WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
PERSPECTIVE

from the other end of the phone line...
WHO WE ARE NOT

Genies
Wizards
Leprechauns
Goblins (well, sometimes...)
THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP US OUT
LEAST FAVORITE HELP DESK CALLS

• “My Computer Doesn’t Work.”
• “What Am I Doing Wrong?”
• “Why is the Internet So Slow?”
• “Where Are My Files?”
• “Can You tell Me My Password?”
• “This Program Stinks”
caring for and feeding a Problem
SO WHAT’S YOUR PROBLEM, ANYWAY?

A Problem is:

A perceived gap between the existing state and a desired state
CHANGES

The nature of problems have evolved over the years…

- more complex
- in gaps between systems
- not always local

Harder to troubleshoot and solve
PROBLEM LIFE CYCLE

• Determine you have a problem.
• Investigate the problem and its environment.
• Communicate the problem, describe it in detail to tech support.
• Hypothesize causes.
• Test resolution(s).
  • Repeat previous step and this step as needed.
• Agree on an endpoint.
RT(F)M
You really have a problem. No, really.
DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM

What do you see?

What did you expect to see?
DESCRIBE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

• What application?
• Where in the application?
• Are you logged in? If so, what role (what identifiers do you have)?
• Browser: IE, Firefox, Chrome, Opera (version)
• OS: Windows, Mac, IOS, Android
• Device type: Laptop, Desktop, iPad, Smartphone
• Where are you (on campus, home, work)?
• Hot, cold, dry, humid… The more (relevant) info the better.
WHAT SYSTEMS ARE IN PLAY?

• I’m trying to login to my library with my campus logon ID.

• I am trying to download my electronic course reserves.

• I am trying to access a database from home.
REPRODUCE THE PROBLEM

• Step-by-step navigation. Detail click-by-click and describe what you see.
• Has this worked previously?
• Can others reproduce it?
• Does it only fail under certain conditions?
• Copy and paste exact errors and when they occur.
• Screenshots help!
CONSIDER THIS AN INVESTMENT

• Investigating and communicating the problem accurately may take time.
• GIGO. (Garbage In, Garbage Out)
• The more you put in up front the more likely a speedy resolution will follow.
FIRST CONTACT
REPORT

• Describe your issue - what you are seeing and what you expect.
• Have the help desk replicate your issue.
• Be clear as to when this last worked and if anything changed on your side.
TREATMENT

Hypothesize about causes, propose and test solutions.
HYPOTHESES, HAMMERS AND NAILS

It’s human nature to analyze problems in terms of what you know: when you have a hammer in your hand, everything looks like a nail.
TESTING SOLUTIONS

- What have you tried, if anything?
- What was the result?
- Was the result acceptable (did you reach your desired state)?
- If not, did it shed any new light on the cause of the problem, or a possible path forward?
- Get it all down in your ticket!
FOLLOWING UP

Don’t assume everyone remembers your issue

You did get a case number, right?
RESOLUTION IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME AS A SOLUTION.

- Sometimes the problem is completely solved.
- Other times there is a workaround or simply wait and see.
- Be prepared, there may be no solution.
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

• Take ownership of the problem and expect the help desk to do the same.
• Define a reasonable time for response.
  • Let them know how critical this is for you.
• Its OK to be strong and direct but please do not be mean or rude.
• Make sure you are mutually intelligible.
• Be patient.
FACELESS STRANGERS

• Cloud environment / centralized IT services means less direct contact with folks you know.
• Different people may be handling your issue at different times.
• Did we mention document, document, document?
  • Your case ticket is your Rosetta Stone.
NOW, HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?