

BMC Software Inc.

Technical Disclosure Publication Document

Amol Manohar Vaikar

Method to Increase Help-Desk Ticket and Communities Feedback Participation

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Overview

This document describes a method that adds an incentive and reward for users to give feedback on services requested by them. This addresses the problem of feedback being skewed because users with poor experiences are more likely to take the effort to provide feedback. The incentive is based on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the feedback received, and this method also simplifies the feedback process. What is proposed is a framework for rewarding customers' efforts using virtual currency. In existing systems like BMC Remedy IT Service Management, once the user's ticket has been serviced, the user has no incentive in providing feedback. However, if a user were rewarded for his/her efforts in terms of points or virtual currency that could be used for material benefits to the user, he or she would be much more inclined to provide feedback. What is needed is a framework to make this possible:

Background

"Customer Satisfaction" is an important statistic that helps an organization to determine whether their strategies are paying off or whether they need tuning. A "customer" here can be an external customer, i.e., an individual or other organization that buys products and later needs tech support for the same, or an internal customer, such as an employee in an organization who is an internal customer of the IT department of that organization. Help-desk software enables individuals to open support tickets that are then handled by IT/Support/Any-Other department within a customer's organization. Management of such departments are interested in tracking customer satisfaction and other statistics in order to improve the performance of their department. Currently, most help-desk software is capable of sending an e-mail with a link to a feedback web page where the customer can provide subjective and objective feedback.

The problems with this approach are:

1. It is too much work for the customer to provide feedback by clicking on a link to open a website, enter the credentials and then answer the objective/subjective questions.

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2. There is no incentive for the customer to provide any feedback.

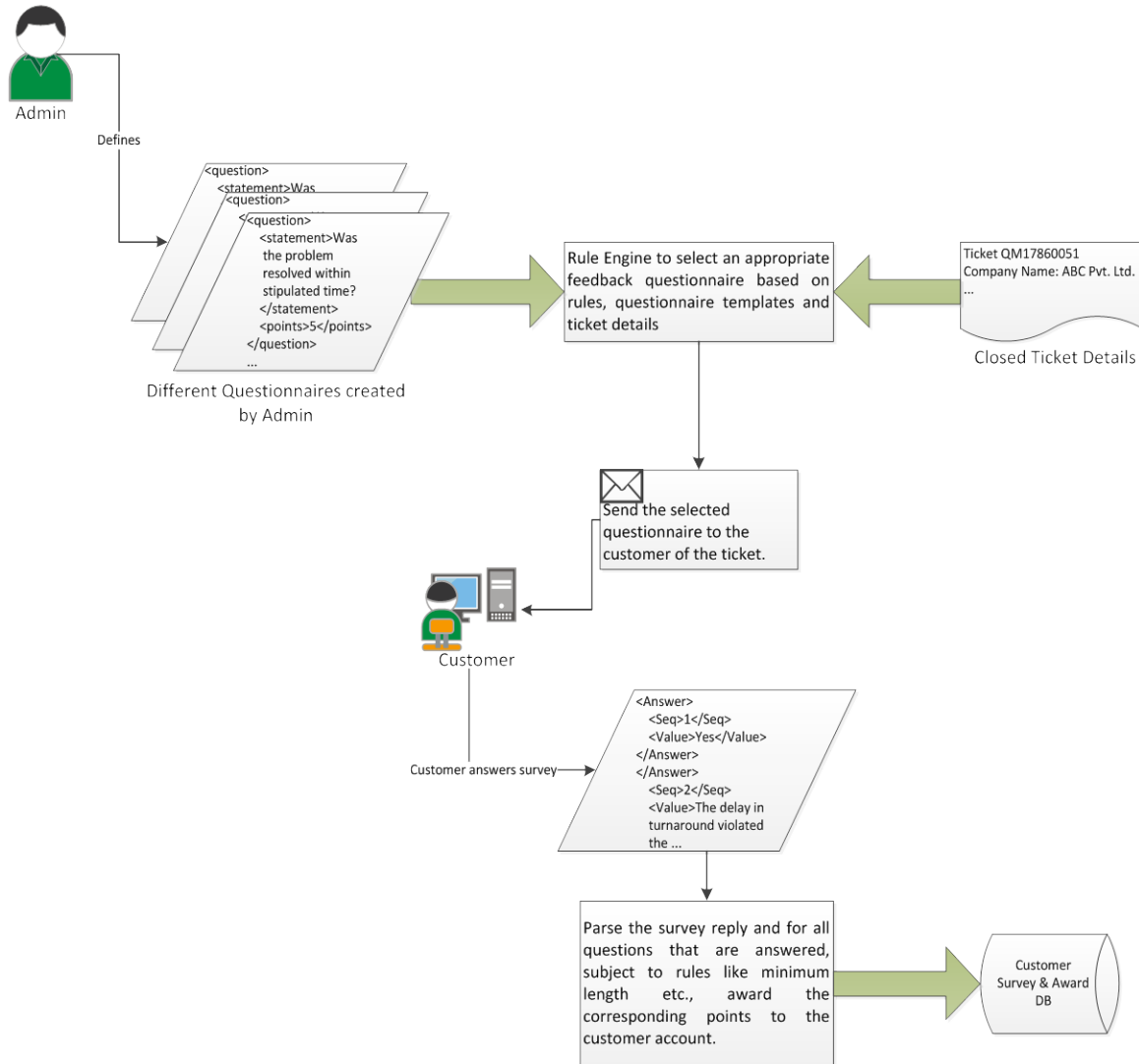
As a result, most of the times when a customer actually takes the effort to provide a feedback, it is to vent his or her frustration owing to an issue that probably was not resolved to his or her satisfaction, either due to taking too much time to resolve, inadequate solution, or non-solution.

