WESTBOURNE
Global IT Solutions

Whitepaper:

Global Service Desk Solutions for the Pharmaceutical Industry

Choosing the right partner, implementation best practices, and optimising for success

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Introduction

Whether you are an Irish pharmaceutical company, a multinational corporation with lab and/or manufacturing facilities in Ireland, or a company with a sales office in Ireland, you will need IT and technical support. The technical support requirements of pharmaceutical companies are also changing, making it more important than ever to identify the right partner.

Pharmaceutical companies have always had unique technical support needs. For example, physical access to pharmaceutical facilities is tightly controlled, pharmaceutical organisations are at an extremely high risk of cyberattack, and new technology solutions need to be properly validated to ensure compliance with regulations.

In addition to those unique technical support needs, digital transformation initiatives and technologies are altering the support landscape even further. Systems are increasingly integrated and connected, including those that in the past operated in silos. More data is being produced that needs to be transferred, stored, processed, and used. And there is a blurring of the previously accepted demarcation between IT systems and OT (operational technology) platforms.

In this whitepaper, we will explore how to identify a global service desk solution that meets the unique needs of pharmaceutical companies, including the ability to adapt to the changes being brought about by digital transformation.

We will look at the specific requirements of pharmaceutical companies with facilities in different parts of the world and the importance of a joined-up approach to the delivery of global service desk solutions.

The whitepaper will also cover how to start an engagement with a global service desk solution provider and how the relationship will evolve over time. And we will cover the best ways to measure success including both business KPIs and user satisfaction.

The final section covers how we at Westbourne have structured our Global Service Desk solutions to meet the specific needs of the pharmaceutical industry, from the skills of our engineers to the flexibility of our approach.

Choosing a Global Service Desk Solution

Considerations

There are multiple considerations when deciding on the best global service desk solution for your Irish pharmaceutical facility. Those considerations include, of course, cost.

Buying the cheapest option is straightforward but it will never deliver on your requirements. It will also end up costing you more in the end.

What other factors should you consider when balancing your options and making your decision? Four of the most important are:

- Do you outsource to a managed service provider (MSP) or keep your service desk in-house?
- Should the service desk be based in Ireland, or can the support staff be located anywhere?
- Will general IT capabilities be sufficient or does the solution also require specific pharmaceutical industry expertise?
- Do you need skilled engineers to provide the support, or will lower-skilled, non-technical staff be sufficient?

Outsource vs In-House

One of the first considerations is to decide to outsource your global service desk or use an in-house solution. An in-house solution could involve recruiting technical resources for your Ireland-based operation or utilising your existing in-house team based in another location.

Outsourcing offers a range of benefits over both in-house options:

- You will have access to a wider range of skills when you outsource unless your existing team is large and diverse.
- Your existing team may already be operating at close to capacity so will struggle to handle an additional workload.
- You can more easily scale the service desk operation when you outsource to match the needs of your business.
- You don't have to worry about recruitment, retention, holiday cover, sickness, etc when you outsource.

Local vs Offshore

The next consideration is whether your service desk should be local or can the support be provided from anywhere. This consideration applies whether you are using an outsourced service or an in-house team. For this whitepaper, we are going to focus on the outsourced option. So, should you use an Irish MSP for your global service desk needs, or will you get the support you need regardless of the MSP's location?

One of the main reasons companies choose to offshore their global service desk is cost. The fact is, wages are typically higher in Ireland, so costs can also be higher.

That said, you will also get a substantially higher level of service when you work with an Irish-based MSP. An MSP based in Ireland will have a deep understanding of the local and European markets. It will be ingrained in Irish society and culture, helping to build relationships with your Irish-based team, as well as having local contacts in the industry – hardware vendors, software vendors, utilities providers, etc.

It's also crucial not to underestimate the importance of having boots on the ground. A lot of the work of a global service desk can be done remotely, but there are also many situations, tasks, and projects where having an engineer on-site is not only beneficial, but essential.

