

Changing the service review conversation



Overview

A divergence of opinion about the quality of service delivered and experienced by customers prevents service providers doing more to make their customers' businesses better

Time is wasted trying to assure the customer that the service delivered is what was promised, because there is no agreed, objective, simple, business-focused data to draw upon. Highlight provides that data, in a clear, digestible form, to enable enrichment of the relationship between service provider and customer.



When provider and customer don't have same view of the service...

Some customers regard their service providers with guarded suspicion. While they have entrusted their service provider with their business, there is frequently a marked disconnect between the quality of experience perceived by the enterprise and the service assurance guarantees given by the service provider.

In these circumstances, service reviews or contract renewals can become a difficult negotiation. The service provider wants to enrich the relationship, but the customer isn't sure they want to stay signed up. It can be a stalemate, where neither side is getting what they want from the exchange.

Often, the service sales representative enters discussions with no data to hand, or with fragmented, dishevelled data, pulled together painstakingly from disparate sources. Service assurance data is either complex and confusing or else dubious, disreputable, discredited and often, disbelieved.

The bottom line is that if the service quality data presented bears no resemblance to the customer's perceived experience of the service, then the conversation degenerates into assertions, accusations and opinions, rather than being fact-based. Instead of taking out their order book, the sales representative would probably rather put on some body armour.

The problem with service reviews

From the service provider's point of view, how can you sell increasingly complex solutions, with more components and moving parts, if it's difficult to communicate and explain the value of the existing, simpler solution effectively?

In short, how can a service provider provide acceptable, credible proof that they've delivered value?

Change the conversation

How can the conversation be moved away from a delicate confrontation, based on distrust and disputed experience, to a more positive and productive dialogue focused around making the service delivered even better?

How can a sales representative meet their targets, if they spend most of their customer contact time defending against alleged service defects and heightened perceptions of poor experiences, which may have actual root causes outside the sphere of control of the service provider?

A trusted advisor

Using Highlight as a service assurance tool lets customers see the service delivery salesman as a trusted advisor, rather than a slightly disreputable, coin-operated rogue

A single truth

Highlight displays single, shared visibility of a customer's information technology estate, on a single pane of glass, rendered in near real time. This gives maximum transparency and openness, while guaranteeing the data is impartial not modified to suit the service provider. A relationship built on transparency fosters more trust between provider and customer.

Create confidence

Highlight builds customer confidence in the service provider. Open sharing of data tells the customer that the service provider has nothing to hide and won't try to.

Enable conversations

Customers and service providers seeing the same business-level data can communicate in a common language. Instead of phoning in issues saying, "the network is slow," and the support desk replying, "It looks fine to me.", the conversation can begin with "I can see a performance problem with my business-critical application. What steps are you taking to remedy it?"

Clear and concise data

In Highlight there is no blizzard of charts and numbers that can conceal more than they reveal. All the necessary data is there, but shown in an easy to understand format, without ever being condescending.

Demonstrate Value

In pre-sales and proof of concept engagements, prior to signing a contract to provide a service, Highlight can demonstrate the value of the proposed service provision with hard data. Fact-centric recommendations can be made by the provider, about the kinds of service options the customer needs, based on solid information, without any hidden agenda.

Resolve issues faster

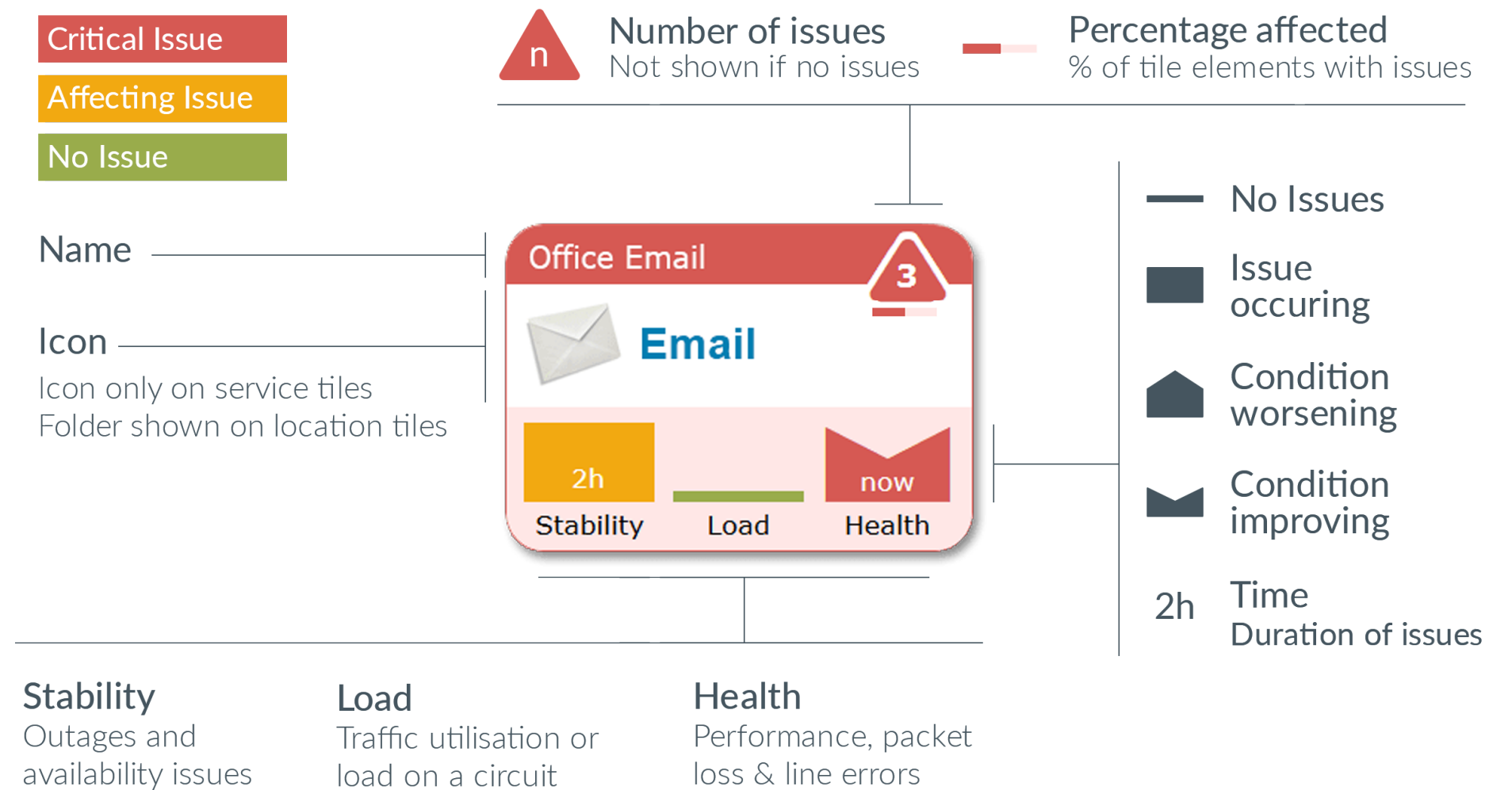
Highlight allows a service provider to be more proactive, assuring the customer that any issues will be noticed and acted upon as soon as they arise, often before they are customer-impacting.



