

Spring IT Help Desk Internship

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Introduction

Joining the workforce has been a tough journey that takes patience and networking skills. I am currently employed at the Old Dominion University IT help desk as a student help desk technician. Prior to being hired for this job, I had applied for hundreds of internships in the surrounding area. Even after applying to these jobs, I had received barely a rejection email. Most companies would just disappear, or my application would just be forgotten. With these results, my enthusiasm had been lacking by the time I found the help desk. The reason I applied to the help desk was because a friend recommended it to me; they had currently been working there. My friend that was working there told me how to apply and that they would put in a word of recommendation for me. What I applied for was a job that I eventually got hired for. My goals for the job were improving my customer service skills, expanding my knowledge of information technology systems, and improving my critical thinking skills.

Orientation and Training

The history of the ODU help desk is not available to me. The only information I have is that the help desk has not always been located in Monarch Hall. New information that was given to me is that the help desk is changing names from the 'Information Technology Services Help Desk' to the 'Information Technology Help Desk'. The help desk manager, Clifton Blaisdell, said that it would be a better name, so customers understand that we don't actually provide IT services. For example, some users come in thinking we can help them fix their personal computers, but that is not a service we provide. The services we offer at the help desk according to the website, "The Division of Digital Transformation & Technology offers faculty, staff, and students a wide range of technology services and support. Our mission is to provide high-quality, cost-effective computing and communications services that meet the needs of the University community". Some specific services we provide are password resets, two-factor authentication reactivation, and many others. The ones I listed are two of the most common requests we have at the help desk. We are usually the first responders when an issue arises with a customer. We serve the entire ODU campus and our Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) partners. Our customer demographic is very diverse because of the large scope we cover. The ODU help desk has only recently merged with the EVMS help desk, so everyone is still getting used to the different systems. Both of the help desks are collaborating to create a smooth transition for users.

Orientation was a smooth process because I started this job during the off season. Everything was in person, me and one other co-worker would sit in a conference room with Steafan, our supervisor. During orientation, he explained what roles would be and walked us through a canvas course. This canvas course had everything from how the ticketing system works to explaining the software programs that we would encounter. At this point of my orientation we had not merged with EVMS, so most of the information was ODU related. We

worked on learning the basic systems, how to take calls, and how to write tickets. The most challenging part to me was writing the tickets because there were so many elements that had to be filled in.

When we finished the canvas courses, we jumped to actually doing tickets also known as incidents. The first few tickets we did were in the conference room with Steafan observing, they were only password reset at the start. After graduating from orientation, we are instructed to sit at the desk to start actually taking calls and serving users. One request that took time to get comfortable answering was hotline calls. These hotline calls are calls from the classroom that need immediate action. The users are usually professors that are having technical issues while trying to start a class. In orientation, we learned how to handle them in theory, but not in practice. When a hotline comes in, we answer, record the information and walkie-talkie it in the IT classrooms department. My first few weeks at the desk answering the hotline calls were terrifying. But with everything, the more you do it, the better you get at it. When first sitting at the desk, it was nerve-racking, but it became easier the more I talked to my co-workers. They were always there to help and answer questions. I feel they made my experience so positive and enjoyable.

General Management & Structure

At the IT help desk, there are three levels of technicians. The first level are student help desk technicians, we are the first people the users see when they walk in. As student technicians, there are some that have been in the position longer, so we help each other when needed. The second level are the help desk technicians, they are sometimes students, but usually not. They are the people that help the student technicians when a problem arises. The third level is my supervisor Stefan, he is the team lead as I stated before. When the two other layers can't figure out the solution, then Stefan is the next person to ask. This is the main structure of the help desk that the average user interacts with. The management environment is very casual, the only time it gets formal is when we speak to upper management. Most days in the office, we are just doing our jobs and talking about our interests. We casually talk about video games, 3d printing and a million other topics. The environment is very relaxed. Working at this job has helped me realize that everyone is just a human and that not all offices need to be strict and tense. I would always get nervous about starting a new position, worried about the environment or the people that I would be working with. But working this in a positive atmosphere has lessened that worry when it comes to future positions.

