customers are doing the same thing. For example, [Twitter](#) now has more than 130 different service desks running across their business.

Conclusion

Always Innovate



If there's one key to making your service organization legendary, it's innovation. When you're constantly working on a queue it can be very demoralizing, because a queue never ends.

If you can spend time off the queue, improving how the queue is run, reducing the number of repeated requests, solving progressively higher value problems, morale goes up. Hiring gets better, attrition goes down, and your customers get quicker and better answers.

No rules, just ship

For us, innovation is a crucial part of the service organization. Innovation allows you to "be the change you seek."

To that end, we run a quarterly innovation exercise, a 24-hour hackathon we call Shiplt. The concept started in engineering, but now we have more and more non-engineering teams doing Shiplt, including our services teams.



Our people spend one day every quarter on crazy innovative ideas, developing wall boards to envision support load and how we should change. Whether it's a smart graph to better connect staff with the knowledge base articles they need or automating answers with Hercules, the innovative solutions that have come out of ShipIt have radically changed Atlassian.

We give our service teams as much time as we can for them to innovate, improve overall service experience and reduce the amount of service that's required.

This all leads up to our mission: to unleash the potential in every team. We've unleashed the potential in our service teams, and with our products we're helping our customers do the same.

Unleash the potential in your IT team.

[Learn more about Atlassian for IT](#)

Epilogue

About Atlassian

Atlassian unleashes the potential in every team. Our collaboration software helps teams organize, discuss and complete shared work. Teams at more than 50,000 large and small organizations – including Citigroup, eBay, Coca-Cola, Visa, BMW and NASA – use Atlassian's project tracking, content creation and sharing and real-time communication and service management products to work better together and deliver quality results on time. Learn about products including JIRA Software, Confluence, HipChat, Bitbucket and JIRA Service Desk at www.atlassian.com.