See clearly

Highlight is a multi-tier, multi-tenant solution, allowing a service provider to manage multiple customer accounts in a single tool

Highlight monitors the entire IT estate, including networks, hosts, switches and Wi-Fi access points, so there are fewer tools to license and log into to manage the service.



Alerts

Intelligently filtered to prevent spurious alert storms and react to both thresholds and sensitivity settings, so that alerts are not issued on a hysterical hair trigger.

Reporting

Designed for simplicity and speed, drawing on both raw and pre-summarised data, to minimise the waiting time when running a report.

Data

Extracted on demand or scheduled and sent to recipients automatically. Network element details are available in highly visual form, making any issues obvious.

Users

Cut to the chase at a glance, allowing root cause analysis and mean time to remedy to be significantly accelerated. No clutter, no distraction and nothing to dilute your focus.

Real world scenarios

Here are some examples of some real-world scenarios where the insight and clear visibility, provided by Highlight, solves problems

The problem...

A customer that ran a hotel chain worldwide was mystified as to why their front of house receptionists were experiencing inordinately long delays, when checking out guests in the morning, using their purpose-built application. The application had quality of service guarantees and performed well, the rest of the time (and on weekends). Initially, the assumption was that the morning check out slowness was just a symptom of heavy load.

With Highlight visibility...

It was discovered that at precisely that critical guest check out moment, everybody at head office was logging into their Outlook email accounts and were downloading their overnight correspondence. The email traffic had been incorrectly routed over the class of service dedicated to the front of house application, causing link saturation every working day morning. Email was business-critical, but not as important as checking out their guests quickly and efficiently.



Another customer had Wi-Fi traffic with bad (or erroneous) DSCP markings in the network.

Consequently, a class of service normally reserved for real time traffic (in this case, VoIP) was being almost fully consumed by application traffic that had no business using that resource, with the consequence that the VoIP quality of service was degraded.

Highlight can show when applications are using an unintended class of service.

Without this visibility, the fault could remain hidden for months.

A better basis for business

In addition to helping service providers become a customer's trusted advisor, Highlight provides the foundation for better business relationships

- Encourages data-driven discussions about service quality and improvement
- Counters and becalms any previously learned tendency toward blamestorming
- Allows the service provider to own their issues, resolve them rapidly and talk about them, without appearing to hide or bend the truth
- More efficient use of customer contact time
- Permits service reviews to get past dispute resolution and onto up-selling
- No more fruitless hours spent assembling service assurance numbers by hand, from diverse sources
- More time spent in customer relationship building rather than data crunching
- Contact renewals are more straight-forward, when the value of the service delivered is evident, tangible and credible, without hand-waving or waffle
- Customer satisfaction improves and value for money becomes obvious
- Customers can assess their own capacity needs, through Highlight, without having to take the service provider's word for it



Summary

The value of Highlight, to a service provider, is that it helps demonstrate the value of the service proposition, in clear and easy to understand ways


Service quality is transparent, rather than opaque. When something has gone wrong, both parties can agree on the cause, positively discuss the reasons why and jointly decide what might be done to prevent future trouble, based on a shared view of the truth. Selling managed or network services is easier, when the customer can see the value for themselves. Importantly, service providers can take orders to deliver higher value, rather than paying out disputed service credits.

“Our network is a lot about quality. We sell based on global reach and keeping promises of quality, backed up with a good SLA. Highlight makes the network quality visible and you engage with client in a much better way. It not only helped me to sell a \$20M USD network, but also to work with the client, during the contract period. We have a weekly meeting, with the customer, about network performance.

The Highlight tool allows us to take the discussion to another level and enables upsell of network and related services on a weekly cadence. Highlight brings us more network sales on a weekly basis. Without Highlight, this would not happen. With Highlight, we upgrade the network, upsell services and can monitor performance, when we move to hybrid and software-defined networking.”

Get in touch

If you are a service provider and want to improve your ability to meet customer’s needs more effectively, contact Highlight for more details.

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