Major Work Duties

Our major work duties at the help desk are serving the users. When serving users, we work with walk in customers, phone, email, and self-service tickets. Walk in customers are our top priority, because of them being in person we try to reduce their wait time. Usually they come

in for a password reset or Wi-Fi issues. Sometimes we interact with personal computers, only when we have to troubleshoot software issues. These duties help with customer service skills and multitasking duties. It's necessary to the business because the help desk operators help customers. If there were no users, we would not exist. At the help desk, we don't get projects or assignments. The only special task I've worked on was assisting an interview. My supervisor Steafan had me introduce myself to the interviewee and ask them prepared questions. Then after the interview we had a reflection, and he wanted to know my opinions on the candidate. We have "Major" incidents sometimes where a service (Zoom, Canvas, etc.) can go down, and we receive a wave of calls about the incident. When this happens we make a template to keep the user informed, then when it's resolved we send out the recovery information to users. If the issue still occurs, we have to send messages out about the incident being resolved. The Major incidents are necessary to keeping users alert on current issues going on with the systems that they use in their daily life.

Work sample

Classification | **Notes** | Related Records | Resolution Information

Watch list Work notes list

Activities: 8 (Filtered) Y

SG Simon Graves Field changes • 2024-07-15 08:22:08

Incident state Canceled was On Hold

SG Simon Graves Additional comments • 2024-07-15 08:22:08

Hello,

This ticket is being closed because there is currently another ticket with this same issue. I have added your additional comments to the other ticket. Please see the ticket number listed below for any updates on this issue.

(Ticket #)

SG Simon Graves Work notes (Internal) • 2024-07-15 08:22:08

duplicate to issue [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Field changes • 2024-07-15 07:30:50

Assignment group	Help Desk
Category	Accounts & IDM
Configuration item	MIDAS Accounts
Incident state	On Hold was New

[REDACTED] Additional comments • 2024-07-15 07:30:50

Hello,

If you have previously requested an email token, please check your junk/spam folder.

If you cannot successfully create a new password using self-reset, ITS will reset your MIDAS password. You will need to follow one of the following procedures:

1. Come in person to the ITS Help Desk in Monarch Hall, present a picture ID and request to have their MIDAS password reset <https://www.odu.edu/ts/helpdesk>
2. If you are out of the area, you must fax a picture of your ID to 757-683-5616 or you can reply to this email (itshelp@odu.edu) and attach a copy of a picture ID. Please include:
 - o Your full name
 - o valid photo ID (drivers license, ODU ID, passport)
 - o Your University Identification Number (UIN)
 - o Your date of birth
 - o A phone number

We will call you once your information is received so we can reset your password over the phone.

Regards,
ITS Help Desk

[REDACTED] Work notes (Internal) • 2024-07-15 07:30:50

Sending user admin password reset instructions so we can verify identity

G Guest Field changes • 2024-07-15 07:28:51

Child incidents	0
Impact	2 - Medium
Incident state	New
Opened by	Aaron Mason
Priority	3 - Moderate
Short description	Password Reset
Urgency	2 - Medium

System Email received • 2024-07-15 07:28:45

✉ Email received

Subject: Password Reset

From: [REDACTED]

To: itshelp@odu.edu

[Show email details](#)

This is what a standard password reset ticket looks like. The information marked out is personal information of the user.

Skills & On-The-Job Experience

The skills I had prior to the internship were common troubleshooting skills, for example turning a machine off and on, clearing cache and cookies, etc. These skills were common knowledge to me before applying for the internship. These skills normally solve standard problems when it comes to webpage errors and some application errors. When I first started helping users, I thought the common troubleshooting skills I had would not work or resolve most problems. It was actually the opposite, as most problems are solved with the two skills I mentioned above. It changed how I understood incidents, and began troubleshooting. I realized my skills were extremely useful when helping users. So when first helping users, I always ask for them to clear their cache and cookies. Another skill that changed my understanding is critical thinking when resolving incidents. With incidents, there are a lot of solutions that could work for a situation. With an endless amount of options to resolve an incident, the best way to go is the most effective option.

Did the ODU Curriculum Prepare you?

The ODU curriculum did not prepare me for the internship. ODU's curriculum does not have enough hands-on experience integrated into their curriculum to be beneficial for this internship. The skills and knowledge I've learned during this internship has come from the training that I completed in the beginning of orientation and my past job experiences. My experience with ODU curriculum has been majorities discussions boards, readings, and papers. Learning ODU's IT systems were new skills and concepts that I had never encountered before. For example, the midas.odu.edu website is where you can change your password, reactivate two-factor authentication, etc. These are services that are used every day, but I have no idea how important it is to ODU systems. Midas is a major source used to execute certain techniques that we learn at the desk. One of those techniques is validating user identities. Overall, all the knowledge I gained in this internship was from the internship.

