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eBOOK

# ITSM buyer's guide

How to choose the right ITSM software



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## Overview

You already have an ITSM solution or at least some form of it. After all, ITSM has been around for decades. But the world has changed. Your ITSM needs to change too.

Perhaps you want to consolidate multiple ITSM tools or update an existing solution. Maybe you plan to roll out a brand new ITSM solution, one that's more advanced. Or you may still be undecided, unsure about what a new ITSM solution can do for you.

Whatever the case, where do you start when you're set to go? With more than 200 ITSM software vendors to sift through, finding one feels like a daunting task.

This buyer's guide can help. Here you'll find the latest trends driving the market, changes you can make to move your ITSM forward, and guidance for selecting the right ITSM tool and vendor.



## Trending now

ITSM has been here for decades, and the underlying approaches to processes like incident management have changed little over time. What has evolved rapidly are ITSM business demands, user expectations, and ITSM technologies themselves.

Strong forces are at play here: The massive move to cloud and hybrid work. A more connected worldwide economy. Innovative technologies like generative AI and low-code platforms. Even a new digital work-life culture, fueled by day-to-day consumer experiences and accelerated by Generations Y and Z.

These forces impact how we work. And they demand a rethinking of business and IT strategies that has given rise to the following market trends.

### A focus on experience

In our high-speed digital world, experience matters. Better experiences drive employee engagement, proficiency, and productivity. But life at work has grown rapidly more complex, with no slowdown in sight. And more often than not, employees perceive the consumption of IT services as a painful process that drags them down.

To fix the problem, IT leaders have shifted their focus to more consistent and satisfying user experiences. Their efforts include moving from traditional service request approaches to smart, personalized self-service models from the consumer world—for example, AI-powered self-help and chat.

When it comes down to ITSM, and especially self-services, IT has a significant role to play in creating superior user experiences and increasing employee productivity. This role is especially important for companies who run initiatives to increase the digital employee experience (DEX).

**The digital experience (DEX) is the total perceived quality of digital services, measured by the effectiveness of all digital workplace tools. According to an SMG survey, only 27 percent of organizations see their digital workplace as fully mature regarding DEX.**

## Trending now

### Reinvention of self-service

For years, self-service has been about enhancing service portals with easy-to-use front ends for requesting services and raising issues. This approach, the result of early ITIL thinking, led to the creation of catalogs of standard, repeatable services and of knowledge bases for supporting IT self-service.

But many service portals deliver only static self-service that leaves little room for agile, personalized self-help. For that reason, they fall short of user expectations—and ROI goals.

AI and machine learning, along with natural language processing, have changed the game—accelerating the adoption of smarter, more dynamic self-service options.

Done right, these technologies improve employee satisfaction and reduce ticket volumes. Generative AI, using large language models (LLMs), promises to raise the self-service bar even higher.

But don't expect the traditional self-service model to be obsolete anytime soon—the elimination of Level 1 support is still a vision. What's right around the corner is a radical reduction in Level 1 support volumes thanks to generative AI-driven self-service.

Wisely used, generative AI will empower users to finally help themselves quickly, easily, and seamlessly. And IT support will be better, faster, and cheaper as a result.



## Trending now

### Generative AI

Since the arrival of AI and machine learning, IT organizations have been exploring how these technologies can help to improve service delivery, including user experiences.

In the beginning, AI and chatbots seemed to give employees a better IT experience. But while the service desk backend quickly benefitted from smart automation, including the automatic categorization and routing of tickets, employee needs were not satisfied by virtual agents. Left to struggle with unresolved issues and questions, users resorted to calling or emailing the service desk directly.

OpenAI ChatGPT and other generative AI content creation services introduced new ways to look at the user experience. Today, AI plus natural language processing are front and center with generative AI and LLMs.

Generative AI can produce text, images, or other content using generative models. Generative models learn the patterns and structure of their input training data and then generate new data that has similar characteristics. An LLM can process vast amounts of text data. The artificial neural networks that it builds can contain from tens of millions to billions of weights and are pretrained using self-supervised learning and semi-supervised learning ([Wikipedia](#)).

By combining ITSM with generative AI technologies, you can build virtual agents that connect across enterprise content to deliver human-like, contextually relevant responses to user requests. With these advanced capabilities, you can realize significant reductions in Level 1 support. That means you can finally shift resources to strategic projects, such as digital transformation.

## Trending now

### Intelligent automation

AI presents endless opportunities. It's also a mandatory prerequisite for intelligent workflow and process automation.

