



SLAs:

*The Foundation for Stronger
Customer Relationships*

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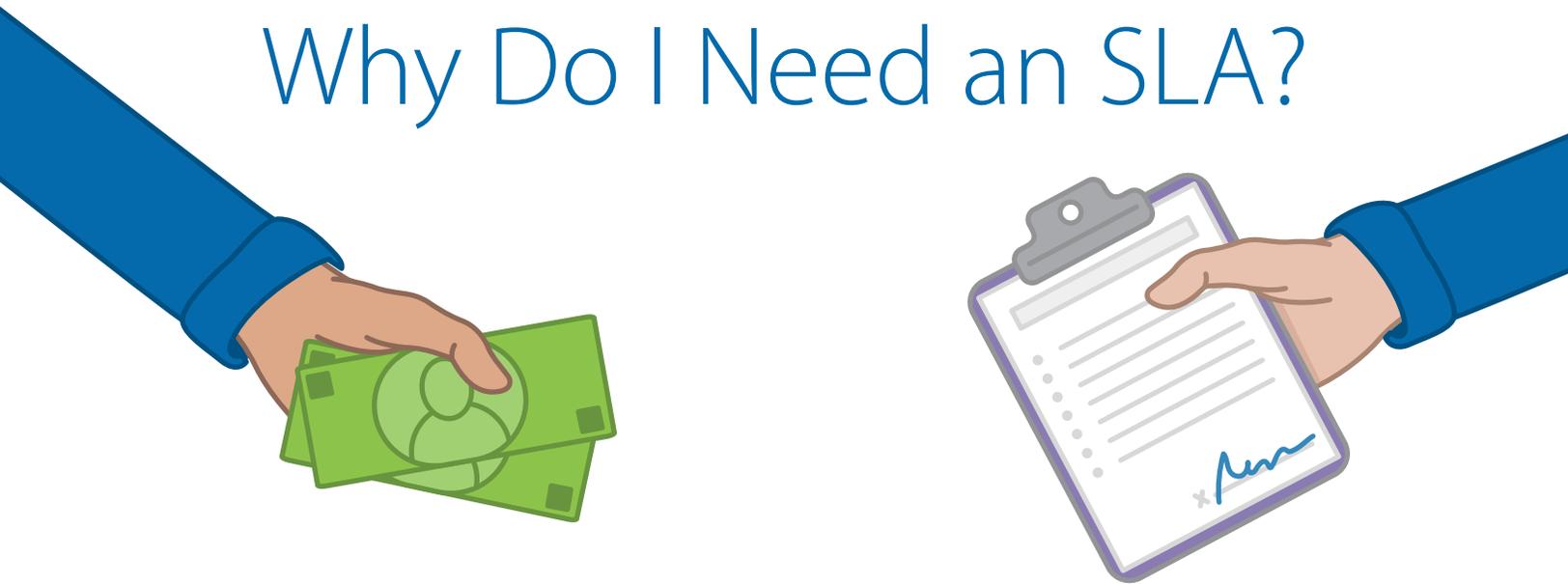
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Introduction:

Your service level agreement (SLA) sets the tone for your relationship with a new client by outlining your responsibilities, your client's responsibilities, and the terms and timelines you will both work under. **When you're clear on expectations, you'll be able to measure and manage the user experience in a meaningful way** and position yourself as a trusted advisor. The better your agreement, the more you and your clients benefit.



Why Do I Need an SLA?



SLAs deliver clear advantages to you and your customers.

By implementing SLAs, you can specify exactly what is (and is not) covered, document roles and responsibilities of both parties, and define service prerequisites that set you up for success. When done well, an SLA delivers peace of mind to your customers, who can refer to agreed-upon deliverables, see clearly defined terms of service, and access specific instructions for support and escalation.



Where Do I Start?

Your SLA doesn't have to be a challenge. Start with a few simple Dos & Don'ts to get you on your way.

Dos

- **Do develop a framework**—like ITIL—to help you map out your SLA and maximize your efficiency. Rely on automated workflows, where possible, to help you save time and deliver faster service.
- **Do identify specifically** what is and is not covered to avoid confusion on both sides. Make sure important things like your availability and contact information are clearly defined.
- **Do monitor compliance** by measuring your progress against SLA goals. Rely on reporting to help you keep customers aware of how you're meeting and exceeding your SLA promises.
- **Do automate reporting.** Providing real-time performance to customers through automated reporting provides full transparency into the real status of the agreed upon metrics.

Don'ts

- **Don't treat it as a solution** to customer-reported issues. Address concerns immediately, so your customers feel heard, and then revisit the SLA if necessary.
- **Don't make it one-sided.** Your SLA needs to work for you and your customer, so make sure it is equally beneficial.
- **Don't let issues fester.** Define thresholds to alert you to issues before they impact your SLA, and communicate performance expectations down to your sales and marketing teams to keep everyone on the same page.

“ If used correctly, the Service Level Agreement can be your most effective sales tool and the ultimate source of your profit and protection. ”

— CompTIA¹

What Should an SLA Include?

