6 HELP DESK METRICS

THAT YOU SHOULD NOT MEASURE INDEPENDENTLY

Standalone help desk metrics often give you a skewered picture of performance. Discover how to get a holistic picture of help desk metrics using correlated metrics.

ManageEngine Analytics Plus

6 help desk metrics that you should not measure independently

Introduction

Help desks use several metrics and KPIs to measure their performance. However, not all of them provide deep insights into the actual performance standards. Some metrics mask underlying problems, some present a skewed picture of performance, while others do not provide clarity at all. For example, request resolution time is a useful metric for measuring technician performance. However, resolution time when measured with request approval time provides in-depth information on process gaps because when the approval time increases, so does the overall resolution time.

Help desks can benefit from combining metrics that provide in-depth insights into what is happening within the help desks. In this e-book, we will explore six critical help desk metrics and learn how to make sense of them by correlating them with other relevant metrics.

1

First call resolution and mean time to resolve tickets

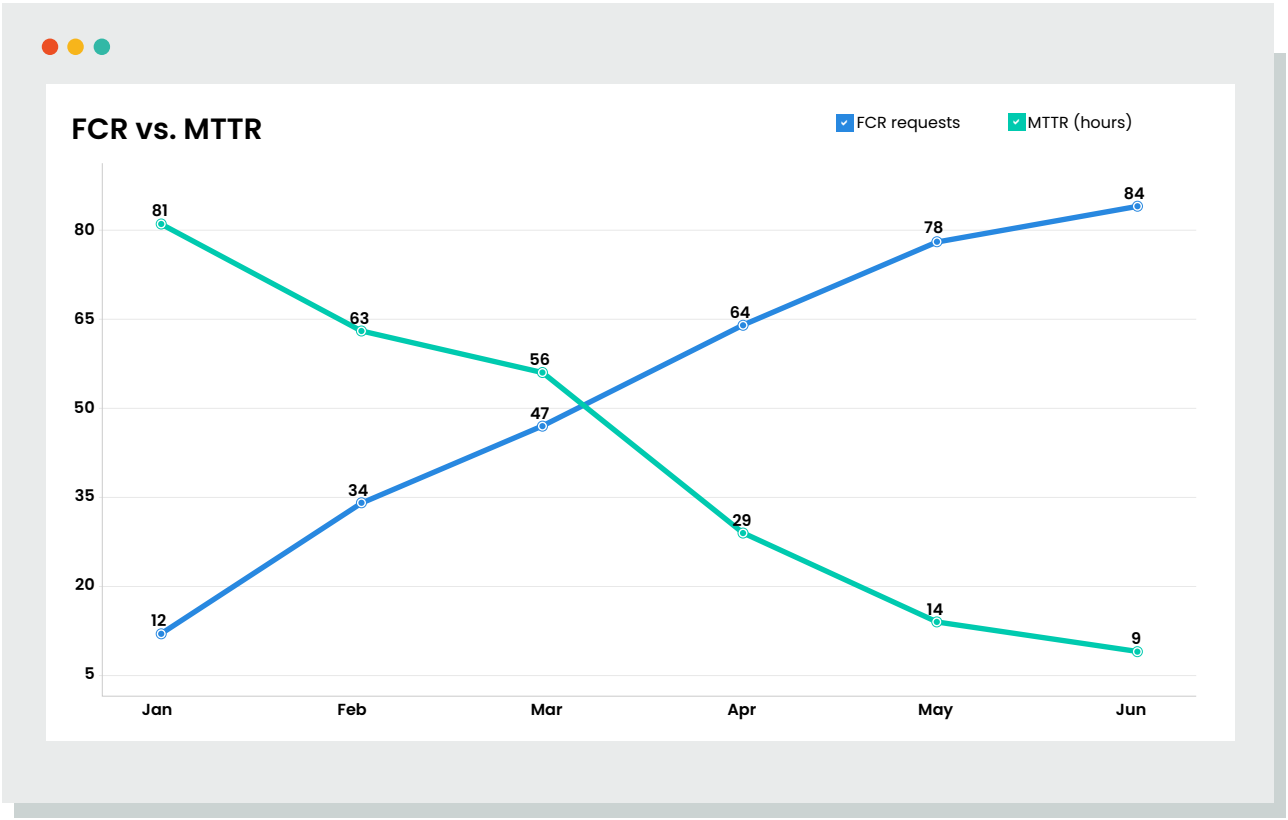
First call resolution (FCR) is a great metric for measuring customer satisfaction, technicians' skills, and IT support staffing levels. High FCR is usually associated with higher customer satisfaction and skilled technicians. Low FCR indicates a shortage in the number of technicians or their skill sets.

The mean time to resolve (MTTR) incidents is an incident recovery metric that demonstrates how quickly an organization can bounce back from an incident. A low MTTR indicates quick serviceability of systems, networks, servers, and applications—an indicator of skilled technicians. A high MTTR indicates significant downtime and, eventually, losses for the company.

While both these metrics offer useful information on their own, together they provide better clarity into technicians' skills. FCR and MTTR mirror each other. So when FCR improves, so should the MTTR incidents.

