

Three Trends Are Transforming The Service Desk

Increase Service Quality And Speed By Addressing ESM, Collaboration, And Intelligence

by Charles Betz and Will McKeon-White

October 2, 2019

Why Read This Report

Three factors — enterprise service management (ESM), collaboration, and intelligent service management — are driving the transformation of the service desk. To better meet customers' needs and increase service quality and speed, infrastructure and operations (I&O) pros must understand how these trends affect and expand the service desk landscape.

Key Takeaways

Enterprise Service Management Is Transforming The Scope Of The Service Desk

IT service management (ITSM) customers have started to understand the value of service management platforms and expanded service management scope to HR, facilities, legal, and more. ITSM vendors have taken this expansion to heart and begun the transformation to ESM.

Collaboration Is Critical For Service Fulfillment And Response

Service fulfillment has always been a collaborative process driven by queues, high-volume requests, and exceptions handling. With the automated reduction of high-volume requests, collaboration is now becoming increasingly critical for service fulfillment, focusing on exceptions — not rules.

Automated Delivery Is Increasing Service Speed

Service fulfillment has traditionally been a manual process, but intelligent service management and self-service are changing the landscape of delivery, improving the speed of service and customer experience. Organizations pursuing this path see, on average, a 20% automation of their workloads.

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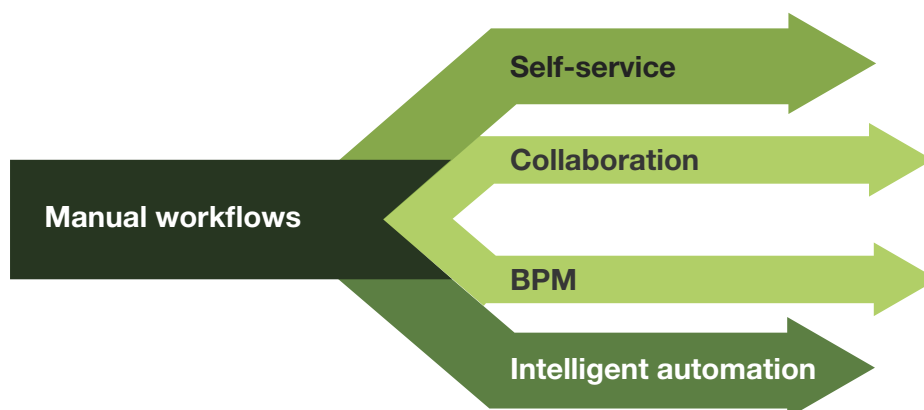
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Technology Is Forcing Your Service Desk To Evolve

Service desks are transforming because of three critical changes: an expansion of service scope, an increased emphasis on collaboration, and a drive to integrate more intelligence. As a consequence, the days of the traditional IT-centric service desk, buried in routine requests, are coming to an end. While ITIL excellence, process formalization, and optimized agent-to-employee ratios set the standard for past service desk success, organizations now need to evolve to keep up with employees' expectations and market demands.¹ Going forward, I&O pros must factor these three transformative trends into their strategies and understand their impact on service desk structure (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Manual Service Desk Processes Are Transforming For Work Fulfilment



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ESM Is Overtaking ITSM

Emerging from the ITSM tool market, ESM extends service management capabilities to areas such as HR, facilities, and finance.² ITSM vendors like BMC Software, Cherwell Software, and ServiceNow have embraced this trend, developing portals, prebuilt workflows, and a central request management system for these extended use cases. In 2018, 65% of global enterprise infrastructure decision makers said they had adopted ESM, with another 18% planning to adopt it in the next 12 months.³ As a result:

- › **ITSM vendors are expanding support of enterprise services.** In terms of both messaging and capabilities, all major ITSM players are becoming ESM vendors. In various stages of this evolution, leaders are doubling down on these commitments and expanding the number of functional modules, workflows, and function-specific services they provide.⁴ To take advantage of these continuously developing capabilities, you'll need to reimagine the role of the traditional ITSM tool provider in your service delivery ecosystem.
- › **Non-IT service processes are formalizing.** Departments like HR, facilities, finance, security, and legal have used informal service delivery models. But these platforms are moving request management and fulfillment from informal tracking with shared inboxes, legacy groupware, and spreadsheets to full-fledged workflows. Organizations have found they provide better visibility into work in progress and service demand and better employee experience (EX), stemming from ease of use, quality assurance, and transparency.⁵
- › **Centralized enterprise service desks are forming.** Increasing numbers of organizations are standardizing service delivery. The exact structure of this service delivery organization varies from enterprise to enterprise; adopters centralize the core platform and key processes such as portal creation.⁶ This allows them to optimize demand management and better take advantage of emerging technologies such as chatbots. Even organizations with decentralized models intend to rationalize services and tools and move to an increasingly centralized model.⁷