Your SLA agreement documents the common agreement between you and your customers and makes sure you both have a clear and concise definition of services, responsibilities, timelines, and guarantees.

The following sections are a great foundation for your SLA, and should be included along with clear explanation:

- Definition of Service
- Fees and Payment Schedule
- Taxes
- Coverage Hours
- Exclusions
- Performance Measurement
- Incident Management Process and Response Time
- Limitation of Liability
- Service Requirements
- Covered Equipment and/or Services
- Minimum Standards
- Confidentiality
- Security



Since your SLA is a legal document, you also want to make sure a qualified legal professional who understands the industry and any relevant verticals or regulatory considerations reviews it.



Is it Time to Refresh My SLA?

Things change in every relationship, and your relationship with your customer is no different. On a pre-established, regular schedule, you should meet with your customer to revisit your SLA and make sure it is still meeting the needs of both parties. If it isn't, you might need to refresh.

“ *It costs approximately six times more to attract a new client than to retain an old one.* ”

— CompTIA³

Here are 5 reasons why it might be time to refresh your SLA:

- **1. You're offering a new service.** Don't set yourself up for failure by allowing new services—with new requirements—to be governed by an old SLA.
- **2. Your team is struggling to meet timelines.** If you can't meet current SLA expectations, especially if it's because you're constantly delivering higher quality work, it's time to renegotiate.
- **3. It's confusing.** If you're constantly getting questions about a particular section of your SLA, rewrite it for clarity.
- **4. It isn't keeping up.** Technology changes fast, and sometimes your SLAs might not reflect the change. Use revision time to update your standards and stay competitive.
- **5. Disputes are on the rise.** If you're losing customers to SLA-related disputes, especially at a higher rate than the industry average, it's time to make some changes.

What is the Best Way to Keep Track of SLAs

You can rely on a solution like ConnectWise Manage to track service delivery expectations that you have set with your customer. Up the ante with an RMM tool like ConnectWise Automate, which gives you the advantage of repairing systems before your clients are aware there are issues. Many partners can charge a premium for a quicker response time. SLAs can help you decide which ticket to take care of first, so you can ensure that you respond within the parameters you have contracted for.

ConnectWise has more than 30 years of experience defining and adhering to industry best practices to improve company performance. They are embedded in the design of new systems and functionality as a way to ensure that clients receive the maximum value from partnering with ConnectWise. ConnectWise Manage implements best practices in many ways including establishing efficient workflows, creating effective SLAs, and developing service ticket management processes.

That way, you can use the features in ConnectWise Manage to keep your customers happy.



Conclusion

Your customers have to know that you put them first. **A well-crafted, service-centered SLA helps make that happen** by defining what your customer can fairly expect, and how you plan to deliver that service.

“90% of customers who are satisfied with their provider will recommend them to their peers.”
— CompTIA²

Rely on ConnectWise Manage and ConnectWise Automate to help you track what goes into your SLAs—service, costs, equipment, etc.—so that you can measure profitability and efficiency. When everything funnels through an integrated system like ConnectWise Manage, billing and managing by user or site becomes simple. Service boards and reporting allow you to provide your customers with specific information on how you’re meeting your goals.



¹“Service Level Agreements for Managed Services” CompTIA, March 2010
^{2,3}“Customer Satisfaction Equals Success!” CompTIA, November 2011



ConnectWise®

About ConnectWise

ConnectWise is a software company that connects technology teams to the solutions, services, and people that allow them to thrive. Our business automation platform stands at the center of a comprehensive Ecosystem of integrated solutions, best practices, and a community dedicated to everyone's success. We are driven by our passion to make it simple for technology solution providers (TSPs) and CIOs to build resilient businesses, delivering the platform, Ecosystem, community, and resources that drive consistently amazing experiences.

We streamline the delivery of solutions and services to enable higher levels of scalability, profitability, and simplicity. We help technology teams keep pace with a fast-changing technology landscape, allowing them to navigate a changing landscape. Our mission is to fuel TSPs' systematic, scalable journey into the future of the technology industry, connecting more than 200,000+ technology workers to hundreds of relevant, integrated applications.

For more information, visit ConnectWise.com or call 800.671.6898.

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Boost the effectiveness of your IT teams and simplify every aspect of your business with flexible remote monitoring and management from **ConnectWise Automate**. Gain better visibility, remove delivery roadblocks, and increase service without increasing costs through a solution that helps you master discovery, management, patching, monitoring, and automation. Eliminate blind spots in your supported environments, automate any IT support task, and support more endpoints without adding headaches or head count.



ConnectWise Manage is a business management platform designed to run your technology solution business, connecting everything with one application to allow superior service delivery, know your business better, discover full-visibility billing, and handle handoffs without hiccups. With ConnectWise Manage, you can put your people first, rely on detailed reporting functionality, speed up billing without sacrificing accuracy, and keep everyone on your team on the same page. From projects to services, marketing, sales, and finance, ConnectWise Manage brings it all together.