# Task 5

Use Table 1 to determine what the priorities should be. Then number each problem in Table 2 according to the priority settings.

**Table 1:** Priority settings

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Priority | Definition |
| 1 | Critical systems are unusable and business is severely affected. |
| 2 | Critical systems are degraded and business is affected. |
| 3 | Non-critical systems are unusable or degraded. Business is not affected. |
| 4 | All systems are available and business is not affected. |
| P | Problem is pending. Waiting for equipment or software testing. |
| C | Unable to contact client. Require client’s approval to continue to next step. |

**Table 2:** Problems

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Priority | Problem |
| p | Clara, a computer user in the Finance Department, does not have the latest update of her financial software. The first analysis shows that the computer requires another disk to store data on. The disk has been ordered but has not yet arrived. |
| 4 | Michael, also in the Finance Department, is unable to complete a report. He requires instructions on how to copy information from a spreadsheet into his report, which is written in a word processing document. |
| C | Maria in Window Display is unable to use any network systems. Configurations were remotely changed on her computer. To fix the problem, she needs to reboot her computer and test that she can access the network. She cannot be located, and has been left a message. |
| 2 | The network switch on the first floor of a suburban retail store has failed. All cash registers connected to this switch have failed. Customers are directed to the other side of the store to make purchases. |
| 3 | The network printer in the Marketing Department has a severe paper jam and the rollers will need to be removed by a qualified technician. |
| C | The printer in the Finance Department has not been printing properly for a few weeks. Problem analysis shows that the computers have been upgraded, and the print driver for the updated operating system is not installed. The Finance Department Manager needs to be contacted to submit a purchase order form in order to purchase a new printer. The Finance Department Manager has not been available for two days. |
| 1 | The warehouse application system has crashed. It is not possible for any deliveries to be taken from the warehouse. |

# Help desk report

Help desk report 1

Preparing and presenting reports 2

The purpose and audience 2

Preparing to write your report 3

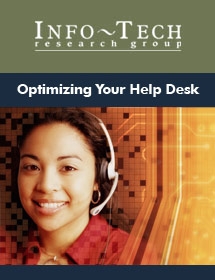
A quick guide to report structures 3

Specialised report writing 3

Report pro forma example 4

Summary 7

Check your progress 7



# Preparing and presenting reports

Throughout your career in IT, you will need to prepare reports. These may be maintenance reports to managers, or maintenance schedules for everyone to follow, or your recommendations for improvements.

Writing reports is the most common way of presenting information in a business or organisational environment. The presentation of the report is also important. It needs to be set out in a clear, and clearly structured way, in a readable style. Technical staff are not usually required to write lengthy reports, but are expected to complete maintenance forms and provide analytical advice.

## The purpose and audience

Report writing requires a style that is different from other forms of writing. Its purpose is usually more technical, as it aims to present information that people can make use of in some way. The purpose will influence both the content and the recommendations of your report.

You need to understand who you readers are so that you can direct the report towards them. The outcome for reports is to have the reader treat the information as reliable, and in some cases, to accept recommendations made.

For many daily technical reports, lengthy research and analysis is not required, but a pro forma document is used. This ensures that the data can be easily used for any analysis or cross checking performed at a later date.

### Reflection activity

Read through some technical reports. Work out what sort of reader each one was aimed at. How can you tell? What evidence did you look for? Did the writer complete all the information? How can it be used for analysis later?

## Preparing to write your report

You need to gather information that is reliable. A reader needs to be able to see where your information came from so that if necessary they can check its credibility or verify facts. A bibliography is one method of providing references for the information supplied.

In preparing, you will need to organise all your research material as effectively as you can, as well as evaluating the material for its relevance.

## A quick guide to report structures

The structure of a report moves the reader along a logical path towards the recommendations, findings or conclusions made. Different types of reports require different structures. The following table outlines the possible headings for different types of reports.

**Table 1:** Outline of report structures and order of text or pages

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Short report | Long report | Technical report |
| Purpose | Preliminary material: cover page, table of contents and lists of tables, graphs and figures. | Table of contents, lists of tables, illustrations and statistical data. |
| Definitions of terminology |
| Purpose |
| Scope |
| Introduction | Introduction | Introduction |
| Discussion | Discussion | Background and research method. |
|  | Method and technique used |
|  | Statement of the issue | Analysis |
|  | Findings | Findings |
| Conclusion | Conclusion | Summary of results |
| Recommendations | Recommendations | Recommendations |
| End matter such as bibliography, appendices and index. |

## Specialised report writing

There are some specialised writing styles for some reports, such as technical writing and maintenance reports. The preparation and style are generally the same, but technical information and section headings will be presented slightly differently.

Technical report writing will usually include tables, illustrations and statistical data. Statistics are often easier to interpret in a graph or table.

