Maintaining a Service Catalog in a Microsoft Computing Environment
By Harris Kern's Enterprise Computing Institute

A service catalog is a list of all the services your IT organization provides. Services must be structured within the IT organization in order to deliver them in the most efficient and effective manner. In a Microsoft shop those services could be:

Server/Web/Email/Network Services
- Provisioning
- Network Configuration
- Storage and Bandwidth Planning
- Installation and Upgrade Management
- Reporting
- Archiving
- Spam Control
- Architecture
- OS Configuration
- Routers and Switches
- Active Directory
- Guest Internet Access
- Voice and Fax (Provisioning-circuits/lines, voicemail)
- Employee Moves, Adds, and Changes
- Tele-working Support
- Asset Management
- Inventory
- Software licensing
- Desktop anti-virus support
- Remote Support
- Desktop Security Support
- VPN Access

Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery
- Analysis
- Development
- Phone Carrier Enhanced and Standard Alternative Routing
- Maintenance
- Review
- Testing

Business Analysis
- Productivity Enhancements
- Systems
- Process

Project Management
- Initiation

- Planning
- Execution
- Controlling
- Closing
- Technology Evaluation

Application Support
- Configuration Support
- Training
- Trouble-shooting
- Technology evaluations

Applications Development
- Impact Analysis
- Testing
- Source Code Maintenance
- Report Development
- Requirements Gatherin

Data Base Services
- Support
- Optimization
- Testing
- Maintenance
- Backups
- New Releases/upgrades
- Patch Management

Business Systems High Availability
- *System Monitoring*
- *Service Level Management*
- *After-hours systems support*
- *Capacity Planning*
- *Circuits Implementation and Management*

Hosting and Maintenance of all Hardware and peripherals
- Configuration Management
- Release Management
  - Quality Assurance

Facilities Management
- Environmental management
  - Data Center
  - IDFs
  - Power

Business Systems Integrity
- Backup and Restore

- Security Planning
- Change Management
- Intrusion Prevention and Detection
- Firewall Management
- Virus/Spyware Management

Technology Evaluation & Procurement
- Hardware (laptops, desktops, servers, etc.)
- Software
- Software Licensing
- Peripherals (printers, fax, blackberries, etc.)

Help Desk
- Incident Management
- Problem management
- Desktop Inventory
- Desktop Security

These services have many implications for the Help Desk. The service catalog will help:

- *Define services.* The catalog allows you to precisely describe the scope of each service, what is and is not included. You can also document the anticipated time it will take to perform the service (a service level).
- *Communicate the scope of services.* The service catalog is an excellent tool for clearly communicating the service centers scope of work to management, customers, and Help Desk employees.
- *Define responsibility.* For each service in the catalog, you can define the Help Desk's responsibility as well as the customer's.
- *Define the required resources.* Identifying the services you will provide allows you to define the areas and levels of expertise required of your Help Desk agents, which will make staffing your Help Desk a more decisive process. Defining the anticipated volume of requests for each service will help you to determine the number of resources required.
- *Identify the support tools required.* Choosing the right hardware, software, communications equipment, etc. is essential to the productivity of your Help Desk. Your list of services will help you select the tools that enable your staff and customers to work efficiently.
- *Develop a responsibility matrix.* A responsibility matrix defines who is responsible for delivering each service on your list. Requests for service are routed to the Help Desk agents or resource pools best suited to deliver groups of services that require related skills.
- *Define the structure of the organization.* You can define number of tiers required and the pools within each of the tiers required to field those calls b identifying the skills required to support each service and the anticipated volume. Many Help Desks create pools of resources with common skills to deliver subsets of the services you provide. This accommodates the incredible variety of products that most Help Desks support. Based on the complexity of the environment (products and services) you

support, you can determine the tiers of support required to handle requests. In many Help Desks, the first tier of support handles the bulk of requests and therefore the most common requests. More complex problems are handled at a subsequent tier, tier 2. Tier1 acts as a filter for all of the requests coming to the Help Desk filtering out, in many cases, over 80% of the requests. Requests that take longer to require specialized skills, in-depth knowledge. Or a dispatched agent is usually handled by tier 2. Those requests requiring even more skills or more time pass through to tier 3, and so on.

- *Determine Service Levels.* Determining the level of service you will provide for each service listed in your catalog will assist you in creating Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that meet your customers' needs and stay within the bounds of your Help Desks capabilities.
- *Develop projected costs.* By determining the anticipated volume of requests for a service and the type of resources and amount of time required to provision the service, you can develop a Help Desk budget.
- *Identify service metrics.* For each of the services in the catalog, identify the metrics you want to gather. You will see that many, if not most, of the metrics you identify will be the same across the services. However, you may also identify metrics that are unique to a particular service or group of services. For example, you may find that it is necessary to gather additional performance metrics for outsourced services in the catalog to ensure that your vendors are meeting their service commitments as documented in their service contracts.

Because the service catalog has such an important role within the Help Desk, it should be formally maintained. Adding a new service can impact the structure of the organization and the skill sets required. A new service has to have service levels defined, escalation rules defined and priority handling defines. There are costs associated with providing new services, and those costs must be evaluated. You may find that it is cheaper to outsource the service than to provide it internally.

Removing service from the catalog should be handled formally as well. They can be removed when they are no longer in use or when it is no longer cost effective to provide the service. In either case, removing services requires formal processing so as not to leave customers without support.

Formally maintaining the catalog means using structured processes to keep the catalog up-to-date and accurate, with these key objectives in mind.

1. Formally evaluate the services you provide.
2. Maintain the service catalog so that it always reflects current services.

The structured processes to maintain a catalog are Add a Service and Remove a Service (to be discussed in a future article).