ITSM at a crossroads: What will it take to move IT Service Management into the 21st Century?

A recent, deep-dive study on ITSM reveals that users on both sides of the help desk are frustrated, overwhelmed and underserviced by current product offerings. The technology is ripe for progression to the next level, but a new vision focused on how ITSM can better impact modern organizational structures is required.

The 80s called, and they don’t want their ITSM solution back.

Today, the smart phone in your pocket has more computing power than all of NASA had when it put Neil Armstrong on the moon. Technology has been rapidly progressing for decades, but in the last 15 years specifically, we've seen the explosion of the global Internet, the proliferation of mobile devices and the subsequent emergence of the App Economy. Innovative entrepreneurs have leveraged these technologies to give life to new companies like Uber and Nest, driving us towards an Internet-of-Things world. Everything has changed. Except ITSM.

Today's business user simply has to fill out a help desk ticket to re-live the technologies of the late 80s. Sure, help desk forms are now accessible on the under-visited and impossible-to-navigate corporate intranet. And we can now key in the fields rather than fill them out by hand. But other than that, today's IT service management systems look eerily similar to those created decades ago. They're still forms based, poorly designed and cluttered with unnecessary information.

These ITSM solutions are no picnic for IT analysts either. Outdated tools and processes work nothing like Google so the search for information is arduous and time consuming. And in order to consult with other team members who have expertise relevant to the issue at hand, they're forced to work outside the system.

The result is that individuals on both sides of the service desk still have too much work and too little assistance. And because the ITSM experience in no way reflects the technology experience today's users have grown accustomed to, IT is perceived as doing things the old-fashioned way. For an industry that claims its purpose is to uniquely transform services, the technology seems hopelessly static.

ITSM: Why the lack of progress?

In our tech-focused world, entrepreneurs everywhere are racing to build the next big app to revolutionize the way we live, work and play. So, why the lack of progress in ITSM? Some providers point to their cloud-based solutions as evidence of advancement, but don’t be fooled: A little analysis reveals that these “revolutionary” products offer little more than the same old ITSM system with fancier buttons and a monthly payment plan. ITSM, as many leading IT analysts would attest, has made little headway towards maturity:

1 http://knopfdoubleday.com/2011/03/14/your-cell-phone/
According to HDI studies\(^2\), the average cost per help desk ticket has remained relatively static for the last several years as ITSM tools have remained trapped in technological adolescence. And until those tools begin to drive productivity gains, the cost to service tickets will remain static, or rise with wage increases.

**ITSM MATURITY LEVELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATURITY STARTS HERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  |

Source: CA Technologies, Multiple industry analyst reports.

So, what’s the core issue? We’re making simple modifications to an antiquated system. We’re trying to modernize the fax machine when we should be designing electronic signature software. It’s time to rethink ITSM from the ground up. And the starting point is the human element. We need to understand the people, the environment and the culture behind the ITSM system.

**Survey reveals the culture behind ITSM**

In 2015, CA Technologies conducted an in-depth study to identify the key reasons why ITSM is failing organizations. The study was designed to explore the foundation upon which companies manage ITSM, and to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations behind both business users and IT teams.

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**

We used a flexible, ethnographic technique to interview and observe users in their work settings. Rather than ask formal survey questions, we encouraged interviewees to tell stories about their experiences which allowed us to reach beyond basic behavior patterns to find their underlying motivations and identify specific pain points.

Creating a new vision for ITSM

The study provided us with some surprising insights into the many underlying factors associated with the use of an ITSM system. With a thorough understanding of the environments in which people use the product and the goals they expect to accomplish, we can deliver a high-value solution that better meets the needs of the modern enterprise. Following are the study’s key findings.

Study finding #1: Today’s ITSM is built for IT processes, not people

Business users feel underserved by today’s ITSM systems, but they’re not alone. IT analysts on the other side of the ticket feel equally frustrated by the technology’s shortcomings. Many analysts feel that rather than facilitate the process, ITSM tools complicate it with incomplete ticket information, insufficient situational context and clunky workarounds. In fact, current ITSM tools are perceived as failing analysts in a number of ways:

Multiple screens, no prioritization

To perform a single task, help desk analysts are frequently forced to work from independent queues across multiple systems. Switching back and forth between ITSM screens, queues and solutions may provide some at-desk exercise, but it also increases the time required to work a ticket, provides zero context in terms of what the analyst needs to do to solve the problem, and doesn’t help to prioritize the workload.