Some technical reports will be very short, and will follow an organisational pro forma document. Data put into the pro forma document will be entered automatically into a database and will be used for analysis for future projections. Some help desk software systems may provide a module for reporting once a problem has been solved, or for maintenance reports.

## Report pro forma example

The following example of an annual technical report pro forma document was written by each of the Department Managers in a large company. Much of the statistical information comes from their help desk system and from the financial records on training costs. Other information comes from the Manager who will analyse their situation in working with the computer systems, and how problems are handled.

Complete the following report:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Annual Technical Report — This Co Pty Ltd | |
| Technical reports are required for monitoring the computer systems in this company, and to provide information for future improvements in computer systems.  Technical reports should be written in a user-friendly manner, minimising the use of computer jargon and acronyms.  The purpose of reports is to analyse computer system problems that occur in the company, and how they are solved.  Each department provides a report that covers the last 12-month period of each financial year. | |
| Technical report number: | 100 – Staff HR |
| Period covered by this report: | 01 / 07 / 2009 to 31 / 06 / 2010 |

Person responsible for signing off the report and their contact details:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: | Ly n Walsh |
| Phone: | 94837294 |
| Fax: | 94837295 |
| Email: | Lyn@bipond.net.au |

Statistical details (this information is available from your help desk system):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total number of help desk calls this year: | 376 |
| Number of PC hardware related calls | 76 |
| Number of printer hardware calls. | 30 |
| Number of network hardware calls. | 27 |
| Number of ‘other’ hardware calls. | 2 |
| Number of PC application software related calls | 59 |
| Number of This Co database software related calls | 63 |
| Number of communications software related calls | 20 |
| Number of ‘other’ software related calls | 14 |
| Number of PC configuration calls | 41 |
| Number of network configuration calls. | 32 |
| Number of ‘other’ configuration calls. | 12 |

### Computer systems

|  |
| --- |
| * 1x server * 40 x workstations * 1 x Kerr Lab * 1 x Projector * 2 x Projector screens * 3 x Electronic whiteboards * 2 x 120 inch plasma televisions |

### Workflow progress summary

|  |
| --- |
| Please advise how the computer systems have helped improve your Department’s workflow. If you undertake a number of projects, separate each project and advise what computer systems were used heavily for the different types of projects. This should consist of no more than 500 words.  Computer systems have helped keep the human resources department running by;   * Having a server that contains all log-in and permission information for the staff of the college. This information is kept on an Active Directory and the information is easily managed within the computer management system. * Having a help desk computer system that allows the logging and tracking of all issues and problems with hardware and software within the human resources department. This system allows the issue to be tracked from the time the client first makes contact until the problem is resolved and all the steps in between. It also has a part for the help desk assistant to call the client back to ensure the problem is resolved and they are satisfied. * Having a database of common problems that includes all issues discovered within the help desk system and their resolutions. Every issue or problem is entered into this database to allow people to solve issues without the need to contact the help desk team first. * Having a database of the hardware and its history of problems. This is important by helping the help desk personal to monitor issues with a particular piece of hardware; this ensures that any issues are resolved quickly thus ensuring less down time for the equipment and loss of productivity for the department. It will also allow the help desk team to discover recurring issues with the same piece of hardware and allow them to show a pattern of issues to management to recommend replacing it. * Having a payroll database and system that allows for the tracking and monitoring of employees salary and leave entitlements. |

### Computer systems problems

|  |
| --- |
| Please advise the general type of computer problems your Department experienced this year. This should consist of no more than 500 words.  Some of the typical computer problems experienced in the human resources department this financial year are;   * Users unable to send emails * Users unable to logon to the network or slow logon * Users unable to print on the network printer * Wireless mouse/keyboard not working/connecting to workstation |

### Computer systems improvements

|  |
| --- |
| What do you believe could alleviate the computer system problems you encountered this year? This should consist of no more than 500 words.  Some of the improvement that may alleviate the computer system problems could consist of;   * The upgrade of the active directory server. This will make user logon a much faster process. * The replacement of wireless mouse and keyboard batteries on a more regular basis. * The process of requisitioning ink for the network printer should be a quicker process. Instead of having to go through the help desk just to request for printer ink, the head of the human resources department should have the authority to allocate it. |

### Training activities

|  |
| --- |
| List any computer training activities that staff received during the reporting period. Include name, institution, dates, topic and source of funding.   * **Name:** Microsoft Windows 7 training.  **Department trained:** Human resources.  **Date:** 12th May 2010 **Trained by whom:** By a technician qualified in the Windows 7 environment. **Institution:** Onsite   All staff in the human resources department was required to complete four hours on-site training by a qualified trainer.   * **Name:** NetHelpDesk  **Department trained:** Help desk.  **Date:** 16th June 2010  **Trained by whom:** A technician qualified in the Net Help Desk software. **Institution:** Onsite   All help desk staff in the human resources department were required to complete 12 hours training on the new help desk software. The software is being implemented into the help desk system in November. This training consisted of four hours a week for three consecutive weeks. |