A local MSP will also build closer relationships with your Irish-based staff, as well as getting a deeper understanding of your business the longer they provide you with a service. This will ensure continuous improvement beyond the basics of the service level agreement, improving the performance, robustness, and reliability of your IT infrastructure.

General IT vs Pharmaceutical IT

Our clear recommendation so far is to outsource your global service desk and choose an MSP based in Ireland. The next question is do you need a provider with pharmaceutical industry experience, or will general IT knowledge be sufficient?

The pharmaceutical industry is unique given the safety and compliance issues that are a constant consideration. There are specialist software applications, equipment, and technologies that are unique to the pharmaceutical industry, plus the process of introducing new technologies requires regulatory knowledge and experience. This includes validation knowledge and experience (CSV and CSA) as well as experience helping pharmaceutical companies maintain compliance during day-to-day manufacturing and laboratory operations.

There is also the issue of IT/OT to consider, where traditional IT is increasingly being integrated with operational technologies unique to manufacturing and laboratory processes and equipment.

As a result, pharmaceutical IT expertise will deliver added benefits as well as reducing compliance headaches and risks.

Engineers vs Non-Technical Staff

The final high-level consideration when choosing a global service desk solution is another related to cost-saving options. Many global service desk providers offer non-technical resources as part of their service to keep their costs as low as possible. That might be a viable option for a standard business where the most complex IT components are email, MS Teams, and wobbly broadband connections.

The pharmaceutical industry is different.

Problems with your technology infrastructure, communications, or equipment can cause costly lab or production line downtime. IT issues can also increase patient safety, compliance, and cybersecurity risks, all of which are unique (or have unique components) to the pharmaceutical industry.

Therefore, it is essential your global service desk is staffed by qualified and experienced engineers. At Westbourne, we also prioritise consistency of service delivery, so our global service desk staff are not just engineers – they are also permanent employees rather than contractors.

The Solution

The best option for your Ireland-based facilities is to outsource to a local MSP that has pharmaceutical industry experience and a team of highly skilled, permanently employed engineers. We tick all these boxes at Westbourne IT, plus we have a proven track record providing global service desk and managed IT services to pharmaceutical facilities and operations in Ireland.

Putting the "Global" Into Global Service Desks for the Pharmaceutical Industry

The Importance of Being Global

As outlined in the previous section there are a number of factors to consider when choosing a global service desk solution. You need expert IT and technical support services but as a pharmaceutical business, it is also important for your solution provider to have direct industry expertise. There is also the international nature of your operations to consider, where facilities, teams, and staff that need IT support can be located in different parts of the world.

Identifying a partner that ticks all the required boxes can be challenging.

While there are some pharmaceutical companies that have facilities in one location, many have operations in different countries and jurisdictions. This can create a challenge when choosing a global service desk solution.

As an example, let's say you partner with a global service desk solution provider that has engineers based in Ireland. What happens when one of your teams in Asia or North America needs technical support? Can they only get support during Irish working hours? Is the support only available in English?

Supporting Facilities and Teams Around the World

The above scenario is far from ideal, so there are two additional essential requirements to consider when choosing a global service desk solution provider:

- **Follow-the-sun capabilities** - Your global service desk should have 24/7 capabilities, where your teams can get expert technical services wherever they are and whenever they need it. This is especially important given the extensive financial, reputational, and contractual repercussions that come from production or quality process downtime. Having round-the-clock access to pharma-specific, engineering-level technical support helps to prevent unplanned downtime and keeps projects on track.
- **Multilingual capabilities** – it is also beneficial to partner with a global service desk provider that has multilingual capabilities to improve communication with members of your team in different locations.

The Ideal Solution

In summary, the ideal global service desk solution for your pharmaceutical company should include the following essential requirements:

- Outsourced to an expert provider
- Local staff in key locations
- Pharmaceutical industry experience, including GMP qualifications
- Qualified and experienced engineers
- 24/7 availability
- Multilingual capabilities

Not only is that an extensive list of requirements, but it is also niche, so it calls for a niche solution provider.