The missing central knowledge base

Our study showed that today, knowledge is stored in a range of locations from sticky notes to third-party solutions and everywhere in between. IT teams are using SharePoint, Excel and old-fashioned notebooks rather than the knowledge management tool in the ITSM system. Without a centralized knowledge base from which to leverage existing intel, analysts lack information that could assist in the resolution process. A comprehensive capture of data -- including screenshots, chats, email, voicemail, etc. -- from resources inside and outside the ticketing system is integral to replacing spotty tribal knowledge with accessible, centralized knowledge.
A maniacal focus on service level metrics

Tools and process are typically focused on service level metrics. But this SLA-based approach encourages the analyst to focus on the speed of solving an issue at the expense of everything else, and doesn’t tell the true story about the quality of the service delivered or the business user’s overall satisfaction. SLAs can even cause the analyst to avoid pressing issues that need immediate attention in order to meet speed goals. Without more comprehensive resolution targets, analysts will continue to find it difficult to evaluate their own job performance and overall service will continue to suffer.

What we’ve got here, is failure to communicate

Strong communication features within the ITSM system are needed to cultivate team collaboration and ensure successful ticket transfers. But today’s tools lack those capabilities and the result is failed ticket handoffs, lost data, incomplete ticket information and a lot of aggravation.

Study finding #2: Collaboration is most often done outside the system

There’s no one individual capable of solving every IT issue that arises. Therefore, IT departments regularly depend on collaborative teamwork to get the job done.

But ITSM systems aren’t designed with features that foster effective collaboration. First, it’s a challenge for analysts to even locate other team members with the expertise required to help solve specific issues, because there’s no easy way to identify their skills sets.

And even if analysts have become aware of each other’s strengths, the one-individual to one-ticket mindset meant to ensure accountability, makes it difficult to collaborate on a ticket simultaneously. In fact, most tools are currently designed for agents to handle only one ticket at a time and if help is required, they have to abandon the tool in order to communicate with other analysts face-to-face, or through IM programs.

External interaction among analysts cannot be tracked or captured in the system. And since they must rapidly move onto the next ticket, external communications are almost never inserted into the system after the fact.

This lack of centralized, trackable collaboration significantly reduces visibility and introduces several disadvantages. When tickets are escalated or sent to co-workers for input, when analyst assignments change or when queues are shuffled, contextual ticket information is lost and the issue reverts back to square one. Other tickets fall through the cracks and are lost entirely. And without any record of interaction, knowledge that could be leveraged to resolve future issues is lost as well.
What collaboration should look like

Collaboration within the system at every stage of the support process would mean that as soon as an issue arises, the right help desk analysts with the right skill sets are leveraged to assist in the shortest amount of time, achieving rapid resolution without driving up support costs.

Tracking and recording communication means it can be referenced when future issues arise to deliver faster resolution. In addition, new employees learn best from seasoned co-workers, so effective collaboration tools that create a natural student-mentor relationship between employees and their veteran counterparts will help to inspire, engage and educate.

Study finding #3: People go to IT as a last resort.

A survey by Harris Interactive⁴ revealed that 53 percent of office workers opt to fix their own computer problems or ask someone else for help, instead of relying on an IT professional or help desk.

This chart illustrates what users actually do when they encounter an issue with a business app like email.

A Deloitte study³ found that companies that prioritize collaboration are twice as likely to be profitable and twice as likely to outgrow competitors. Collaboration is an important factor of success.

---

⁴ http://www.researchscape.com/business/office-computer-user-survey
What sends users running from ITSM?

Today's business users have grown accustomed to the ease and speed technology brings to their lives. They expect quick and easy access, straight-forward transactions and readily available information. And they expect results in minutes or hours—not days or weeks.

So, of course business users look for every way possible to bypass the ITSM process, preferring to use administrative assistants and other IT helpers to facilitate communication between themselves and IT, or when necessary, defaulting to familiar tools like email or phone to communicate issues.