If the overall ticket volume and the technician count remain constant, resolving more requests during the first call should reduce the MTTR for requests of all complexities. However, if the MTTR does not reduce for more complex requests, it means your technicians are great at solving simple tickets but struggling with complex ones, indicating a significant skill gap.

Here is a sample report that shows an ideal correlation between FCR and the MTTR incidents.



2

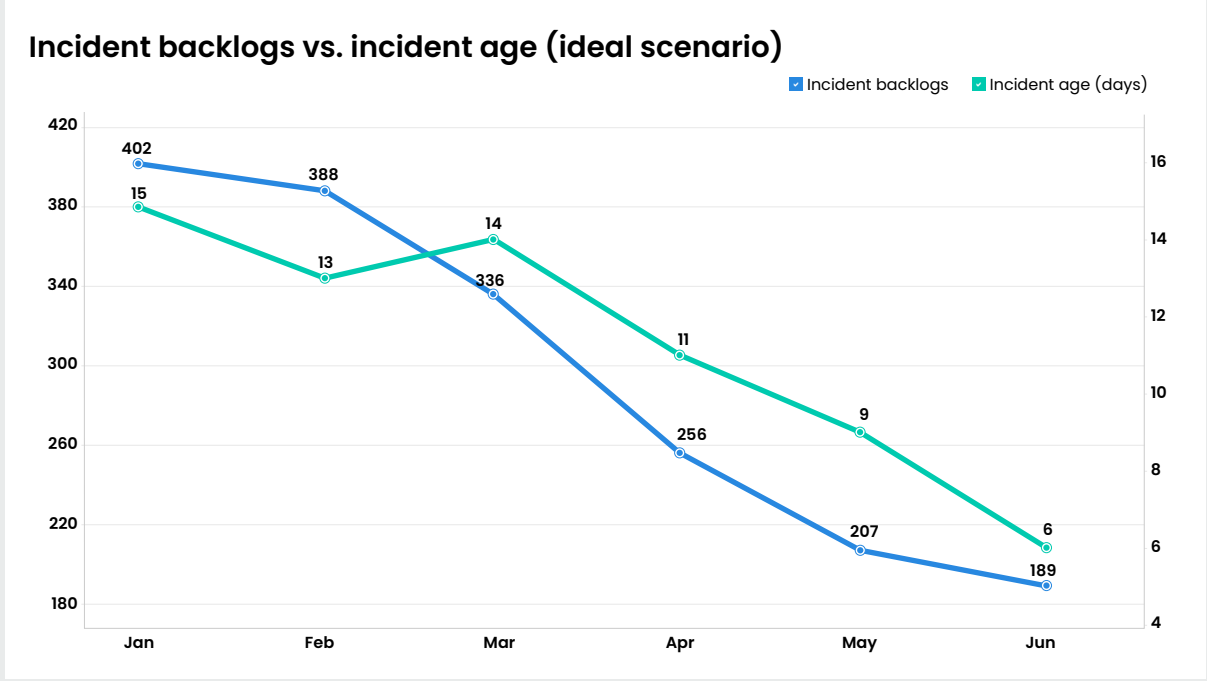
Incident backlogs and incident age

Backlogs are open incidents that have not yet been resolved by technicians. Incident age is the average time incidents remain open before being resolved by technicians. Comparing these metrics enables you to scan your help desk for loopholes in your service process.

