

Frost & Sullivan Research: User Perceptions of Customer Service from L4-L7 Network Equipment Vendors

Executive Summary

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As part of its continuous coverage of the advanced networking equipment market, Frost & Sullivan (www.frost.com) has recently completed research on how IT personnel in the US perceive the customer service offered by various providers of L4-L7 networking equipment. The objective of this research was to begin to understand how the vendors' customer service is perceived overall in the US user base, and what some of the elements of those perceptions might be.

The research was based on an online survey, conducted in March/April 2005. Respondents were selected on the basis whether or not they are responsible for supporting L4-L7 network equipment (e.g., load balancing, content switching, application acceleration, etc.) within their organizations. Although not a requirement, many of the respondents were able to comment on multiple vendors, due to their use of the vendors' equipment or a high level of familiarity with the vendors. The vendors on which we polled the users in our panel included Cisco, F5, Foundry, NetScaler, Nortel Networks, and Radware. A total of 254 respondents participated in our survey, generating a total of 498 citations for the set of six vendors.

Among the various aspects of customer service that were explored, the survey asked about:

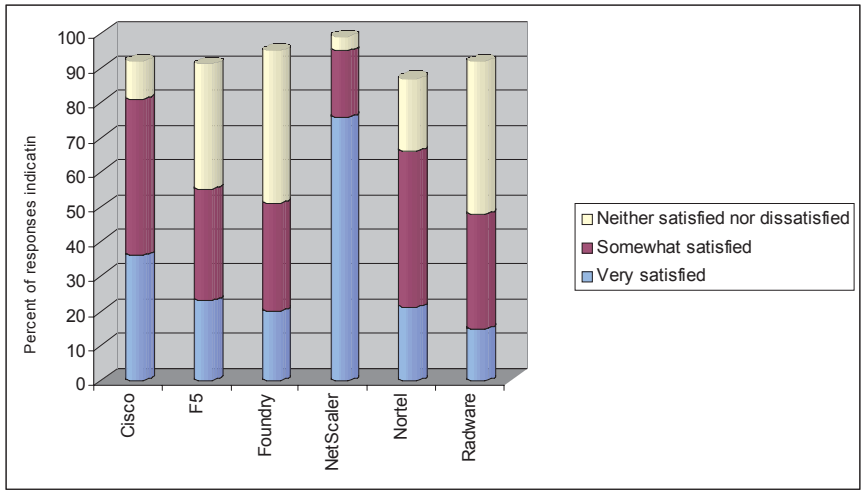
- A vendor's promptness in answering support calls with a live, qualified technical support agent
- The general responsiveness of this vendor to technical support inquiries
- The promptness with which a vendor typically resolves a service request
- The level of expertise and knowledge of a vendor's customer support staff
- Perceptions of a vendor's customer support overall

The analysis found that of all the vendors, NetScaler received the highest overall ranking for its customer service. Fully 76 percent of those IT professionals that rated NetScaler gave them a 5-out-of-5 rating ("very satisfied"), which was more than twice the percentage reported by respondents for the next highest rated vendor. NetScaler also received consistently high scores for other dimensions of its customer service. Cisco and Nortel also did well in the ratings process, particularly on the areas of the knowledge level and expertise of their technical support and customer care staffs.



Overall, the IT personnel who participated in the survey felt that they were satisfied with the level of professionalism exhibited by the L4-L7 network equipment vendors' technical support and customer care staffs, their ability to provide a solution, and their timeliness to respond to inquiries made of the staffs.

Overall Perceived Satisfaction with Customer Service



This research is part of Frost & Sullivan's ongoing coverage of the Network Equipment market. Those interested in learning more about our coverage, or this study in particular, can visit www.frost.com or 800.GOFROST.



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