### Future training activities

|  |
| --- |
| List any computer training activities that staff may be required to attend in the future. Include the possible name, institution, dates, topics and estimates of cost.   * Any future training will be implemented on an as-required basis. |

### Staff Resources

|  |
| --- |
| List the computer systems resources available to staff in your Department, including manuals and online assistance. State if these are being used, and whether they are adequate.  The resources available to staff are:   * **Name:** Net Help Desk e-manual **Kept:** Online  **Available to:** Help desk personnel **Use:** Regular **Adequacy:** Good * **Name:** Net Help Desk manual  **Kept:** Stores cupboard – Human resources **Available to:** Help desk personnel **Use:** Regular **Adequacy:** Good * **Name:** Windows 7 e-manual **Kept:** Online **Available to:** All personnel **Use:** Regular **Adequacy:** Good * **Name:** Windows 7 manual **Kept:** Stores cupboard – Human resources **Available to:** All personnel **Use:** Regular **Adequacy:** Good |

### Budget Requirements

|  |
| --- |
| Provide a summary of expenditure on computer systems. Outline any significant variations from approved budget during the reporting period.   * **Training**  1. **Name:** Windows 7 **Cost:** $1000 2. **Name: Net Help Desk Cost:** $2000  * **Hardware**  1. **Name:** Replacement of network printer **Cost:** $369 2. **Name:** Replacement of wireless mouse/keyboards **Cost:** $390 3. **Name:** Replacement of monitor of workstation no. 5  **Cost:** $202  * **Software**  1. **Name:** Windows 7 **Cost:** $10000 2. **Name:** Net Help Desk **Cost:** $4000 3. **Name:** Trend Micro Security 2010 **Cost:** $2000  * **Incidentals**  1. **Name:** Ink for network printer **Cost:** $500 2. **Name:** Paper for network printer and photocopier **Cost:** $298 3. **Name:** Batteries for wireless mouse and keyboards **Cost:** $187 4. **Name:** Mouse pads **Cost:** $27 |
|  |

# Summary

The maintenance of IT infrastructure is a crucial role of an organisation’s IT department. Many problems are raised with the help desk, and all information needs to be recorded, from the initial call to the resolution of the problem or query. Reports derived from records can reveal trends that may indicate the need for a change in hardware, software or user training.

When determining maintenance requirements, both critical and non-critical software and hardware systems need to be considered. Likewise, it is important to consider whether the client is an internal customer or external supplier, and whether there is a maintenance agreement in place.

Response time standards, escalation procedures and reporting procedures will vary according to the conditions laid down in maintenance agreements, and according to the procedures set by the parties involved.

After each help desk call has been resolved, the user needs to be contacted. The user must be satisfied with the end result before the call is closed. The help desk software system must be updated to reflect the closure of call. In some organisations, a technical report is required for each problem. These are usually completed on a standard pro forma document that is used later for analysis.

## Report writing references:

* Report writing guidelines from the University of Canberra: <http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/reports.html>
* Plain English guide to writing reports: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/reportguide.html>
* Technical report writing for NASA engineers and scientists at the Glenn Research Centre. This is a guide to help make report writing easier: <http://grcpublishing.grc.nasa.gov/editing/vidoli.CFM>
* The Mindtools website contains information on general career skills such as time management, practical creativity and problem solving. From information skills section, go to the page on developing skills in mind mapping. This skill can be useful when creating reports: <http://www.mindtools.com/>

## Help desk procedures

* A case study on help desk and prioritising calls from De Montford University, UK: <http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/cism/Call%20Prioritisation.htm>
* An example of help desk procedures from the University of Houston, Texas: <http://www.uh.edu/fast/helpdeskprocedures.htm>
* An example of help desk procedures from the York College of Pennsylvania: <http://www.ycp.edu/helpproc.htm>
* This is from Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL); a number of documents to assist in implementing the framework for IT Service Management (ITSM): <http://www.itil-itsm-world.com/itil-4.htm>

## Help desk software

* You can download a free trial of TrackIT help desk software from the Intuit Company: <http://itsolutions.intuit.com/default.asp>

## Purchasing and maintenance

* Computer lease and purchase procedures from Californian State University’s San Marcos Foundation: <http://www.csusm.edu/foundation/policies_procedures/computer_lease_or_purchase_procedures.html>
* This is the computer maintenance procedure from East Tennessee State University: <http://www.etsu.edu/oit/ppp/policies/maintenance.asp>

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