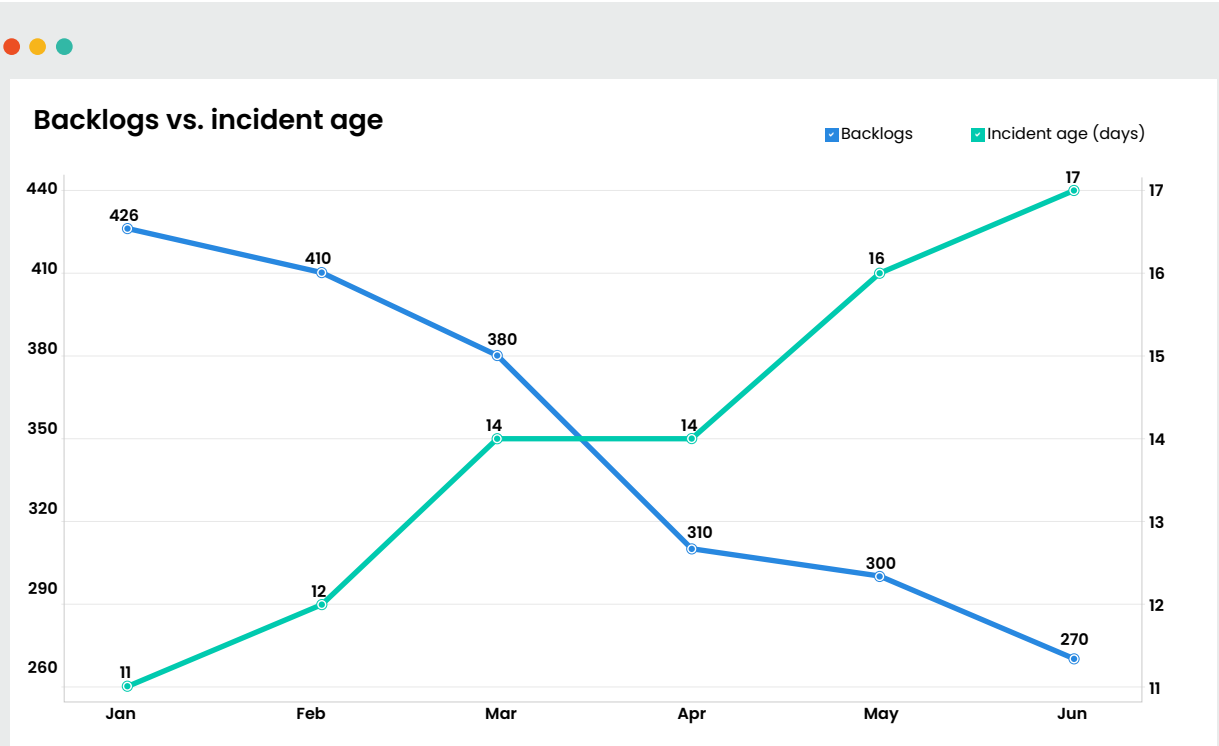
A healthy help desk should closely align these two metrics with each other. That is, when incident backlogs decrease, so should the average incident age. If there is not a corresponding decrease in the incident age, it means your technicians are cherry-picking incidents and resolving the easiest ones first to cut down on backlogs while complex, time-intensive incidents are left idle.

Measuring backlogs without correlating them with the average incident age causes tunnel vision, leading the IT manager to assume their technicians are tackling backlogs effectively while in fact, they are not.

The report below illustrates an ideal scenario where the average incident age decreases along with incident backlogs. This is a target that help desks should aim to achieve.



Here is another report that illustrates a scenario where the number of backlogs and the average incident age are not aligned with each other, hinting at trouble brewing within the help desk.



If you notice a similar trend in your help desk data, further investigation is needed to discover the nature of the idle requests. The majority of them tend to be regarding servers, hardware, or access to critical portals.

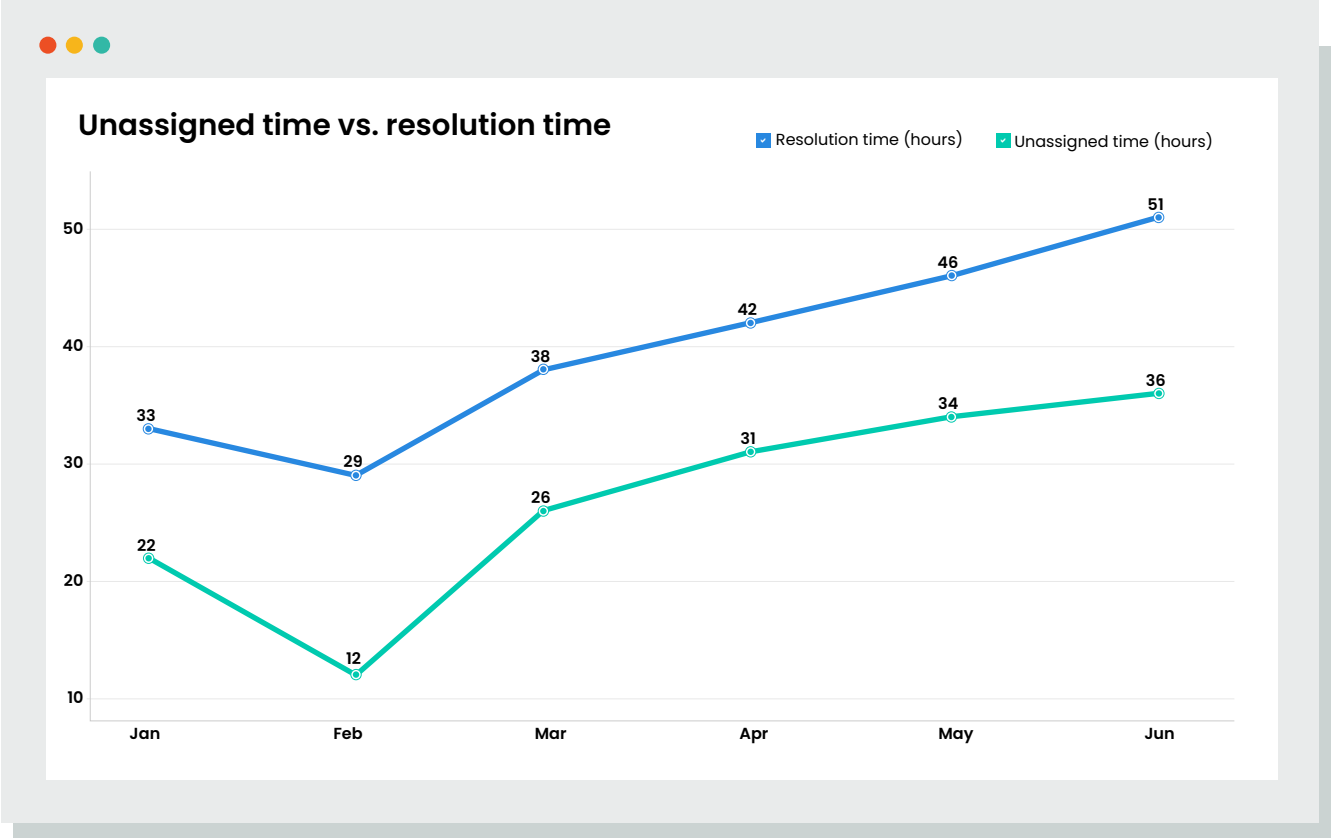
If they are about hardware requests, assess your procurement schedules and explore ways to fast-track asset purchases. If the delay is due to the servicing and maintenance of servers, look into the age of the servers and their service history to evaluate whether now is the right time to replace them. If the delay is due to the poor serviceability of cloud-hosted applications, opting for premium support could help you get faster services.