At Westbourne, we have structured our global service desk solutions to meet the needs of global pharmaceutical companies with laboratory and/or manufacturing facilities in Ireland. Here's what you can expect when you choose us as your global service desk solution provider:

Westbourne's Global Service Desk Solutions

☑ **Outsourced to an expert provider** – we have extensive experience providing global service desk solutions.

☑ **Local staff in key locations** – we have placed engineers in client facilities in Ireland, the US, Japan, and other countries on a short or long-term basis.

☑ **Pharmaceutical industry experience** – we have direct pharmaceutical industry experience supporting standard IT platforms and equipment as well as those specific to pharmaceutical laboratories and production environments.

☑ **Qualified and experienced engineers** – each member of our team is a qualified engineer with pharmaceutical industry experience.

☑ 2**4/7 availability** – in addition to our operations in Ireland, we also have offices and engineers in New Zealand, giving us follow-the-sun capabilities.

☑ **Multilingual capabilities** – our teams in Ireland and New Zealand have engineers who speak multiple languages, including the main European and Asian languages in addition to English.

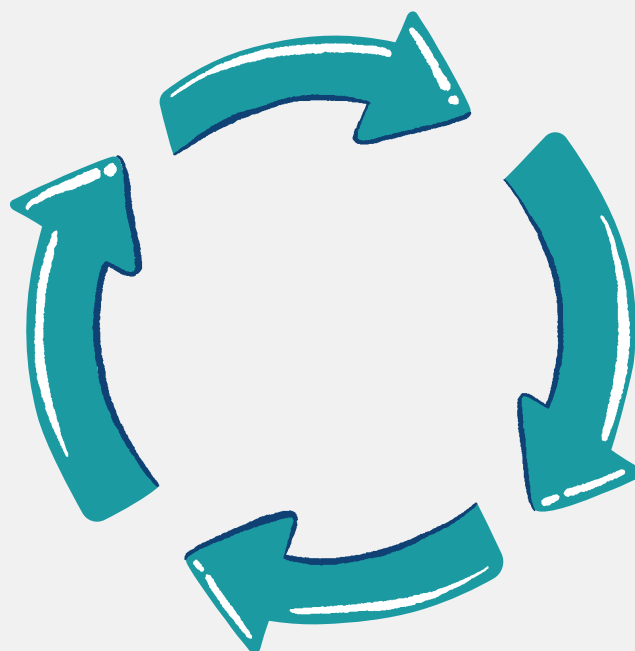# The Global Service Desk and Managed Services Solution Lifecycle

With an understanding of the type of global service desk solution and solution provider that you need, it is also essential to define your requirements. What do you need today and where do you want to get to in the short, medium, and long-term future? What is a global service desk as a concept in the pharmaceutical industry? What are managed services and what can you expect from a managed services provider? Within those solution categories, are there any additional factors that pharmaceutical companies should pay attention to?

These are common questions largely because "global service desk" and "managed services" are generally very loosely defined. They can mean different things to different people, from the organisations providing the services to potential customers like you.

Rather than looking for a specific definition, the best approach is often to look at the solution lifecycle for global service desks, in the context of the five stages of the managed services lifecycle we have described below. With a solution lifecycle approach, it is easier to see your entry point, the immediate and long-term benefits, and how the relationship with a global service desk provider can evolve.

From our experience at Westbourne providing global service desk solutions to the pharmaceutical industry, the relationship with customers almost always evolves as new technologies are introduced, challenges are overcome, available resources change, priorities shift, and strategies develop.

The Umbrella of Managed Services

Our Umbrella of Managed Services highlights the main evolutionary phases that are part of the global service desk solution lifecycle.

Monitor

Monitoring is often a foundational type of service, especially if you don't have the resources or capabilities to fully monitor your infrastructure in-house. The aim is to identify performance issues and anomalies, ideally before they have an impact on operations, as well as to identify optimisation opportunities.

Technology plays an important role in monitoring your infrastructure and IT estate, but expertise and experience are also required.

