

Features: Ticket Management, Team Collaboration, Product and Asset Management, Customer Self-Service

Industry: Non Specific

Customers: Mid to Large Enterprises

Geography: All markets **Languages:** English

Cost: Starting at 15US\$ / Month

Website: <http://www.teamsupport.com>



Review methodology

This review constitutes an analysis based on a product demonstration and software review by qualified system software experts at Eval-Source. The demonstration Eval-Source received from the vendor was based on their own custom vendor script, specifically designed to validate and/or disprove vendors' claims. The script was specifically designed to identify functionalities and form an impartial analysis and software review for various features of Ticket Management, Team Collaboration, Product and Asset Management.

Business Problems Addressed

Research shows that the majority of organizations experience problems with internal collaboration, especially when it comes to delivering customer support. The larger the organization, the more challenging this becomes. Internal collaboration can cause fragmentation within organizations and create distance and division between departments.

A common hurdle is the creation and accumulation of so-called information silos that neither leverage nor capture valuable intellectual property. Piles of knowledge capital like shared project work, valuable customer support data, product updates, and potentially lost information due to an aging workforce become major obstacles. The solution is to capture and manage internal collaboration.

As organizations employ unified communication strategies, TeamSupport can play an integral role in facilitating internal/external collaboration through optimized Customer Support, Ticket Management, Inventory Control and Asset Management.

This cohesion is achieved by connecting the various customer services, support channels and IT channels and linking them to other departments throughout the company. Multiple service channels are united in a storehouse/databank with "one source of truth", a space shared with near real-time data. The flexibility of the application has spawned many other uses in addition to its original purpose. The ticket management system allows organizations to manage a range of diverse business operations that may otherwise have included several separate software applications.

Due to the internal design of the application, Ticket Management, Asset Management, Inventory Management, internal/external support and collaboration coexist in one convenient package. This makes administrative tasks and customer support far simpler and easier to manage.

Target Market

TeamSupport is a web-based, enterprise class/level customer **support management system** designed for B2B technology companies and institutions that provide internal support.

TeamSupport assists organizations in **managing customer support communications** through familiar channels such as telephone, web, email or chat – all from the cloud. TeamSupport can cater to any size of business, large or small and can be applied to a spectrum of different industries and verticals.

The application can function as a standalone system or act as a complementary application to your existing systems through the use of their API.

Although TeamSupport is based in the US, 25% of its customer base is located outside North America, which demonstrates the company's excellent customer support capacity and global reach.

TeamSupport targets the following kinds of customers:

- Technology companies that provide B2B technical support.
- Non-tech related companies that require a ticket management system.
- Medium sized companies that require a ticketing system for internal IT and support.
- Larger organizations that require ticketing and enhanced communications between departments and customers.

Pricing model

Three editions of the application are available: **Enterprise, Support Desk** and **Express**. TeamSupport is a flexible vendor, which offers several standard payment options including PayPal, credit card and purchase orders. Discounts are available to customers paying biannually or annually, although the majority of the customer base pays monthly via credit card. TeamSupport offers transparent pricing with no hidden clauses in the contract pertaining to "vendor lock-in" and "data ownership" issues.

The pricing for the editions offered by TeamSupport is as follows:

- **Enterprise** \$35 per month
- **Support Desk** \$25 per month
- **Express** \$15 per month
- **Live Chat** \$15 per month (optional add-on – all editions)

- **Advanced Customer Portal** (optional add-on – Support Desk or Enterprise only)
 - Up to 25 companies - \$50/mo – unlimited users
 - Up to 50 companies - \$100/mo – unlimited users
 - Up to 75 companies - \$150/mo – unlimited user
 - Up to 100 companies - \$200/mo – unlimited users
 - Up to 125 companies - \$250/mo – unlimited users
 - Anything over 125 companies is considered unlimited for \$250/mo.

External companies can access the secure customer portal to manage their tickets and search the knowledge base. The Advanced Customer Portal has no user limit restrictions. This is a great option for organizations that support many external customers.

Solution Analysis

Each of the three editions of TeamSupport represents a different level on the price scale and addresses specific functions. TeamSupport offers two additional modules: **Live Chat** and **the Advanced Customer Portal**. Live Chat is available for all editions while the Advanced Customer Portal is available **for Support Desk or Enterprise** only.