Intelligent automation combines proven ITSM capabilities, such as runbook automation, with AI. This integration allows you to automate processes, workflows, and tasks in new ways. Here's one well known example: A ticket is automatically created from a user's screenshot, the ticket is automatically categorized on the backend, and a virtual agent automatically responds via chat or email. Part of this response can be kicking off a runbook to automatically execute a workflow or task.

This example shows how intelligent automation streamlines the incident management process and enables faster, less expensive issue resolution.



## Trending now

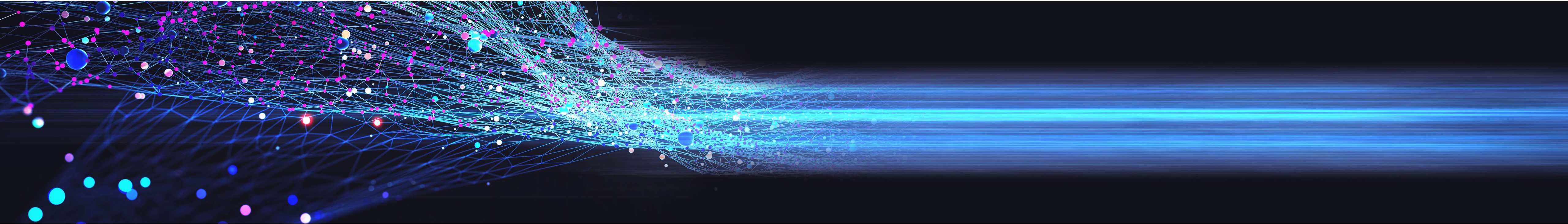
### Data-driven ITSM

Data is essential to the survival of ITSM and IT organizations—a fact that has elevated the role of CMDB since the beginning of ITSM and ITIL.

Traditionally, data for support or supplier contracts has been duplicated in the service desk solution for easy, on-demand access. But this data is static and limited in scope.

Now, by integrating technologies like generative AI, LLM, and natural language search with modern content management solutions, you have a world of possibilities for finding answers while keeping your data secure.

For example, AI and smart semantic search can understand the searcher's intent and the contextual meaning. These capabilities give IT organizations the tools they need to leverage massive data pools of structured and unstructured data provided by the service desk and other applications. What a door opener! With access to the right data at any given point in time, IT teams can quickly find answers, resolve issues, drive decisions, and continuously improve service quality.





## Trending now

### Sustainability

Climate change is real. Measuring and reducing carbon footprint has become a mandatory element of most business strategies.

Since no digital service comes without a carbon footprint, ITSM has a role to play in supporting sustainable IT operations. ITIL even offers a certification course centered on digital and IT sustainability ([www.axelos.com](http://www.axelos.com)).

The greening of IT operations presents tradeoffs like those of the familiar project management triangle—quality, cost, and time. Carbon footprint reduction must be balanced with service quality and cost, and changing one value has an impact on the other two. These tradeoffs reinforce the importance of governing the lifecycle of services/assets and connecting hardware/software, financial, and environmental data for informed decision-making.



## Trending now

### Advanced ITSM

Corporate and technology landscapes are converging. The new terrain calls for an **advanced ITSM** approach—one that holistically addresses business issues and opportunities rather than applying partial solutions to just one area (people or processes or technology).

Advanced ITSM introduces capabilities that increase an IT organization's maturity, for example, through IT financial and asset management. It also shifts the service management focus from “what is done” to “what is achieved”—for example, value co-creation per ITIL 4 with an emphasis on process efficiency, cost-effectiveness, risk mitigation, and people.

For this reason, advanced ITSM can be seen as next-generation ITSM. It combines different approaches to increase IT's business value and prepare you for whatever comes next.

Now you know the trends driving the ITSM market. But how would you/should you begin to put them into practice? That's up next.



## Turning trends into wins

IT industry and technology trends are great catalysts for changing your ITSM software, but they are not typically the sole drivers for a change. Just throwing AI technology onto the service desk will result only in limited outcomes. To turn the promise of trends into real wins, you need to know your current situation, your goals, and what to focus on first.

Whether you plan to change your ITSM solution or haven't yet given it serious thought, this section serves up options—not rules set in stone—for getting started.

### Consolidate your service desk

Consolidation comes in different forms. For example, it might look like unifying multiple ITSM tools (perhaps resulting from a merger or acquisition) onto a single platform. Or it might be centralizing disparate, multiple ITSM service desks to break down silos between teams. Just know that consolidation takes time and effort. Plus, it almost always triggers questions about the current ITSM approach and how to improve it.