One of the reasons for this is the sheer quantity of notifications that must now be monitored in large organisations. The real value in a global service desk provider is understanding what the notifications really mean, the potential impact, and what to do next.

Operate

Tech infrastructure requires ongoing effort to maintain performance levels and security, and to minimise downtime. It is also important to ensure the user experience is as good as possible.

Ensuring a stable operating environment includes tasks such as:

- Incident resolution
- Update and upgrade processes
- Change requests
- Event and incident management

Change management is also crucially important. One example is testing updates before they are applied to fully understand the impact, as even small changes can have significant consequences.

Optimise

Technologies constantly evolve, as does your business, so it's important to continuously improve. Continuous improvement is essential in your manufacturing and laboratory processes, but it is also important in your technology infrastructure.

Optimisation examples include making performance improvements, enhancing automation, reducing licence fees, and improving SOPs.

Transform

A global service desk provider should provide critical support as you implement new technologies, systems, and ways of working. This includes projects that are part of your organisation's digital transformation strategy.

The expertise you will benefit from include:

- Project and strategy advice
- Project planning
- Project management
- Vendor liaison and management
- Implementation and post-mplementation support
- Training

In the pharmaceutical industry, it is also beneficial to have validation and regulatory knowledge and expertise, as well as experience with operational technologies in addition to IT.

Managed XaaS/Cloud

XaaS is a technology term that means everything-as-a-service (or anything-as-a-service). It is a catch-all term that describes the general trend away from owning and operating technology in-house to instead using subscription-based solutions typically delivered via the cloud.

Examples of XaaS include:

- SaaS – software as a service
- IaaS – infrastructure as a service
- DaaS – desktop as a service
- PaaS – platform as a service

The XaaS approach brings a range of benefits, including lower upfront costs and enhanced flexibility to scale and customise as required.

A global service desk provider can support your transition to as-a-service solutions pre-implementation, during implementation, and post-implementation.

The Four Ps

Irrespective of the phase of managed services you are in, the global service desk solution lifecycle should ensure the support you receive is:

- Proactive
- Predictive
- Preventative
- Prescriptive

It is a flexible, process-driven approach to managed services that delivers on your needs today while also facilitating future requirements.

How to Measure the Real Impact of Your Global Service Desk Solution

How do you measure the success of a global service desk solution? Is it through the successful implementation of a new technology to manage support tickets? Is success achieved by your solution provider fulfilling its SLA (service level agreement) obligations? Can you judge success using metrics like uptime and availability?

All the above examples are relevant to success, but they also leave out the most important elements – the experience of users and the impact IT services are having on your business.

Having a shiny new support ticket solution is okay but it is not a measure of success if users continue to be frustrated by IT issues.

A global service desk provider delivering on the terms of an SLA doesn't necessarily mean your IT systems are helping your business achieve its objectives.

And 99.8 percent availability becomes an irrelevant figure if IT systems fail at critical times, especially when those failures impact customer relationships.

Metrics like SLA delivery and server uptime don't capture how a global service desk solution is helping (or hindering) user experience, productivity, and business performance.

In other words, there is a disconnect between commonly used metrics/KPIs and the real-world experience of the employees and other stakeholders who use your IT systems to deliver for customers, drive innovation, and achieve business objectives. Breaking that disconnect is essential.

The Disconnect Between Technical Metrics and Real-World Experience

There are metaphors in a range of areas that demonstrate a disconnect between technical metrics and real-world experience.

In politics, government representatives can talk for hours about how they have allocated budgets and the policies they have implemented, but those words mean little if there are issues that matter to you that you feel are not being addressed. Similarly in sport, a team can hit multiple positive metrics such as shots on target, goals scored, and tackles made, but fans struggle with such stats if the team can't win games.

The disconnect between technical IT metrics and real-world user experience can be just as pronounced. It can also be costly both financially and in terms of business performance.

