



Incident & Service Request - the same or not?

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First of all: the ITIL-page that explains the Service Request should be interpreted carefully. It states that Service Requests are handled similar to Incidents, which - in my experience - is absolutely not true (but maybe I've been working in the wrong organizations?). Therefore I'll give you an alternative explanation.

A Service Desk receives calls of the types Service Complaint (Incident: please comply to agreement or restore the performance), Service Change (I need something else) and Service Request (I need something/more off the service menu).

A Service Request is predefined and agreed upon (in the SLA).

That means that if a customer requests a structural change to the agreed service levels, like changing the standard opening hours, this will NOT be a Service Request. Instead, the SLA will have to be changed, and the new service specs will have to be implemented structurally.

Examples of regular Service Requests would be:

- Functional question or request for information
- Status inquiry
- Password reset
- Requests for batch jobs and password authorizations
- Database extraction
- Request to provide new employee with appropriate IT functionality/services

As you see, this list contains actions that could be considered to be a Change... But in practice they are not, simply because they have been allocated to be a Service Request. And that's because the organization has chosen to do so, to relieve the burdened Change Management process. That way the CHM process can be reserved for "true" changes, which require the complex and careful handling by a change procedure. Service Requests normally go straight to a production process: making the database extraction, providing requested information, resetting a password, et cetera. They will be listed in the SLA with the appropriate service levels (time of handling, cost of delivering, other quality parameters).

Standardized Changes will go through another workflow: a shortened and simplified change procedure, but one that includes the triggering of the Configuration Mgt process. They can be listed in the SLA as well, but they can also be listed only in the Quality Manual of the IT organization. Any RFC that relates to such a standardized change will simply be routed through the workflow of the standard (which is called "Change Model" in ITIL: par 8.3, pages 170, 176).

So: Service Requests are not Changes and vice versa. But either one is NOT an incident and will NOT be treated as incident." They will know very different workflows.

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