Collaboration Is Changing How Service Fulfillment Takes Place

Ticketing platforms and intelligent systems are increasingly enabling automation and self-service management. For the manual work that remains, fulfillment mechanisms are changing as well. As a consequence of left-shifting, easy or high-volume, low-variable tasks are becoming automated (e.g., access requests), and issues that make it to the service desk are becoming more varied and novel. To better deal with this new reality, service desks have to adopt a new problem-solving posture. This trend has several consequences:

- › **For workflows that aren't automated, fulfillment requires collaboration.** Linear workflows and spheres of responsibility once determined the service desk and request fulfillment, but the decrease in predictability of help desk tasks now requires responders from multiple disciplines. Work has a more dynamic quality, with swarming providing an increasingly popular model for facilitating collaborative work.⁸

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- › **Real-time collaboration is co-opting ticketing.** Responders are gravitating to tools that better facilitate real-time interaction. Persistent, conversation-based team messaging applications like Microsoft Teams and Slack are becoming the center of work. With these chat platform integrations in ticketing platforms, the ticketing system remains a system of record, providing key identifiers for grouping incident activity but decreasingly serving as a collaboration platform.⁹ In other words, ticketing will act as the delivery spine, not the entire nervous system.
- › **Collaborative incident management is enhancing collaboration.** With everyday work generating the proliferation of signals, collaborative incident platforms such as xMatters and PagerDuty help organizations rapidly identify, diagnose, and resolve incidents. They bring multiple disparate sources of data together and place them in a collaborative workroom where incident responders can work together in unison. The service management market recognizes their utility, with organizations adopting the tools and other vendors acquiring these platforms to enhance their offerings.¹⁰

Increasingly Intelligent Self-Service Is Speeding Service Delivery

While left-shifting isn't a new trend, employees' expectations of service speed, limited service desk resources, and new technologies in ESM platforms make self-service a reality. Organizations that have already adopted self-service have increased customer satisfaction and enhanced their scaling capacity, achieving, on average, 20% self-service resolution — and they're hoping that figure will grow rapidly.¹¹ ESM vendors are embedding more intelligence into their platforms through a combination of machine-learning applications and advanced analytics, introducing natural language understanding (NLU), advanced search, incident correlation, and more.¹² These changes are resulting in intelligent service management platforms, altering the relationship of humans and technology in the context of the service desk.

- › **Self-service is reimagining what service management tools must do.** Most service management tools were once ticketing and workflow platforms, but today, they're facilitating end-to-end automation without human intervention and with capabilities on par with those of business process management (BPM) platforms.¹³ In addition to changing the ESM market, this continuous expansion of functionality is bringing these tools into competition with other software markets.¹⁴
- › **Automated resolution is transforming the way employees access the service desk.** We once categorized the service desk as tickets, genius bars, and call centers, but the service desk is integrating more intake methods. Employees expect to contact the service desk through push-button resolution and integrations/APIs/connections to the desk in other tools as well as more variable input methods like chatbots.¹⁵ While many of these methods are available through ESM platforms and steadily increasing numbers of out-of-the-box automated workflows for customers to rapidly leverage, an emerging market of vendors providing automation overlays of ESM platforms are accelerating service desk automation journeys.¹⁶

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- › **Organizations must invest time in automation to meet employees' expectations.** Self-service is rapidly automating high-volume, low-variability requests, generating a sizable percentage of most organizations' inbound tickets. This results in not only better resolution time for employees but also better employee outcomes. Instead of waiting for a simple request like access, employees can resolve their issues in mere moments, letting them return to a key driving element of EX — making a meaningful impact.¹⁷ Because employees expect rapid resolution, employers must ensure that these options are available.¹⁸ Furthermore, with consistently limited resources for the service desk, automation that scales will be a requirement. Your service desk can no longer manually execute ticketing workflows.
- › **Human intake work is reducing.** Through elements like automated incident categorization and intelligent ticketing assignment aided by machine learning and advanced analytics capabilities, these platforms relieve humans of triage, classification, and routing, so submitted incidents get to where they need to go faster. Combined with the trend toward self-service, intelligent service management is slowly automating significant portions of the level 1 service desk and already having an impact.¹⁹