For organizations looking to offer live chat on their website, the Express edition with Live Chat can be combined to deliver functionality at a relatively low cost compared to similarly priced services, whether we're talking SaaS or on-premises solution. The Live Chat feature is fully integrated into the tickets, which means you can create new tickets from a chat session and add a chat to an existing ticket. Alternatively, if no one is available to accept the chat, the "leave a message" feature will create a ticket and alert your team.

A unique feature that sets TeamSupport apart, is the inclusion of a **ticket submission** form in addition to a public knowledge base engine that can be posted directly to your website with a simple iframe - with no need for a specialized login. This feature is highly practical for organizations that require internal ticket creation in order to promote/boost customer self-service. For organizations that share public information, a self-service portal can provide a FAQ or a knowledge base. For those that require a secure, private entry portal, the Advanced Customer Portal constitutes an option that can be added to the Support Desk or Enterprise editions.

Many functions that typically exist over multiple applications are consolidated into one handy, specific communication application that includes ticket management, customer service, asset management and product management.

Features within each functional module are listed below.

Team Collaboration	Products and Asset Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiki 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product and version tracking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Cooler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory and asset tracking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User groups 	

Ticket Management	Customer Database and Self Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custom ticket types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers and contacts database
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket submission portal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket tagging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public knowledge base portal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket queue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web conversations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family tickets 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service level agreements 	

Integration Specs

In order to promote unified communications across the organization, TeamSupport includes **native CRM integration** with Salesforce.com, Highrise CRM by 37Signal.com and source control integration to Beanstalk and Tortoise for subversion integration. Native CRM integration is possible/applicable for the three editions of Express, Support Desk and Enterprise. The **REST API** provided allows customers to build interfaces to just about any system easily. The API can be fully customized by the end-user or by TeamSupport. Watch this space as TeamSupport is using its open and flexible API to develop a variety of new off the shelf integrations that will soon be available.

When it comes to integration, TeamSupport currently has several business partners: Beanstalk, Highrise, Nicereply, Salesforce.com and ScreenStepsLive, all of which are included within their packages as pre-configured interfaces.

Email integration is accomplished through an internal dropbox account: every customer is provided with a unique email account for their company to which they can forward their current support address and that in turn creates new tickets or updates existing tickets. Customers can create multiple dropbox accounts so that additional company email addresses can also forward into the account and automate various ticket assignments immediately. This conveniently stores the entire history in one place, making it accessible to everyone on the team. New tickets can be generated and pre-existing tickets assigned, via email all types of workflow can be defined and further notifications can be alerted to appropriate stakeholders once a change has occurred regarding the status of a ticket. The dropbox functionality with email integration is a highly effective method for disseminating and updating alerts and statuses.

TeamSupport's **reporting functionality** allows you to create "ad-hoc" reports and export them in a multitude of formats, including Excel. This extra level of business intelligence is embedded into the TeamSupport applications, enabling organizations to aggregate, share and analyze their data as part of the application. TeamSupport's reporting adds functionality and enterprise performance KPI's, which is vital, given the size of many of the businesses that TeamSupport targets.

The addition of BI helps automate **workflows**, create alerts and permits authorization for managers to check open tickets and monitor related statistics for any additional intelligence and outstanding escalations. Dashboards that create specific KPI functionality per user can alert managers to which actions should be taken in order to maintain high customer support standards.

TeamSupport brings a powerful **Ticket Automation feature** that allows triggers to be defined to simplify ticket management. This feature performs intelligent ticket actions, auto responders, and a variety of events against tickets, which translates in less man hours and physical intervention on typical tasks. As an example, you can setup a trigger to ping your customer after a certain number of days if a ticket is still pending their response - and also customize what that message is. The system can do much of this type of housekeeping on its own.

To demonstrate the simplicity of TeamSupport software, the screenshot below shows ticket types, (all of which are user definable), by customer and reveals the details and status pertaining to each ticket, including their complete history, be they open or closed.

Figure 1.

A **strong architectural** platform is used to support effective and efficient tools with which organizations can collaborate both internally and externally with customers.

The TeamSupport approach to internal collaboration creates a knowledge base and storehouse/databank for customer service, product management and management teams. By combining these elements, all the relevant data pertaining to tickets, customers, assets and inventory can be easily managed. This centralized repository can store newly created content including documents, open tickets and service incidents, reduces overall administration costs and simplifies IT management.