Users find self-service tedious because many of today's help desk systems do little more than combine disparate tools and features together, without any real consideration of the human element behind the process. And that missing human element materializes in a number of ways:

- Users can’t readily access solutions buried in the corporate intranet
- Forms and knowledge materials are riddled with IT jargon
- IT categorization is confusing
- Menu navigation is laborious
- Users lack involvement in the process
- The learning curve is steep
- System performance is slow
- There’s no integration with the business software they use

Distributing costs to other departments isn’t saving money

Many organizations have implemented some flavor of self-service — providing business users with the ability to troubleshoot and/or create tickets for their own issues. It sounds good, but according to our study respondents, self-service in its current form doesn’t have a significant impact on front-line workload.

The primary goal of self-service is to shift some of the support burden from an overloaded Tier 1 help desk back onto business users. This is an attempt to urge business users to solve their own technical issues rather than having them solved by much cheaper help desk analysts. So, rather than focusing on their core job, we have highly-paid business professionals spending valuable time troubleshooting their own technical issues.

While self-help and self-generated tickets may reduce IT support costs on the surface, in reality these costs are really just being distributed through the organization in ways that make little business sense.

According to Compass America®, US employees spend 30 minutes each week trying to fix their own problems or helping a co-worker with theirs. In a similar European survey®, 65% of respondents claimed they spent an average of four hours a week troubleshooting computer problems. Calculating on the basis hourly wages, study organizers estimated the resulting costs to be £12 million a year – for that group of respondents alone. It’s hard to imagine what users in that study are doing that requires four hours a week troubleshooting, but whether they’re spending 30 minutes or four hours, the cost of lost productivity as business users try to solve their own IT issues adds up fast.

3 http://www.networkalliance.com/your-advantage/understanding-technology-costs
Our vision for next-generation ITSM
As made evident by the survey, there are significant issues with today’s ITSM solutions, but none are insurmountable. And effectively addressing these issues could have a significant, positive impact on both the business and the IT sides of the organization.

With our research results in hand, CA has set out to create a better ITSM solution to support business growth, provide better customer service and user experience, improve workforce productivity and manage costs.

We believe that the key to a more progressive ITSM experience is to factor people into the equation every step of the way. We can help IT to regain relevance and legitimacy by:

• Improving the lines of communication
• Addressing user needs through the eyes of the users themselves
• Moving beyond static forms and rigid checkboxes to better leverage information
• Working with users to identify root problems and resolve them in a timely, satisfactory manner
• Busting the silos that prevent IT analysts from using their expertise in a team context
• Harnessing cumulative tribal knowledge to provide more comprehensive help to customers
• Using technology as a means to provide personalized service, while managing costs
• Designing a tool that works the way people work

CA Service Management – Designed for Humans, Built for Service
In direct response to our survey findings, CA has reevaluated the design methodology behind our ITSM solution to deliver a tool that better reflects user and analyst goals and motivations, rather than focusing exclusively on underlying technologies or tasks. Our resulting design process includes the following core elements:

Don’t skip a beat.
Stop solving technology problems and start solving people’s problems. Provide customers a simple way to connect with IT and remain engaged and satisfied across the entire service delivery and restoration process.

Give customers a consistent support approach across any channel, information and involvement in every step of the process, and in business terms with non-complex language. Make IT simple and keep customers running at their best.

Make every moment count.
Up-level IT intelligence and communication. Provide analysts with awareness of the complete state of the IT environment.

Give them a comprehensive understanding into the importance of the workload, a way to prioritize it with data driven intelligence and a list of activities to get the job done right. Provide them with the expertise to make every engagement valuable.
Embrace the team, not the ticket.
Elevate system and human knowledge to support the business as a unified IT team. Give your service desk a well-organized, single-view solution with easy access to knowledge resources.

Give them a system that leverages team- and skills-based capabilities so analysts can work together to solve issues based on individual strengths, as well as a way to monitor and measure results to improve the level of service. Help teams be productive in the digital workplace.

**ENGAGEMENT MODEL**

- Connections to strengthen the intelligence of the IT team
- Shared skills for better decision making
- Metrics to improve the overall level of service

CA Technologies (NASDAQ: CA) creates software that fuels transformation for companies and enables them to seize the opportunities of the application economy. Software is at the heart of every business, in every industry. From planning to development to management and security, CA is working with companies worldwide to change the way we live, transact and communicate – across mobile, private and public cloud, distributed and mainframe environments. Learn more at [ca.com](http://ca.com).