What It Means

Your Service Desk Structure Will Change

I&O pros should know that ESM, collaboration, and automation of service delivery will change the structure of the service desk. While these trends are still years from making their full impact, they imply a fundamental shift to the service desk and its importance within organizations:

- › **Low-variability work.** Level 0 or self-service support will replace level 1 or tier 1 support for the majority of low-variability work (e.g., password resets and access requests), and systems like intelligent ESM tools and AI for IT operations will drive down the repetitive/informational matching work of level 2 or tier 2. Demand for level 3 or tier 3 support will then increase.²⁰
- › **Complex requests.** These requests will require more experience, ongoing problem solving, and deeper understanding of the systems they serve. This will lead to fewer entry-level positions, a reduction in level 1 requests, changes in outsourcing models, alterations to levels 1 and 2, and a shift in day-to-day activities of the service desk by moving from reactive to a proactive posturing.

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Endnotes

- ¹ ITIL: Information Technology Infrastructure Library.
- ² For more on the foundations of ESM and its value proposition, see the Forrester report “[ESM: Elevate Service Value Beyond The Technology Organization.](#)”
- ³ Source: Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics® Infrastructure Survey, 2018.
- ⁴ For more on the players in ESM and the state of the market, see the Forrester report “[The Forrester Wave™: Enterprise Service Management, Q3 2018.](#)”
- ⁵ Source: Forrester interviews with ITSM/ESM customers.
- ⁶ The most common models have taken a federated approach, keeping service delivery fulfillment and best practices centralized within relevant teams but with a core guiding improvement team to build out the service management vision and platform. Source: Analyst-attended conferences and Forrester interviews with ESM adopters.
- ⁷ Source: Forrester interviews and inquiry with service desk managers and directors.
- ⁸ Source: “Intelligent Swarming,” Consortium for Service Innovation (<https://www.serviceinnovation.org/intelligent-swarming/>).

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⁹ For more on how organizations are practicing incident and crisis management and how the practice is evolving, see the Forrester report “[The Changing Landscape Of IT Incident And Crisis Management](#).”

¹⁰ Everbridge, PagerDuty, and xMatters provide standalone platforms today, and OpsGenie and VictorOps were acquired. Source: “Atlassian to Acquire OpsGenie to Help IT Teams Manage Service Disruptions,” Atlassian Investor Relations press release, September 4, 2018 (<https://investors.atlassian.com/financials-and-filings/news/news-details/2018/Atlassian-to-Acquire-OpsGenie-to-Help-IT-Teams-Manage-Service-Disruptions/default.aspx>) and “Splunk Agrees to Acquire VictorOps,” Splunk press release, June 11, 2018 (https://www.splunk.com/en_us/newsroom/press-releases/2018/splunk-agrees-to-acquire-victorops.html).

¹¹ Source: Vendor briefings and Forrester interviews with organizations that have implemented a self-service strategy.

¹² Source: Analyst-attended ESM vendor briefings, 2019.

¹³ For more on the players in ESM and their automation capabilities, see the Forrester report “[The Forrester Wave™: Enterprise Service Management, Q3 2018](#).”

¹⁴ Source: Forrester ESM client inquiries and interviews, 2019.

¹⁵ Source: Forrester briefings with ESM vendors.

¹⁶ Some of these vendors include Astound.Ai, Attivio, Espressive, Moveworks, and Squirro. Source: Analyst-attended briefings.

¹⁷ For more on employee experience, the key driving factors, and how to improve EX throughout an employee’s day, see the Forrester report “[Focus On Employees’ Daily Journeys To Improve Employee Experience](#).”

¹⁸ Source: Forrester interviews with ESM and chatbot customers.

¹⁹ Source: Forrester interviews with organizations adopting self-service/intelligent service management strategies.

²⁰ In essence, L2 splits, and all that’s left are L1 and L3; this is what swarming implies.

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