3

Unassigned time and resolution time

Unassigned time refers to the time it takes to assign a ticket to a technician. Resolution time is the overall time it takes to resolve a ticket from the time it is created to the time it is marked as resolved. Unassigned time is a good measure of how efficient your ticket automation process really is. Resolution time is a significant metric used to measure the overall efficiency of the help desk.

While both these metrics offer substantial information on help desk operations, together they can help you identify process-level flaws. This is because the time it takes to assign tickets adds to the overall time it takes to resolve them. In other words, the longer the unassigned time is, the longer the resolution time will be. The graph below traces the relationship between unassigned time and resolution time.



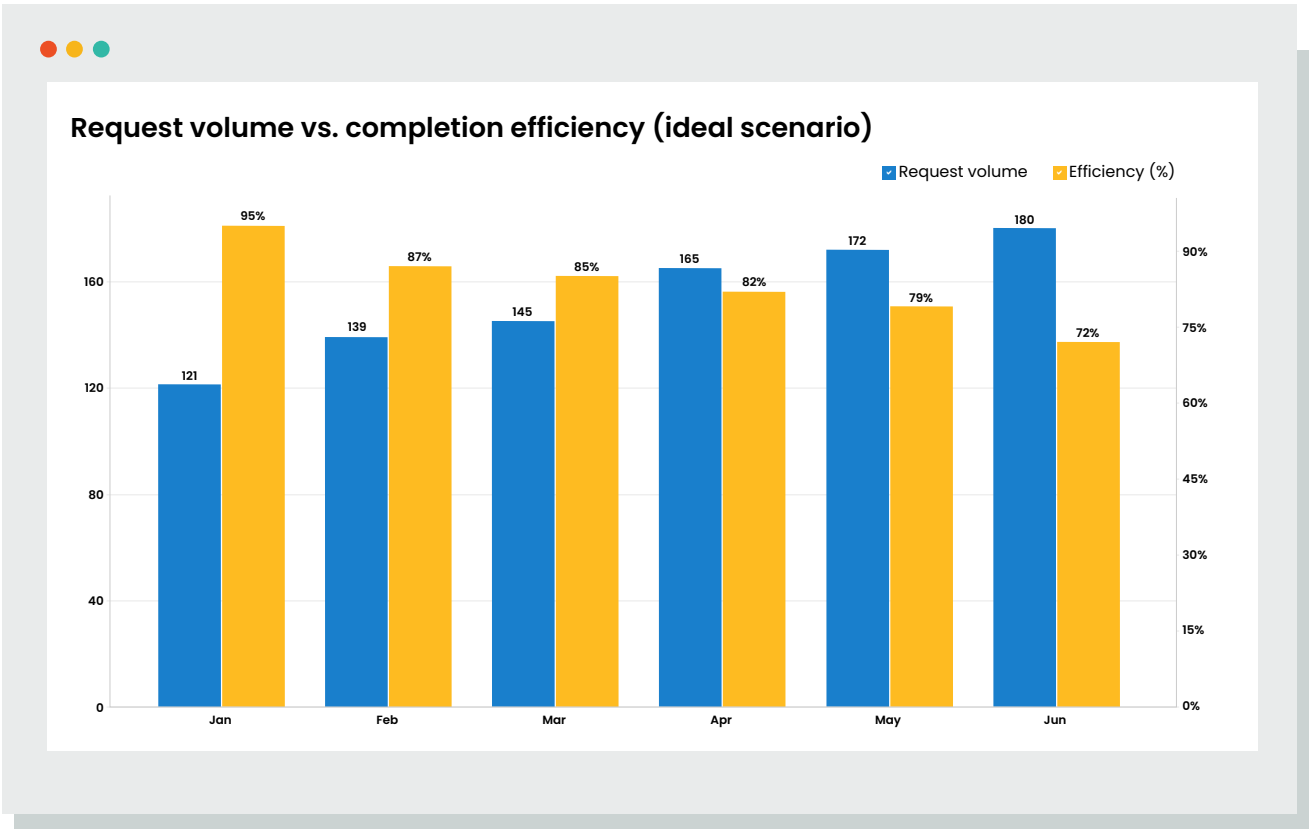
Ticket resolution by itself involves several stages and processes, so it would be in the best interest of the help desk to keep the time taken to assign tickets low lest it increase the overall resolution time.