What Happens When There is a Lack of Focus on User Experience

Focusing on technical metrics rather than real-world experience leads to a range of negative outcomes:

- Users continue to be frustrated and dissatisfied even when technical metrics are positive.
- IT performance becomes increasingly out of alignment with business and strategic objectives.
- Technical resources are allocated to tasks and projects that don't improve user experience or help the business achieve its objectives.
- Trust in IT teams can fall because users are being told one thing but are experiencing another.
- Frustrations with IT systems can feed into overall employee dissatisfaction which can have knock-on impacts on recruitment and retention.
- Opportunities to innovate and improve can be missed because there is a focus on the wrong areas.

Properly Measuring the Success of Your Global Service Desk Solution

Assessing a global service desk or managed IT solution requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account technical metrics but doesn't stop with them.

The assessment also needs to include:

- User experience
- The ability of IT systems to support day-to-day business operations
- The impact of IT systems on productivity
- The impact of IT systems on employee job satisfaction
- The effectiveness of IT systems in support of other business priorities, such as compliance and digital transformation.

Essential Steps

Assessing the areas identified above is more time-consuming than looking at a server uptime chart, but the benefits are worth the effort. The essential steps to take include:

- Gathering data on the experience of users, typically through surveys. There should be a particular emphasis on user pain points.
- Gather data from key business stakeholders, including SMEs (subject matter experts), HR, and finance directors. The priority is to understand whether key stakeholders believe IT systems are delivering value and supporting business priorities.
- Develop solutions to any concerns, issues, and problems identified in the surveys of users and other stakeholders.

- Refine other areas where improvements can be made as true success comes from improvement, not just resolving problems. Fostering a culture of continuous improvement in IT is also beneficial.
- Change the perception, where your global service desk solution is treated (and measured) as a service that adds value to the business rather than being a simple cost.

Our Approach at Westbourne

Below is an example of the customer satisfaction results we have achieved for one of our clients. The client is a multinational corporation where we provide a team of field engineers.
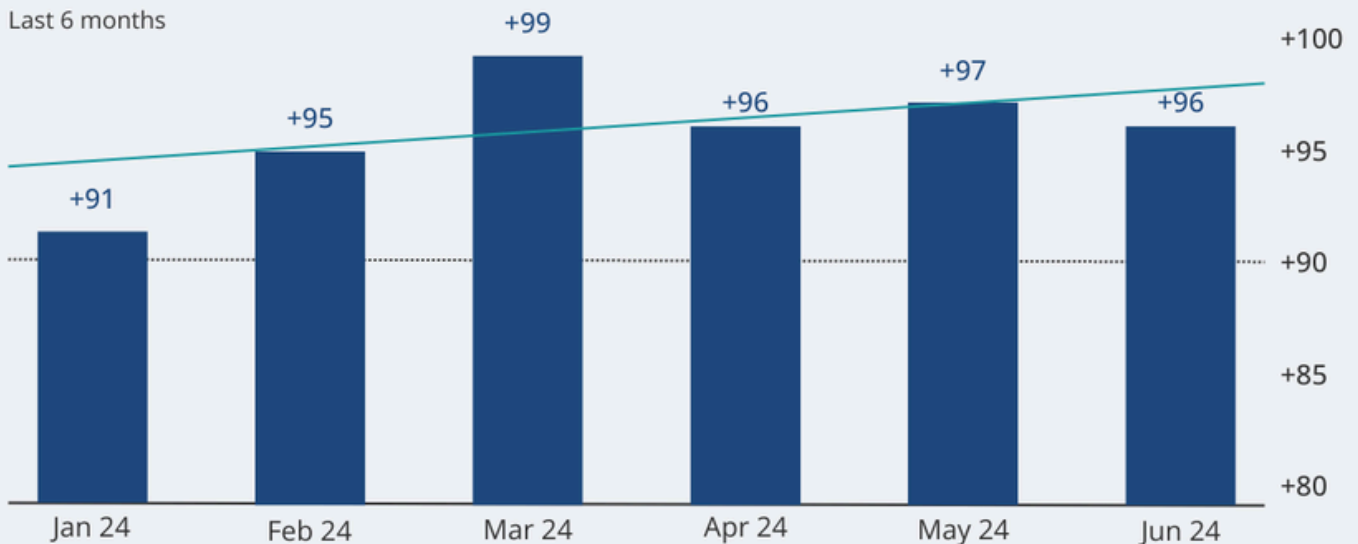
We provide data on the key metrics you will be familiar with in relation to the delivery of our global service desk solutions. As we understand the critical importance of user experience and real-world business impact, we also help you get a full understanding of the success of your IT services. This includes experience in a number of platforms that gather user experience data.