Internal collaboration is further facilitated/boosted by the Wiki (collaborative editing tool) for documents, files, video and images. This tool enables customers to collaborate on articles that include images and documents, which can then be shared internally within an organization and externally via the portals. A further tool with which to dynamize internal collaboration is the Water Cooler, a meeting place where users can gather and converse about customer support issues and a variety of other topics.

When tickets are assigned to a group, all members of that group receive notifications. Typical groups could include level 1 support, product management, engineering, escalation, etc. For example, if a sales person calls on an account and discovers an issue, he or she can create a ticket and set the "Assigned Group" to the support group. All members of the support group will be notified so that someone can either take ownership of the ticket, or a manager can choose to assign the ticket to someone. Groups are used to define functional areas and departments, permitting ticket escalation that can be passed from one team to another as needed.

Documents and files can be attached within any of the TeamSupport functions, ticketing, help desk and internal collaboration. This creates a convenient content repository from which enterprises can manage records and monitor

service level performance by customer or by ticket. An additional function that builds on the ticket management concept is that of tagging and associations. Tagging tickets is similar to Twitter hashtags and can keep your content more efficiently organized in the optimum and most comprehensible manner for your company, which eases the learning curve. Associated tickets allow agents to easily identify which other tickets may relate to the ticket they are working on. Agents can also create a direct link to tickets and define parent/child relationships.

Last but by no means least, the **Ticket Queue** is designed to offer better control over what you and others are working on today or in the coming week. An agent may have many tickets in their bucket, but in many cases, he or she will not necessarily intend to work on every ticket in a single day, or even within a week. The Queue generates short-term focus and makes prioritizing as easy as drag and drop. This unique capability is also useful when processing an e-discovery request or when specific content needs tracking down.

The screenshot below illustrates a **workgroup** and demonstrates how tickets can be passed from department to department. It shows the ticket type, to whom it is assigned, pertinent/relevant details and the status of the ticket with all related information, including any documents or attachments.

Figure 2.

The screenshot displays the TeamSupport.com interface. At the top, the user's status is 'working on issues'. The main content area shows a 'Customer Service' group with a table of tickets. The table has columns for Number, Name, Type, Status, Severity, Product, and Version Reported. Below the table, a detailed view for ticket 93 is shown, including its type (Bugs), assigned agent (Brent Gilmour), and work performed section.

Number	Name	Type	Status	Severity	Product	Version Reported
93	Problem with TPA reports	Bugs	Open	Low	Product A	2.00a1
82	Unable to pull report from Notes	Issues	Open	High	Product A	2.00a1
79	Need access to the new server	Issues	Open	High		
78	Blackberry Issue	Issues	Open	High		
59	Product A Failed	Bugs	Open	Medium	Product A	1.00a1

93: Problem with TPA reports
 Ticket Type: Bugs Assigned To: Brent Gilmour Group: Customer Service Version Reported: 2.00a1
 Status: Open Severity: Low Product: Product A Version Resolved: SP 3
 Customers: A Plus Productions

Work Performed:
 i did some work

TeamSupport offers **mobile web capabilities**. You can connect to TeamSupport using the web as it leverages its cloud (SaaS) delivery model. From a security, administrative and infrastructural standpoint, this constitutes a sound approach to mitigating risk and reducing disconnected systems and disparate information created by an App for each individual mobile device.

TeamSupport offers **Product and Inventory Management** modules as part of the application. It is important to note that the Inventory module was designed as a very simple inventory tracking system. Inventory is associated by customer and

not by inventory location, which allows you to see the specific products and physical assets attributed to a specific customer. The asset management module consists of three scenarios including: assigned inventory, warehouse inventory and junkyard options. Organizations can manage assets that have been assigned to specific customers, or assets in stock. The Junkyard module refers to physical assets that have been written off the books, although a complete history is saved for future reporting.

In addition to tracking issues by customer, TeamSupport can also track **issues by product**. This gives additional insight into where the problems are occurring and links the product development teams directly with the customer support group. This feature allows the product management teams to have direct visibility on how their products are performing and also adjust the roadmap based on customer tickets.