To keep ticket assignment time in check, start by evaluating ticket assignment rules. Ensure you have the right number of skilled technicians distributed across peak periods and off periods. If you manage to assign tickets to the right technicians quickly on the first go, it will not add extra time to the ticket resolution time.

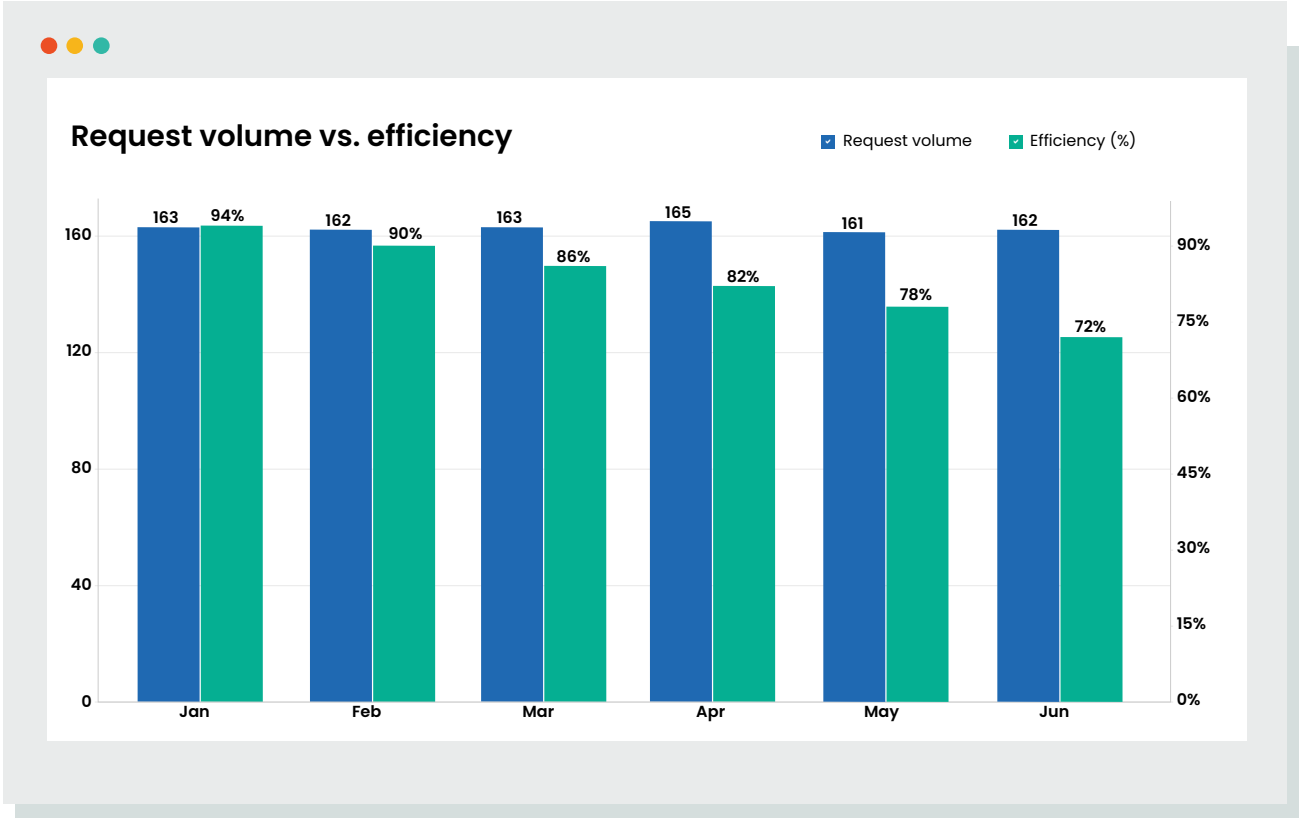
4

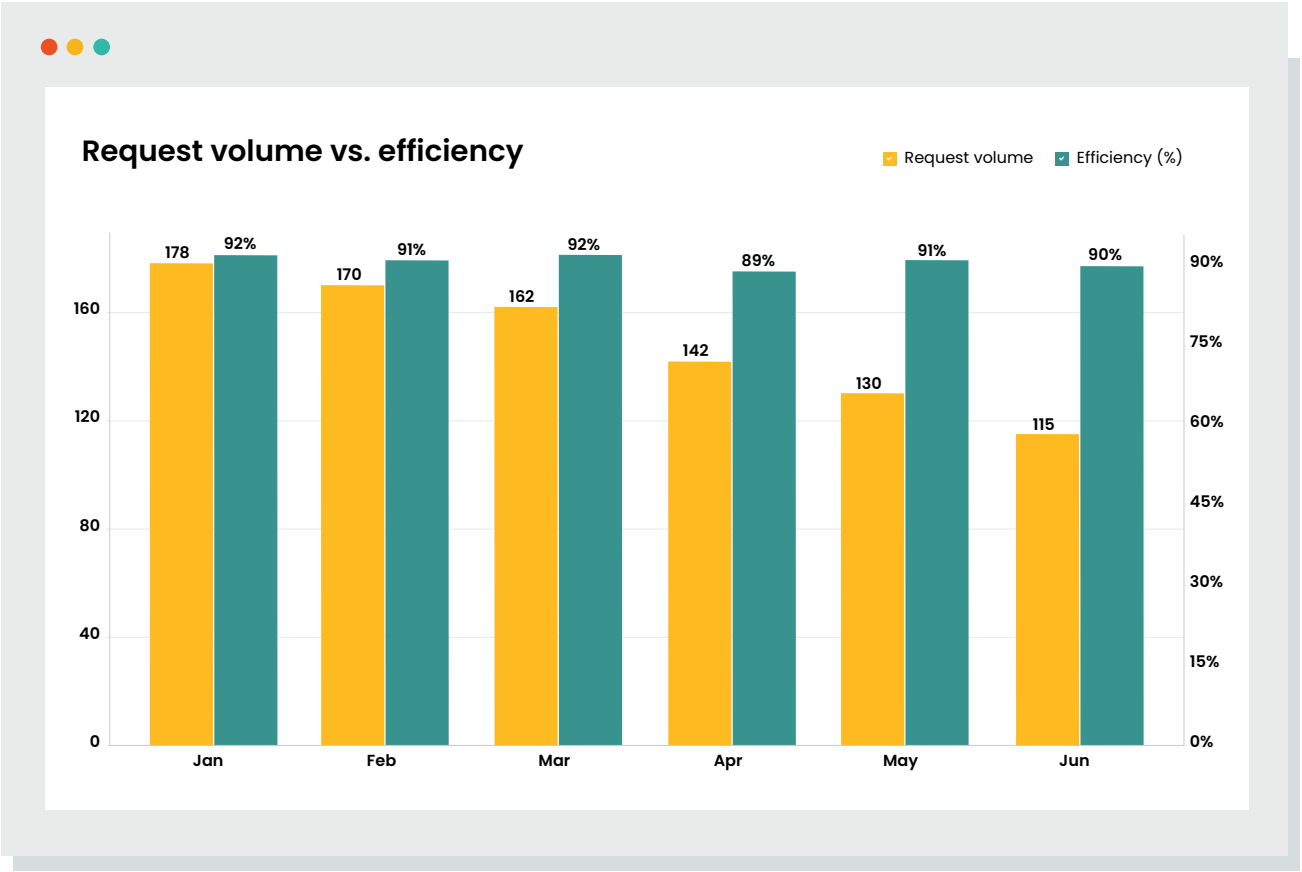
Request volume and completion efficiency

Request volume is the total number of requests created in a given period. Request completion efficiency is the ability of your technicians to resolve incoming requests within the same period. There should be a fine balance between these two metrics. That is, when the request volume decreases, the request completion efficiency should increase. Naturally, when the request volume increases exponentially, the request completion efficiency will come down, provided the number of technicians available to resolve requests remains unaltered.



However, if the request completion efficiency decreases even when the request volume remains constant, or if the request completion efficiency remains constant when the request volume decreases, it means your technicians are falling behind. The two reports below illustrate these cases.





The graph above represents another case, wherein the completion efficiency remains constant (represented by the green bars) while the request volume decreases. This means that the technicians are resolving just enough requests to maintain their request completion rate even when the total available requests for each technician to work on is actually less than before. This can also be a sign of lagging behind.

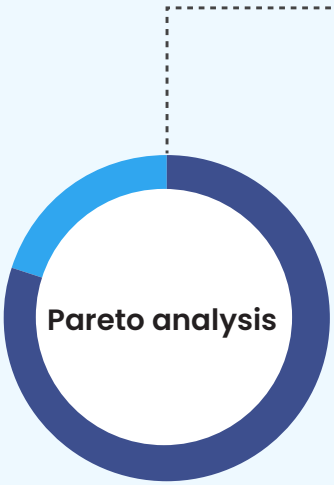
It is not possible for a human to be productive 24/7. However, IT managers need to keep a close watch on technicians who regularly lag behind and identify ways to increase their contribution. Usually, providing additional training or responsibilities can help get technicians out of their slump and increase their productivity.

