

Seradex White Paper

A Discussion of Issues in the Manufacturing OrderStream

Service Module Software for Manufacturers: A Critical Customer Satisfaction Tool

Introduction

What is the cost of losing a customer?

Increased service requests, staff reductions, growing customer demands, and shrinking budgets are just a few of the many issues challenging today's manufacturing companies. A critical step to ensure customer satisfaction is having a centralized system to track and manage all service and support requests, and measure customer satisfaction.

The goal of any Service Module is to deliver timely, responsive service to customers. However, most companies take a reactive approach. Support staff, like fire fighters, must be ready to respond to critical issues quickly. The right tools and technology can help a company become more proactive.

The key benefit of a successful Service Module is gaining control. Having the right tools can greatly improve help support operations by reducing incident handling costs, streamlining workflow, and even enabling personnel to do more with less. The end results are faster response times, reduced call duration and – most of all – happier customers.

Conversely, in a reactive environment, situations tend to have a downward spiral effect that can impact customer satisfaction, Service Module personnel morale, and the bottom line.

To track customer issues, companies are commonly using email

and static spreadsheet tools. This approach impedes your ability to manage and deliver customer service.

Service Module software can offer a cost-effective system to enable everyone involved with a customer issue to communicate through a centralized system. This makes it easy for staff, customers, and managers to access the system from virtually anywhere at anytime.

Service Module Benefits:

- Centralizes all service requests
 - Monitors turnaround time, service levels and escalation processes
 - Tracks requests from all sources
 - Provides visibility to all relevant staff of new issues and work assignments
 - Enables companies to quickly build knowledge bases
 - Gives companies the ability to provide self-service online for customers
 - Automates report generation for analyzing performance
- Your Business Challenges

There are four key areas to ensure effective use of Service Module software:

Customer Satisfaction – Defining service levels measuring performance.

Company – How a company structures its procedures for the Service Desk

Technology – deploying applications to support internal and external customer needs.

Reporting – To measure trends of customer satisfaction levels.

Typically, companies consider investing in Service Module software when a combination of spreadsheets and email systems begins to break down. Delivering service is arduous and limited. You cannot share data, tracking is taxing, repetitive tasks are a burden, and issues constantly fall through the cracks.

A well-designed Service Module software solution:

- Allows technicians and customers to access the system from anywhere, anytime via the web
- Enables companies to automate ticket generation, request routing, repetitive tasks, business rule implementation, recording of solutions knowledge, and reporting on activity, performance and trends
- Offloads service requests and low-level problem resolution by enabling customers to use online self-service to submit requests, monitor their status, and search for their own solutions.

These tools will allow a company to improve efficiencies, reduce costs, and improve the quality of service to customers.

Having a single, customer issue tracking system gives companies the

ability to centrally record, track, assign, manage, and control all service requests, including requests coming in via the phone, email, the web, and wireless devices. All requests are captured and monitored throughout their lifecycle.

The Service Module prevents issues from falling through the cracks and customer support is delivered in a more efficient manner. This centralized system gives support staff an easier work process coupled with fast access to information they need. Companies are better equipped to understand and monitor the customer demands on their Service Module and support operations, and allocate resources throughout the problem resolution life cycle.

Service Module Software for Manufacturing Companies

There are many generic Service Module systems on the market today that offer a comprehensive range of capabilities and operate very well.

However, manufacturing companies have specific Service Module software requirements that you need to carefully consider. Here are some issues to examine with your potential Service Module Software vendors:
Integration with your ERP System

Many manufacturing companies try to make do with generic Service Module software. While these offerings do have some benefits but limitations are quickly encountered. Some important capabilities that manufacturing companies require include:

- The ability to search by product serial number and access bill of material information and service history
- The ability to send out loaner equipment temporarily and tie this to the support request
- Quickly determine if the product in question is under warranty
- Easily issue a repair quotation including parts and labor directly from the service ticket
- To issue and track RMA's associated with the service ticket
- To create a work order and track material and labor costs back to the service ticket
- Associate a service ticket with a support agreement and track all costs incurred under the support agreement.
- Identify parts and labor as chargeable or non chargeable and incorporate time and billing capabilities
- Determine if a customer is on credit hold or under a support agreement.
- The ability to issue a Non Conformance Report (NCR) and Corrective Action Document as a result of a service ticket. This integration dovetails with ISO or QS 9000 requirements

Ease of Use and True ROI

To optimize potential time and cost savings, your Service Module solution must be fast to implement and simple for everyone to use – including customers, management, staff, and technicians.

Self-Service Online

A Service Module delivers self-service tools so customers can help themselves anytime from anywhere.

There are many different metrics tracking cost of a service request. According to Gartner, the cost of a live person handling a call is \$5.30 compared to self service online which costs .45 cents, a savings of more than 90%.

Self-service is a necessity for companies that have global customers and the need to deliver 24/7 service. Customers need the ability to submit and track their own tickets. They can search, find, and resolve issues on their own. This not only improves the responsiveness and quality of service, but also reduces the amount of requests channeled to a live agent – freeing up human and monetary resources. Additionally, today's competitive business environment is

Two-Way Email Integration and Management

For fast, automated support, seamless two-way email communication to the Service Module is critical. This means automated handling of both outgoing email notifications and incoming email requests. This gives support personnel the ability to centrally manage support email and keep customers and others informed of status throughout the ticket life cycle.

Comprehensive Knowledge:

Management

Customers and staff can save by leveraging information from previous tickets. This can include common problems, resolutions, FAQs, and other knowledge sources.

Performance Monitoring

Service Module and support managers need fast access to current, automated reports that analyze support activity. Having these reports gives them the ability to monitor service delivery, learn what's open and what's closed, and reallocate resources based on request volumes.

You can measure if service level agreements are being met. Having this data allows them to make informed decisions and changes as needed. Real-time, customizable metrics and graphical reports, including an administrator dashboard, give managers an up-to-the-minute pulse on support

The Payback offered by Service Module Software

Web-based Service Module technology provides a cost-effective solution that can make an immediate impact across the company and with customers.

Customers – can receive faster problem resolution when dealing with agents and can resolve issues on their own with self-service online capabilities.

Support Managers – can streamline their overall support operations; reduce call handling costs, increase level-one support resolution, and keep a constant pulse on changing activity, performance, and trends.

Technicians - can be more efficient through task and process automation,

can improve communication, can reduce repetitive work tasks, and can exchange valuable information with their peers.

Conclusion – Service Module Software for Manufacturing Companies

For manufacturing companies to get the maximum benefits from Service Module software requires specific features and integration to your ERP system. .

Companies that empower their Service Module and support operations with the right tools will achieve significant cost savings, customer support delivery improvements, workflow improvements, time savings, and communication improvements. Service desks can not only help companies achieve this, but can also identify new opportunities to continuously improve processes – keeping employees productive and customers satisfied.

A Service Module may well be a cure for what ails many companies and their service and support departments whose symptoms include increase call volumes and staff reductions, growing customer demands, and shrinking budgets – to name a few.

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