

Is your product roadmap being held hostage by support tickets?



You are so close to the finish line. You might just keep this project on time and on the budget, after all. But then, just as you are about to plan for some relaxing downtime to celebrate your upcoming win... wait for it...BOOM. You walk into a pile of service desk tickets, all related to the latest release. The service desk manager is there with a fresh cup of coffee and a box of donuts to lessen the blow.

It's your circus

This isn't your first release circus, but YES, this is your circus, and YES, these are your monkeys. Before you can take one step toward the next sprint, you must first address the problems identified and their dependencies. It's time to gather the troops for the status report you'll use to justify to the c-suite why you're encountering a delay.

How exactly does one get to the point where their projects run as smoothly as they do on television? While we cannot guarantee absolute perfection, we do have some suggestions to help keep your product roadmap from being held hostage from those support tickets. Read on, and let's dig in.

Let your requirements be your guide

If you captured great requirements, treat them as your personal Sensei. A Sensei always steers you in the right direction, even if it's in the form of a riddle. Great requirements, however, should never be a riddle, and we'll talk more about that next week.

When you have Lighthouse on your team, share the requirements with us ahead of time. Not only do we use it for our test scripts, but we can point out holes and present questions where we see gaps.

When you understand what is most important to your product (as stated in the requirements), your decisions focus on the direction of those priorities.

Pro Tip: The quickest and easiest way to successfully deliver quality software is to have great requirements. WE KNOW REQUIREMENTS! We look at them every day while we write and build test scripts. So by engaging us to review your requirements and make suggestions we can help ensure bugs don't happen in the first place. [Contact Us for more info!](#)

Note: Even if your project or program is well underway, this is a great way to stop bugs dead in their tracks.

Technical debt – get rid of it

Speaking of priorities, let's revisit [technical debt](#) again. In that blog, we talked about the three different categories of technical debt: planned debt, unintentional debt, and unavoidable debt.

Service desk tickets fall under the category of unintended debt. If the defects were detected, they would have been either corrected with new code or bypassed, making them planned debt. Either would enable you to proceed with your next sprint.

So, do you review your technical debt between sprints? If not, this could be a pivotal factor in avoiding project delays, because defects kept in a list without analysis or prioritization increases your chances of disaster.

Analysis can also prevent paralysis

Just like an apple a day keeps the doctor away, defects need a thorough review and prioritization. When analyzing your errors, sort and prioritize your upcoming work from the following perspective:

1. Stability
2. Performance
3. Security
4. Functionality and enhancements

Stability and performance always hold top billing, because if these lack strength, the others are sure to crumble like a house of cards.

Awareness is your first step and will guide your decisions going forward.

Some will try to say otherwise

If you haven't noticed yet (*wink*), some people on your team are a little mouthier than others. When you are seeking input from your project team, does their volume, insistence, or pushiness make them any more correct than the quieter members of your team? Of course not! Do not let them overshadow the wisdom and extensive knowledge residing on the rest of your team.

Mark my words, they will try to convince you otherwise. Product and sales teams are notorious for this, and why, do you ask? They probably have already been talking up all of the enhancements and maybe even started some pre-sales based on the new changes. They are driven to get the latest functionality live and will try to force you in their favor. You can't blame them since they work for commission, but they lack your expertise and wisdom. If you fall for their dark skills of persuasion, you could be revisited

by the donut man. Don't take the bait. Instead, offer them a donut to keep them quiet so you can gain consensus from the rest of the team.

I mentioned a few [brainstorming techniques](#) earlier this year to use with your team. My two favorites are affinity mapping and the Pugh matrix. Both are great at giving your quiet members a voice. In fact, I used to pull out my trusted Pugh when I had an executive voting with the group. The executive's thoughts always had the most weight (even when they were incorrect), and everyone would bow to their opinion instead of offering a different perspective, but the Pugh matrix always shines an unbiased spotlight on an answer.

Now, if a client says something, it's essential. Their voice holds more weight than anyone. The voice of the customer is ten times louder than your team's loudest loudmouth, so put those topics to the top of the priority list. The customer's wishes always trump opinion. Still, I'll say that it should never be at the expense of stability and performance, so don't be afraid to push back, since their favorite feature is rendered worthless if the system isn't stable enough to perform as it should.

Tell us where it hurts

Lighthouse Technologies has a stellar reputation for software testing and consulting on software quality issues. -That's usually our first encounter with our customers. We are so much more than that, however. After working with us, our customers trust us as a partner to help get their team or project back on track and identify ways to improve efficiency in their development and testing processes.

We invite you to take a look at our [services](#) and think about where we can give your organization a competitive edge. How are 2020 and your pipeline of projects looking or the first quarter? [Contact us](#) and let's discuss how Lighthouse will be your guide to getting your projects completed on time and budget!