More specifically, the products section displays what customers are using your products - and also what products are being used by which customer in one simple snap shot. In many cases, this data is very difficult to track down yet TeamSupport removes the guess work entirely. You can also define and manage version releases so you can track both reported and resolved tickets based on versions released. More importantly, your teams can see all defects, support issues, and enhancement requests in one location. This allows key departments to share vital customer and product data in one place.

Total Cost of Ownership

In our analysis we have identified 11 items that should be included when calculating the total cost of ownership (TCO) for a cloud solution. This provides the starting point for determining the TCO over the application lifecycle and provides the basis for the calculation of ROI.

Are these components included the SaaS subscription?

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| • Hardware | Yes |
| • OS Licenses | Yes |
| • Database Licenses | Yes |
| • Middleware Licenses | Yes |
| • Software Licenses | Yes |
| • Software Support | Yes |
| • Hardware Maintenance | Yes |
| • Software Maintenance | Yes |
| • IT Operations | Yes |
| • Upgrades | Yes |
| • Training | Yes |

Support is offered 24/7 via email, a knowledgebase for FAQ, online documentation, customer portal and options to create a trouble ticket for *free*. TeamSupport also offers free training to all customers.

A key point of differentiation for TeamSupport is its ability to offer **free telephone support** as part of the monthly subscription price. This premium customer support is usually applied as an add-on or a pay per incident request by other vendors. Free phone support can drastically lower the monthly cost, which will reduce the total cost of ownership.

Technical Specifications

When it comes to data privacy, TeamSupport offers business continuity standards, redundancy for its data centers, application level security and session security. Team Support is a multitenancy solution with several online data centers. It uses standard SSL encryption and is SaS 70 certified.

Web browsers: TeamSupport is most/best optimized for Mac & Windows: IE 7 & 8. Firefox 3+, Safari 4+ and Google Chrome. Typical TeamSupport software installation times vary from 3 to 5 days; this depends on how much existing data needs to be migrated to the new system and the number of seats being used.

Edition Comparison Summary

	Enterprise \$35/mo/user	Support Desk \$25/mo/user	Express \$15/mo/user
Technical Support (phone included)	Free	Free	Free
Multi-Timezone Support	✓	✓	✓
Reporting	✓	✓	✓
SLA Management	✓	✓	✓
Wiki	✓	✓	✗
WaterCooler	✓	✓	✗
Live Chat (Prices)	✓	✓	✓
Custom Fields	✓	✓	✓
Custom Workflow	✓	✓	✓
Custom Properties	✓	✓	✓
Custom Tickets	✓	✓	✓
File Attachments	✓	✓	✓
Ticket Queue	✓	✓	✓
Ticket Tagging	✓	✓	✓
Family Tickets	✓	✓	✓
Email Integration	✓	✓	✓
Knowledge Base	✓	✓	✓
User Groups	✓	✓	✓
Ticket Submission Portal	✓	✓	✓
Advanced Customer Portal (Prices)	✓	✓	✗
API	✓	✓	✗
CRM Integration	✓	✓	✗
Source Control Integration	✓	✗	✗
Customers & Contacts Database	✓	✓	✗
Products & Version Tracking	✓	✗	✗
Inventory & Asset Tracking	✓	✗	✗

Conclusion

Within the customer support, ticketing and team collaboration market, TeamSupport offers a **great deal of flexibility** with a minimal price tag. There is fierce competition in this space. For a SaaS/Cloud vendor, the attention paid to security from a delivery and application standpoint is impressive. TeamSupport offers an **excellent range of support options**, which are included in the monthly subscription.

Organizations can take advantage of the Live Chat feature, which can be added to all editions. This gives organizations the ability to offer live support, direct from their website. An **intuitive interface** is a key feature of TeamSupport as a significant percentage of its customer base contracts its services and very rarely needs to interact with the vendor for support or configuration changes.

Whether TeamSupport is used for customer support, product defect tracking or internal co-worker/IT support, all stakeholders will benefit from the depth of functionality available. TeamSupport can exist as a standalone application or as an additional enterprise tool that coexists with others systems in your business.

The TeamSupport product is a good first step towards a **unified communication strategy** as it unifies and resolves several difficult communication tasks in one application and provides a single place to store the correct information. This convergence of business functions will reduce IT administration and lower operating expenses, thereby bolstering bottom line results.

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