5

Technician workload and effort distribution

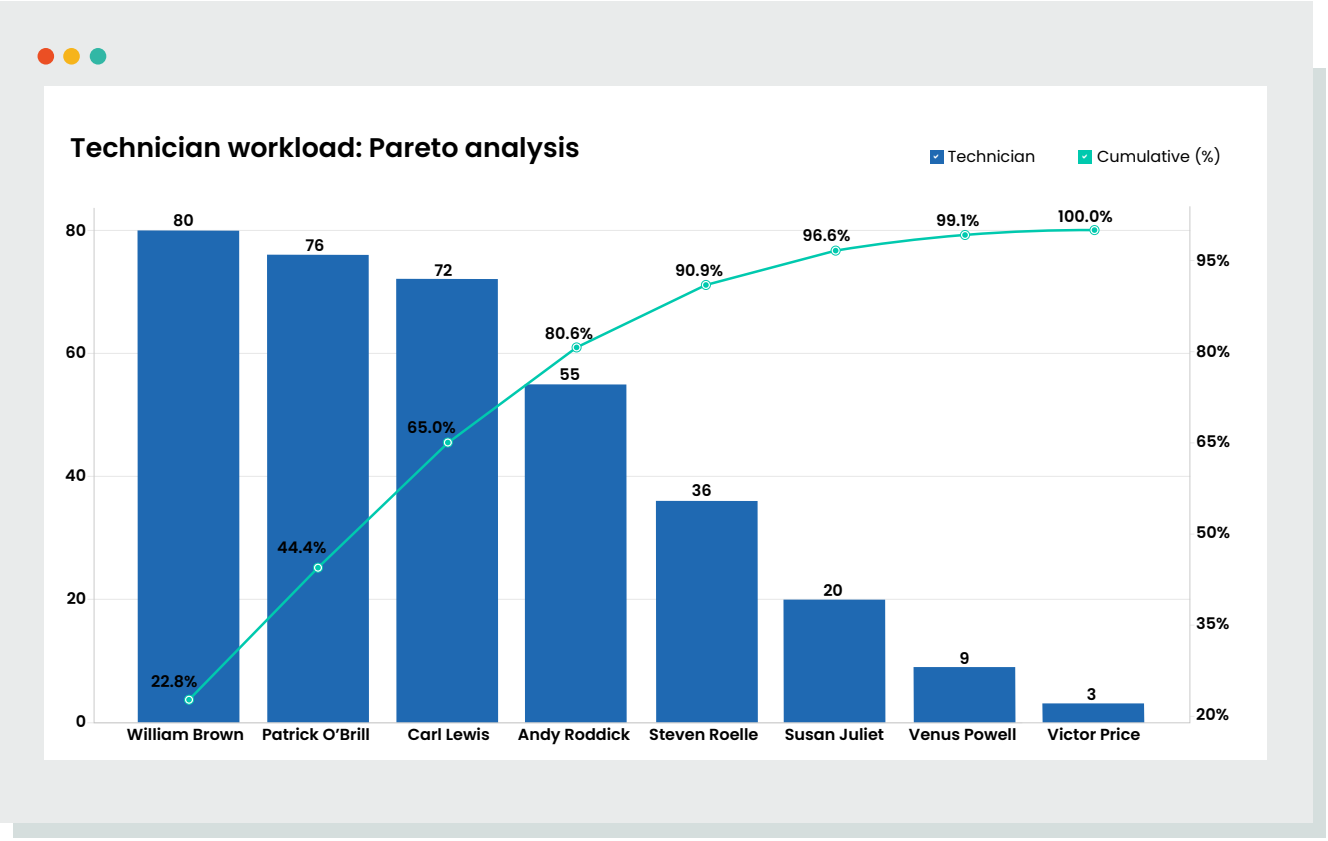
Technician workload has a direct relationship with performance. Tracking the workload helps you spot technicians who have relatively lower workloads and those who regularly pull in the majority of the work. Balancing the workload among technicians and ensuring an even distribution of work is important to ensure the proper functioning of the service desk.

Often, technicians complain they are overworked, and there are various underlying issues contributing to this—a lack of skills, a lack of tools and technology, poor ticket assignment practices, a lack of proper guidelines, or a combination of these factors. To know if your workload is properly balanced among your technicians, perform Pareto analysis.



80% of the results can be achieved by doing **20%** of the work.

Applying this theory to the technician workload, we should be able to find the 20% of technicians who carry 80% of the workload.



It is clear from the graph that a few technicians carry the bulk of the workload, while others carry a relatively lighter load. Next, we need to discover the reasons behind the technicians not sharing the workload equally, then work on evenly distributing requests among the staff.

Tip: The ticket category plays a major role in how much of a workload a technician can carry. So, it is best to recreate this report for different categories of requests. You can even recreate this report to study workload distribution based on ticket tiers (i.e., the complexity of the tickets).