Our open approach to optimising user experience also shapes how we deliver our services, including global service desk solutions. Specifically, our objective is not to tick boxes for technical metrics. Our efforts are instead focused on ensuring your IT services deliver for your business, including in crucial areas such as user experience.

Westbourne's Global Service Desk Solutions – Supporting Your Pharmaceutical Facility

Pharmaceutical companies of all sizes and in all locations need skilled, proactive, and scalable technical support that is always available and hands-on when it needs to be. At Westbourne, we specialise in providing Global Service Desk solutions to companies in the pharmaceutical industry.

Best-in-Class Global Service Desk Solutions

What makes a best-in-class global service desk solution? To summarise the previous sections of this whitepaper, a best-in-class global service desk solution should feature the following elements:

- Outsourced to an expert provider with extensive expertise across a wide range of technologies and business processes.
- Access to technical resources remotely or at your location.
- Direct pharmaceutical industry experience and extensive knowledge of compliance processes, regulations, and best practices, including Computer System Validation, Computer Software Assurance, and 21 CFR Part II.
- Skilled, qualified, and experienced engineers.
- 24/7 availability with response processes tailored to your requirements.

- Multilingual capabilities, especially if you have facilities in multiple jurisdictions.

Focus on Key Areas

Pat Minogue, General Manager at Westbourne, said: "My recommendation to pharmaceutical companies looking at Global Service Desk options is to focus on a few key areas. The first is the importance of having direct expertise on the ground.

"Remote support is okay in some situations. We have extensive remote capabilities at Westbourne for this reason, with bases of operation in Ireland and New Zealand to give us follow-the-sun capabilities.

"However, there are other situations, especially in pharma labs and manufacturing facilities, where you need to be hands-on, on-site. As a result, we also have extensive experience where our engineers operate on-site at client facilities.

"The people providing the support is the next key area to focus on. In the pharmaceutical industry, technicians with IT industry expertise will be able to provide support, but only in certain areas.

"The reality is the pharmaceutical industry is unique. The technologies, applications, and platforms that are commonplace in the pharmaceutical industry are unique. The compliance requirements are unique. The interface, or lack of interface, between IT and OT – operational technology – is also unique. This means IT industry expertise is not enough. You also need pharmaceutical industry expertise at an engineering and scientific level.

"The final focus area is the starting point in your relationship with a Global Service Desk solution provider. The number of tasks and issues, and the scale of what you want to achieve, can be so vast it is difficult to identify a starting point

"My advice based on working with many pharmaceutical companies over the years is that it is a journey typically beginning as a joint-operated service before transitioning to a fully managed service as the relationship matures over time.

"The journey often starts with information, so you know what is happening and why.

"This evolves to ensure current performance capabilities are maintained and benchmarks achieved.

"After that we can start optimising, setting new performance benchmarks, and raising standards.

"This then leads to transformational projects – digital transformation - where performance standards are raised even further and critical business metrics are improved, from reduced error rates and enhanced automation to minimised costs and optimised OEE.

"Technology, both IT and OT, is critical to the operational viability, profitability, and competitiveness of modern pharmaceutical operations. The right Global Service Desk solution will augment your existing technical resources, wherever they are located, so you can achieve your objectives."

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> *The reality is the pharmaceutical industry is unique... This means IT industry expertise is not enough. You also need pharmaceutical industry expertise at an engineering and scientific level.*
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>
> **Pat Minogue, Westbourne General Manager**

To discuss your Global Service Desk requirements, please contact us at Westbourne today:

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