Internship Fulfillment

My goals, that I spoke about in my introduction paragraph, were expanding my knowledge of systems, improving my customer service skills, and improving my critical thinking skills. Starting with expanding my knowledge of systems, specifically ODU's IT systems. Working at the help desk has introduced me to the many different systems that ODU utilizes to keep the school working daily. These systems have made it easier to understand issues that many users face. An issue like not having a certain service, a service like using the Wi-Fi. To gain access to the Wi-Fi, a user needs to use MIDAS to request for that service to gain access to using the campus Wi-Fi. This is an example of a system I have become familiar with through the time at the internship.

My customer service skills have improved greatly, because of all the patience needed when helping users. When helping a user, they come in with many different levels of understanding of technology and the internet. There are users that just need the instructions given to them one time, but there are some that need to be led through step by step. With users that need more assistance, it requires patience and understanding to be able to help them professionally.

Finally, improving my critical thinking skills has been successful. I can see a difference by the way I solve incidents. When a ticket is on a topic that I am unfamiliar with, I use our knowledge base and the internet to find a solution. Using these critical thinking skills are important at the help desk because you need to be able to solve an issue when it arises without disturbing others working. I truly feel like my goals have been fulfilled through my time at the internship.

Aspects of the Internship

One of the most motivating parts of my internship is being able to share the knowledge I've gained. We have new student technicians come in all the time, and with that they have different levels of knowledge understanding the systems. Being able to help the new incoming students always reminds me that I have grown from where I started. It motivates me to keep learning and strengthening my skills to help others around me. To be a face of help and guidance helps me push forward. Helping others always makes me feel better about myself and about the environment I work in.

There are not many discouraging aspects of the internship. The only thing that is semi-discouraging is that getting promoted is difficult. There are only three positions for the help desk technician, the only way to get into this position is to wait for someone to leave or get another opportunity. So, it's a competitive position to try and apply for, which makes it discouraging. This is the only aspect of the job that is discouraging to me because the internship has many positive aspects.

The most challenging aspect of this internship is handling users. Handling difficult users can be mentally exhausting. It's challenging to get about into a professional state when becoming mentally exhausting. To maintain patience and handle my emotions has been challenging. With these challenges, I have learned that everyone is different and needs individualized attention to their issues. These different approaches are added to the challenges that come with customer service. There were many different aspects of the internship that I will remember for the rest of my professional career.

Recommendations

My biggest recommendation is to come in with an open mind and be prepared to learn a lot. An open-mind is for the users you will be working with and assisting. Helping the users can become very tedious and emotionally draining. Because if you let your emotions overwhelm you, the user will be at fault. The second point of recommendation is being prepared to intake knowledge. In training you will learn a lot of information that can be overwhelming and stress you out at first. Then after you finally sit at the desk, it will be very imitating at first. All the advice you need is to keep a cool head, and be attentive.

Conclusion

My main takeaway from this internship is how much growth came from simply being present, open to learning, and willing to step out of my comfort zone. Starting at the Help Desk, I felt unsure and nervous, but over time, I gained confidence in my technical skills, improving my communication and problem solving skills. Learning how to stay calm and professional in high-pressure situations. The hands-on nature of the job allowed me to apply and develop real-world skills that I did not learn in the classroom.

This internship has influenced how I view the rest of my time at Old Dominion University. I now see the value in seeking out more hands-on, practical opportunities that align with my career goals. Whether it is through more on-campus positions, research, or leadership roles. I plan to stay involved and push myself to grow beyond just academics. I've also realized the importance of networking and building connections, as it was a recommendation from a friend that brought me to this opportunity in the first place.

Professionally, this experience has given me a clearer picture of what I want in a future work environment. I've learned that I thrive in a team that supports each other, values communication, and fosters a laid back but professional atmosphere. It's also reinforced my interest in cybersecurity and IT support roles, where I can continue helping others while expanding my technical skill set. This internship laid a strong foundation for the kind of professional I want to become one who is knowledgeable, dependable, and driven to keep learning.