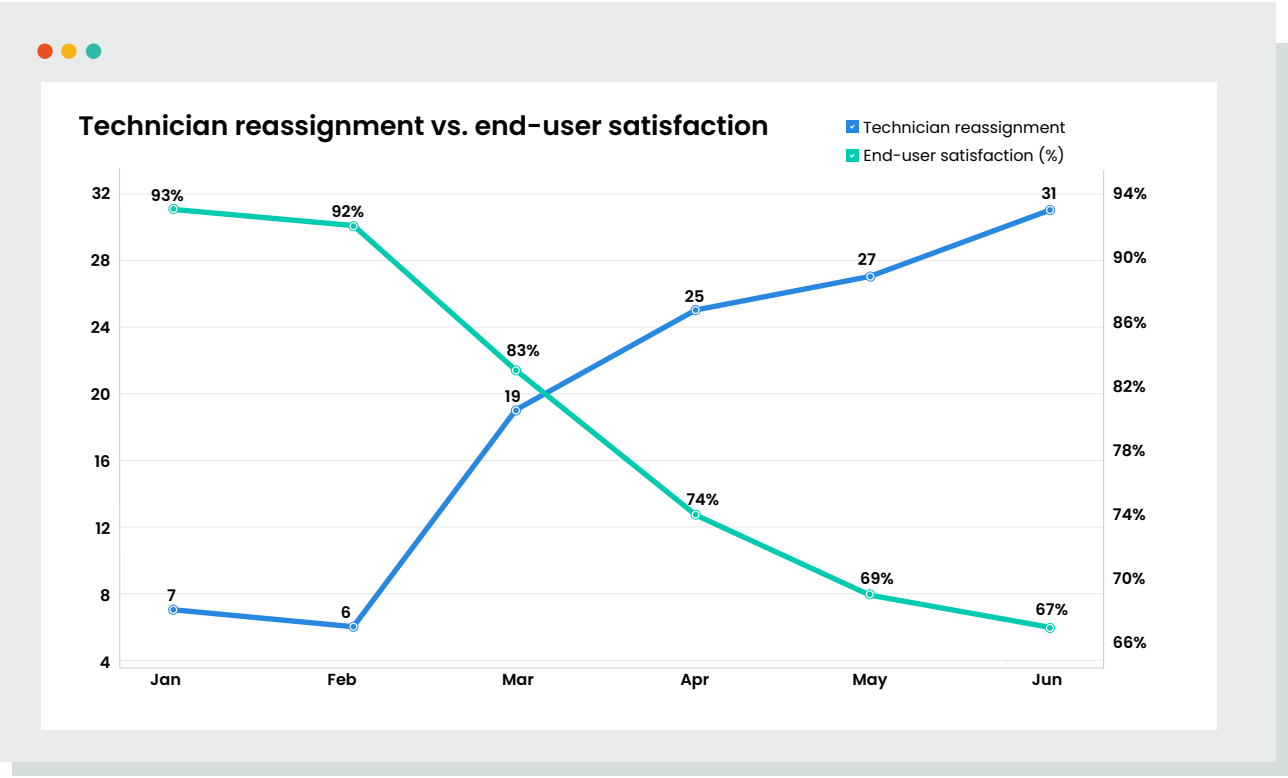
6

Technician reassignment and end-user satisfaction

After tickets are automatically assigned to technicians, they can be transferred from one technician to another for a variety of reasons. Whatever the reason, tickets bouncing between technicians is not good for the help desk as it can lengthen the overall resolution time. From the end user's perspective, their ticket being transferred to another technician means they have to explain their issue all over again from scratch.

Imagine calling customer service to complain about an internet outage. Would you rather talk to one technician who can stay with you until your issue is fixed, or have the first technician transfer the call to half a dozen technicians who make you repeat your complaint each time?

While longer resolution times and poor quality solutions are the primary causes for end-user dissatisfaction, technician reassignment silently adds hours, if not days, to the overall resolution time and contributes greatly to end-user dissatisfaction. The report below traces the correlation between end-user satisfaction and technician reassignment. As you can see, during the months when technician reassignment is more frequent, end-user satisfaction dips.



Help desks should try to keep the number of reassignments as low as they possibly can. This can be the shortest route to achieving a higher end-user satisfaction rating.

To achieve this:

a. Fix issues with ticket assignment rules. Automatically assigning tickets to the right technicians takes the manual guesswork out of finding the most qualified technician for the job.

b. Fix skill gaps and ensure you have the right set of technicians who can handle a range of tickets of varying complexity.

c. Motivate underperforming technicians through additional training or peer learning sessions to bring their performance up to speed.

Conclusion

In this e-book, we explored a few KPIs that when combined offer deeper insights into IT performance, workload, and efficiency. We hope this helps you get a better sense of your help desk's actual performance standards. To explore more metrics, **check out our resource library**.

About

ManageEngine Analytics Plus

ManageEngine Analytics Plus is a self-service, AI-driven IT analytics solution that helps organizations implement complex initiatives that address requirements of expanding businesses. Analytics Plus visualizes IT data from several applications, and integrates out-of-the-box with several popular IT applications such as ServiceDesk Plus, Jira, Service Now, Zendesk, and Endpoint Central. Analytics Plus features an AI-powered analytics assistant that responds to voice and text prompts to provide meaningful visualizations. This eliminates the need for a data analyst to aid help desk managers, and reduces report building time while enabling organizations to make faster, data-driven decisions.

Download a 30-day free trial of Analytics Plus to kickstart your IT analytics journey. Want to know more about the product before giving it a try? **Sign up for a free virtual tour with one of our experts.**

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across the world

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management experience

90+
products
and free tools

190+
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