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The most expensive line in a Wi-Fi support ticket is the one nobody wrote.

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I have spent 25 years reading other people's Wi-Fi tickets and then spending a morning reconstructing what the person actually saw. After enough of them you stop seeing individual tickets and start seeing five shapes, over and over, in every country I have worked in.

The Wi-Fi Is Down

Four words. No SSID, no device, no location, no time. The missing line is what "down" looked like to the person who typed it. Cost: the opening stretch of the investigation goes to working out what happened, before anyone gets to start on why.

My Laptop Won't Connect

The missing line is whether anyone else is affected. One device and one whole floor are completely different investigations, and the ticket does not say which one you are in. Cost: you go hunting RF when it was a driver, or the reverse.

The Diagnosis

The user has already decided. The AP is bad, the channel is wrong, the new phones broke it. What arrives is their conclusion with the observation stripped out. Cost: you inherit somebody else's theory and spend your time disproving it. This is the shape I care about most, because Many Wi-Fi Problems Aren't. A ticket that names Wi-Fi as the cause hands you a negative to prove before you are allowed to look at DNS, DHCP, the uplink, or the application.

The Cold Case

Filed three days later, from memory. The missing line is the timestamp. Cost: the logs have rolled, the controller history is gone, and there is nothing left to correlate against. One ticket filed while it is happening is worth ten filed afterward.

I Already Fixed It

Rebooted the Access Point, changed the channel, swapped a cable, moved the AP. Then filed. The missing line is what changed and when. Cost: you are now troubleshooting a network that no longer exists.

I'm sure you've had these same type of trouble tickets... sometimes with all five in the same ticket!

None of this needs a new form or a new portal. Four lines will do it:

1 What device, by name and OS version.

2 Where you were standing.

3. What time it happened, to the minute.

4. What you saw, before you decided what caused it.

That fourth line is the whole game. Report the observation and keep the theory. I will ask for your theory, and I do want it, but I want it after I know what you saw.

If you have ever had to reconstruct someone else's bad afternoon from four words in a ticket: which single line have you started demanding before you will pick one up?

By Keith Parsons, CWNE #3, Wireless LAN Professionals. Free to read and share. Facts