This tends to skew the statistics generated using the feedback (C-SAT or areas with maximum problems, for instance), which is not going to help in taking correct business action to improve the service.

A similar problem is seen with online forums. In such applications, the users who ask the questions are not usually inclined to acknowledge that a reply from another user has resolved the problem they were facing. This affects the reusability of the content available on such forums. Here too, the user who poses the question has no incentive to log on to the forum and mark one of the answers as the answer that solved his problem. What would be helpful would be a system that will deter such behavior and reward those users who take the efforts to mark the problem as being solved by a reply.

Solution

In the current system, once the user's ticket has been serviced, the user has no incentive in providing a feedback. Instead, if a user were to be rewarded for his/her efforts in terms of points or virtual currency that could be used for material benefits, the user would be much more inclined to provide feedback. We need a framework to make this possible:



Using this framework, customers would be able to:

- a. Define a subjective/objective feedback form. This can be defined using a set of pre-defined XML tags. Rather than a static form being sent to all users, there could be multiple forms and a relevant one for a ticket could be sent to the user. The form could even be dynamically generated using a collection of different questions depending on various criteria as defined by the administrators.
- b. Assign a certain number of points/virtual-currency to the overall feedback form as well as individual questions in the form. This way, the end user who answers the most questions in the feedback form is likely to get rewarded proportionately.
- c. Provision for administrators/help-desk-engineers to award further points to the end user depending on the quality of the feedback provided.
- d. A rewards store where the points can be redeemed for material benefits.

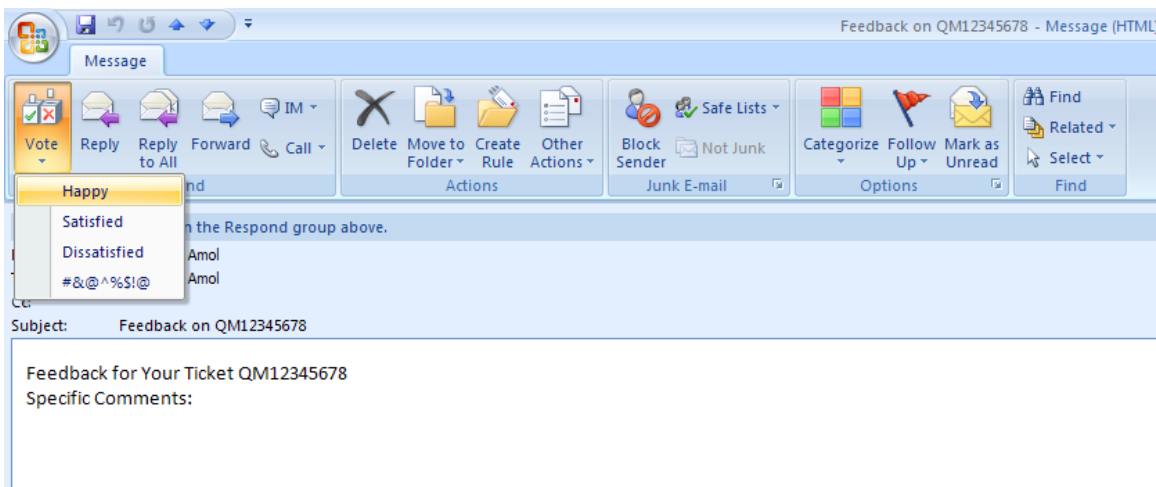
To prevent abuse of the system, there could be a provision for administrators to review all the feedback after the customer submits a request to redeem the points earned before the request is approved.

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What can the customer do with all this virtual currency? At a high level, the answer would be “It depends on the organization”. Some real life examples could be:

- o Increasing the priority of the ticket opened by the customer.
- o Getting the ticket quickly escalated to, say, engineering.
- o Increase the support level from, say, bronze to silver.
- o Receive spiffs, like corporate t-shirt, passes to conferences etc.

To make it easier for the customers to provide at least the very basic feedback, as in whether the customer was happy, satisfied, upset, etc. by the service received, instead of making the customer log onto a feedback website to indicate whether the customer was happy or not, simple e-mail voting options can be used. It would look something like this:



1 click for the vote, and 1 for the “send”! Another implementation would use Microsoft Outlook forms to make it possible for users to send the feedback via e-mail contents itself instead of having to log-in to the website to provide the feedback.

These solutions could also be adapted for online forums wherein if a user marks his or her question as being resolved by a particular answer, he or she gets points as well as rewarding the user who provided the solution.

These points can be displayed as a separate statistic on the user’s profile and will serve as an indicator for others to gauge whether their help is likely to be appreciated in the form of points. And of course, the user can use the points for the benefits described above. This will significantly improve the re-usability of the content on the communities site. This framework increases the likelihood of a user providing feedback that benefits the organization and gets rewarded in return, thus making the process mutually beneficial and can be used to improve the re-usability of the content crowd-sourced on on-line forums.