### Expand your ITSM processes

For employees, a service is a service whether it's related to IT or not. Expanding ITSM concepts, principles, and capabilities into non-IT realms—such as HR, facilities, and sales (aka enterprise service management or ESM)—allows companies to standardize services and user experiences across the business. Doing it successfully requires that you have the right tools, capabilities, and support IT/non-IT work in place.

### Reduce IT workloads and costs

Level 1 support costs—even with the introduction of AI, successful self-service implementations, and smarter ticket workflows—are still a thorn in many IT managers' sides. By reducing IT workloads and making them smarter, you can drive down service desk costs.

The cost per ticket (incident, service request, question, etc.) indicates how well a service desk works—assuming that cost is not traded with other indicators like service quality or customer/employee satisfaction. Cutting this cost can help IT organizations shift their focus to more strategic tasks and initiatives.



## Turning trends into wins

### Digitally transform

Digital transformation is a corporate necessity that's been accelerated by economic uncertainty and climate change. Digital transformation projects aim to replace outdated, manually reliant business processes with digital workflows. In terms of ITSM and ESM, digital transformation touches the design and delivery of new products and services, customer and employee engagement improvements, and the rethinking of back-office operations—all of which are hugely dependent on data and technology.

### Move to SaaS

Thanks to heavily customized implementations, off-cloud (on-premises) ITSM deployments often come with technical debt, complex maintenance requirements, and sky-high costs.

For that reason, IT organizations, business departments, and entire companies are quickly moving workloads to the cloud. ITSM solutions are no exception. Strategies vary from private cloud deployments to public cloud deployments and SaaS.

ITSM SaaS is noteworthy for stopping maintenance nightmares and delivering TCO savings for ITSM solutions. On average, SaaS benefits outweigh potential disadvantages. For these reasons, many organizations have a SaaS-first strategy, often part of a larger digital transformation project, that ends up having an impact on current ITSM solutions.

**According to Gartner®, “By 2026, 75% of organizations will adopt a digital transformation model predicated on cloud as the fundamental underlying platform.”**

Gartner, Predicts 2023: The Continuous Rising Tide of Cloud Lifts All Boats, Sid Nag, Yefim Natis, Ed Anderson, et al., 9 March 2023

## Turning trends into wins

### Satisfy tool expectations

Beyond any ITSM trends, you may want to replace your current ITSM tool for one simple reason: It no longer meets expectations:

- It reached or is reaching end of life, so updates and maintenance are prohibitively costly and time-consuming.
- It is a homegrown tool that is no longer maintainable.
- It does not keep up with requirements related to ITIL alignment, usability, automation, flexibility, customization, integration, and more.
- It failed to deliver the expected benefits for self-service adoption, service management KPIs (such as incident volume or change success rates), or any other goals you had originally set.
- It is not used by employees because it feels outdated and doesn't deliver what they need, so they call or email the service desk instead.

**Now that you know some specific ITSM changes you can make, you're almost ready to evaluate tool options. But first . . .**

**Twenty-nine percent of respondents said that the primary reasons for ITSM tool change were tool dissatisfaction, that the tool was end-of-life or simply outdated.**

## Before you evaluate ITSM tool options

With market trends, business or IT initiatives, and reasons to change in mind, you're almost ready to frame your ideal ITSM solution. But before you start thinking about selection criteria, you must first understand where you are now and where you are going.

### Where you are—Service management maturity

Organizations generally fall into one of three levels of service management maturity. They are described as follows:

#### 1. You just got started.

You are successfully using basic service desk software to support key workflows, including incident management, change management, and key self-service requests. With measurable benefits and an experienced service desk team, you're ready for more advanced ITSM capabilities.

#### 2. You have implemented advanced ITSM capabilities in some areas.

Your ITSM team has fully embraced a customer- and service-centric mindset. You have already automated some tasks, workflows, and related KPS, such as change success rate, with clear results. Incident management is more effective, and your users appreciate intelligent self-service and search capabilities.

Now service quality and self-service adoption rates are on the rise. But you know you can grow IT and business value even further.

#### 3. You have a highly advanced ITSM solution in place.

You are living a service-oriented mindset. You've implemented ITSM practices and process across the board. You use discovery and workflow automation. You are beginning to leverage AI and machine learning. And you are considering the adoption of IT asset management, virtual agents, and collaboration tools for integration.

In other words, you are an ITSM visionary on a mission to evolve your ITSM solution and make it fit for the future. Your goals are to:

- Adopt generative AI and LLM to transform your IT service management.
- Integrate with content management to tap into corporate knowledge.
- Configure and customize with no-code/low-code options.
- Converge cloud and off-cloud management for total visibility and operational consistency.

## Before you evaluate ITSM tool options

### Where you're going—ITSM goals

It's time to clarify what you want to achieve with a new ITSM solution.

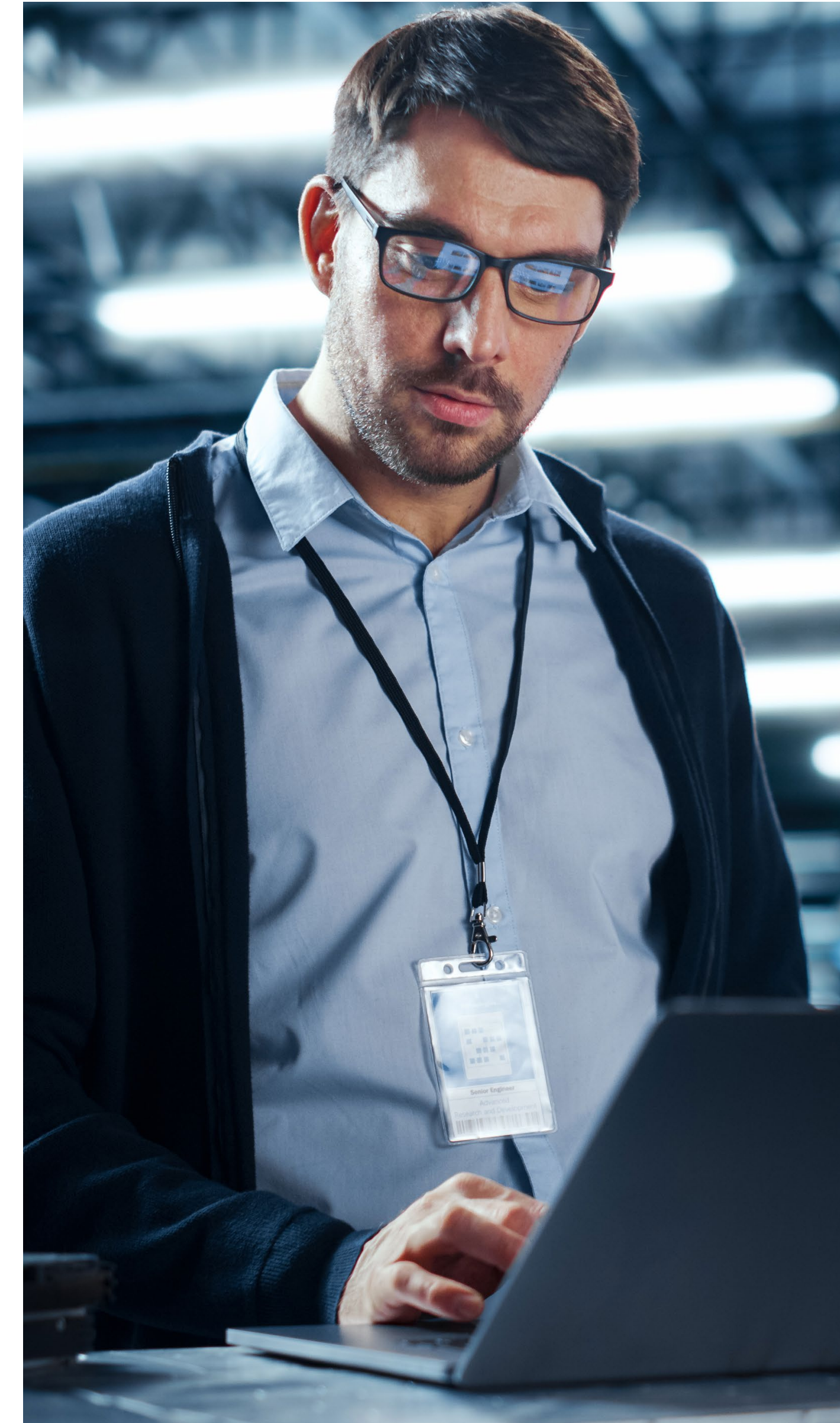
#### Get specific. Ask yourself these types of questions:

- Are my users frequently dissatisfied with the service desk? If so, why? Slow response times, bad responses, a clumsy UX, poor search results?
- How do these problems negatively impact my business?
- How much time and money can I save by fixing them?
- What tasks or workflows can I automate? What cost savings or other benefits can I gain with automation?

#### Keep your answers simple and formulate three to four stretch goals. Here are some examples:

- Cut down the time your agents spend on Level 1 support by x percent.
- Reduce ticket volume by x percent.
- Decrease the average ticket resolution time by x percent.
- Decrease ITSM software update and maintenance costs by x percent.
- Implement new self-services with an adoption rate of x percent.
- Increase employee satisfaction (Net Promoter Score) by x points.

**Once you have clarified your goals, you are ready to define your selection criteria.**



## ITSM selection criteria

Don't get stuck in endless feature lists. Keep the big picture—your goals, initiatives, strategies—in sight by zeroing in on a short list of high-level requirements for both software and vendors. In other words, what are your key requirements and who can best help you meet them?

Here's how to think about goals: You probably won't reduce your Level 1 ticket volume by 50 percent with an easy-to-use self-service front-end. You might, but that's too general. Ease of use does not automatically give employees exactly what they're searching for. Nor does it mean they'll find a solution quickly. Be more specific.





## ITSM selection criteria

### Software requirements

Recalling the trends, your change drivers, and most important, your goals, weigh your technology options:

#### **Secure generative AI**

New developments in AI technologies, propelled by ChatGPT hype, promise big business benefits. LLMs can empower users and provide self-service and search capabilities like we've never seen before. The elimination of Level 1 support is within reach, as are significantly reduced incident volumes. But keep this in mind: For ITSM, data security is paramount, so private LLMs are mandatory.

#### **Data and content integrations**

Stop replicating documents in ITSM. Instead, use data-like contracts from a centrally governed content management system integrated with the service desk. Service desk agents, change and configuration managers, asset managers, and others will be able to access and update documents following the information management policies and governance rules set by their respective business owners.



## ITSM selection criteria

### Software requirements

#### Automation capabilities

Eliminate manual, error-prone workflows or tasks and enable your ITSM team to work more effectively on cloud or off. The best automation platforms are open, extensible, and come with rich out-of-the-box content, an easy-to-use workflow designer, and RPA robots that mimic screen-based human actions.

#### Software integrations

Open, flexible ITSM solutions that integrate easily with other software solutions right out of the box can save you hours of time. When out-of-the-box integrations are not available, look for a simple, intuitive, modern user interface for building and managing your integrations. In this case, predefined templates that jump-start the building process by removing the need to write complex code are crucial.

#### Low-code/no-code customization

Expanding service management into non-IT functions, including HR, finance, and facilities, requires the freedom to easily extend ITSM processes and workflows or build your own—without programming or coding skills.

#### Licensing and deployment options (SaaS, on cloud, off cloud)

It may seem like a no-brainer to put SaaS on your shortlist of requirements, but what if your strategy changes? ITSM software should come with deployment and licensing flexibility, including options for moving the ITSM workload off cloud to private cloud, public cloud, or SaaS, all based on the same software platform. Ideally, a license will cover both named and concurrent users or offer a unit-based system. These options give you the flexibility to combine licenses and make changes as needed.

#### Expandable platform

A future-ready ITSM solution must be able to support advanced ITSM use cases on a single platform, including those from non-IT functions. HR is a perfect example. By integrating ITSM with out-of-the-box HR workflows and a contextual HR knowledge base, you can deliver a unified and consistent service experience.

## ITSM selection criteria

### Vendor requirements

Now that you know what your software requirements are, who can meet them? How can you sort through hundreds of vendors to create your short list? Here are some questions to guide you:

- Does the vendor have proven ITSM history? Did it help to shape ITIL? Can it be a partner in your journey?
- Does the vendor offer an advanced ITSM solution with out-of-the-box best practices that cover all core processes and practices on a single platform?
- What services does the vendor offer in addition to support services? For example, does the vendor provide assessment and implementation services?
- Is the vendor a niche player covering only ITSM/ITOps or does it offer a comprehensive software portfolio covering a broad range of solutions across and beyond IT?



## Partner up for your journey

It's not easy to prepare for an ITSM change. One of the next steps in this process is to create a business case. Use some of the points discussed in this guide. You may also want to take a detailed look at your requirements around AI, automation, and integrations.

Remember, you don't need to go it alone. If you pick the right vendor—the one with the right solution—you'll gain a partner by your side every step of the way into your ITSM future. Get ready to meet up with happy users, efficient IT, and better outcomes soon.

Visit [Modern ITSM](#) or contact our team to learn more.



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