Life on the Service Desk in 2016: A View From The Frontline

Prepared by Ollie O'Donoghue, SDI Industry Analyst
January 2016
Declaration

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Prepared by SDI

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**Embrace:** To raise the quality of service delivery by valuing best practice

**Engage:** To create an inspiring and engaging customer experience

**Invest:** To empower their teams to be inspired, take action and be better

**Shine:** To demonstrate and deliver exceptional business value

SDI sets the globally recognised best practice service desk standards that provide clear and measurable benchmarks for service desk operations and professionals. The standards are designed to encourage service desks to embrace and value best practice in order to raise the quality of service delivery.

For more information about SDI please visit www.servicedeskinstitute.com

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Introduction

When initially published in 2012, the SDI ‘A View From The Frontline’ research report was set against a background of economic austerity and uncertainty. At this time, an emphasis was placed on maximising resources to deliver services to meet increasing customer expectations. This fostered an environment where service desk professionals were seeking to realise the most value from their ITSM tools.

The 2012 research asked a series of questions about what the service desk industry looked like at this point in time and whether economic realities and increasing business demands had a negative impact on the outlook and performance of the service desk. The report went on to investigate the perception of the ITSM tool as either a hindrance or an enabler, alongside what the service desk would like to see in their tool and, indeed, how vendors could raise their standard of customer service, support and innovation.

Now, in 2015, the economic climate looks brighter. Research conducted by the Service Desk Institute reveals a more positive environment with reduced budgetary pressure and the potential for increased staffing levels. However, despite this change in environment, service desk professionals still rely on tools and technology to deliver the services their customers demand. As a result, the questions asked in the 2012 research are still pertinent in 2015.

The results of this survey - sent out to ITSM professionals during October and November 2015 - provide a valuable insight into the frustrations and challenges service desk professionals are facing – with a particular emphasis on ITSM tools and vendor relations – as well as the additional capabilities that service desk professionals would like to see in the future.

1. The ‘A view from the frontline’ report was originally published in December 2012 by the Service Desk Institute. This research used the same questions, with minor amendment, to draw comparisons with the service management industry in 2012 and 2015.

ITSM Tool Frustrations

What Are Your Top Five Frustrations With Your Current ITSM Tool?

Respondents were asked to list five frustrations with their current ITSM tool. These were then placed into eleven categories to allow comparison with the 2012 research. Some of the qualitative responses have been listed below under each category heading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customisation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardisation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaaS/Social</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- 2015
- 2012

www.servicedeskinstitute.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lacking automation in core processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of mobile interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited browser support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited self-service functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No integrated CMDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No separation between Incident and Service request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complicated to customise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of updates to keep up with industry standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complicated user interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to provide updates in multiple languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easy to organise a personal queue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited knowledge management consolidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not intuitive – there is a big learning curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't work as well for varying teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited reporting functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to track team performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting capability is virtually non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual efforts in creating reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many steps to get reporting and analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to access data quickly to respond to ever-changing trends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asset updates take too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searches take a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The system locks up when someone is running a report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool slow, especially when spread across different global regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to multi-task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow response on in depth searches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor workflows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of integration in other ITSM processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak process base, workflow should be much better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ITIL compliant (sic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too complicated to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ‘agile’ understanding and orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not easy to upgrade without spending a fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra cost to access back-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense of adding functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires investment in SME contractor to gain traction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of integration with other systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tool does not integrate with non-company accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not play well with other tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of automation and integration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For many service desk professionals, the procurement of an ITSM tool is one of the most important, and complex, decisions they will make. The lifeblood of a service and support organisation, ITSM tooling is essential to ensure the work of the service desk is effectively managed. It is notable, then, that for many there are obvious areas of improvement that currently cause a great deal of frustration.

In the 2012 report, the largest proportion of respondents, comprising 24%, advised that their biggest frustrations were feature-based. Increasing to 29% in 2015, features remain the greatest source of frustration for service desk professionals. It was also noted in the 2012 report that customers were hungry for new modules, particularly surrounding knowledge management. In 2015, this is still the case; however, the demand for specific modules has changed. Arguably, moving in line with technological advances, the capabilities which are under the spotlight in 2015 are automation, integration and increased demand for mobile and web-based interfaces.

Vendors have made significant advances to ensure the ITSM tools they develop are viable in a competitive marketplace. As a result, since 2012 ITSM tools have become increasingly feature-rich with the caveat that procuring a tool with all of the desired features can make increasing costs a significant consideration in the procurement process. Nevertheless, the percentage of service desk professionals who have highlighted frustrations with ITSM tool pricing have remained the same at 6%.
Reporting, usability and customisation remain high on the list of customer frustrations, with limitations in reporting capabilities a notable concern. Corresponding with the 2012 report, customisation is also high on the agenda as organisations endeavour to build an ITSM tool that fits the business needs and culture of their organisation.

For most software vendors, post-implementation customisation serves as an additional revenue stream, with significant costs associated with development and consultancy time. Indeed, this additional cost features in this report as a major frustration (see page *) as service desks endeavour to tailor ITSM tools to their organisation and realise the most value from their purchase.

It is notable that frustrations with Software as a Service (SaaS), social support capabilities and standardisation remain at the lower end of the table, both of which have seen a reduction – down from 5% and 3% respectively in 2012 to 1% in both categories by 2015 - largely due to the development of the SaaS business model and the increase in social support capabilities in ITSM tools.
## Vendor Frustrations

Respondents were asked to list five frustrations with their current ITSM tool vendor. These were then placed into six categories to allow comparison with the 2012 research. Some of the qualitative responses have been listed below under each category heading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Support
- Lack of local support
- No real commitment
- Would rather sell new upgrade than help with opportunities existing version
- Slow response time
- Once the tool is sold you are on your own
- Very sales orientated

### Relationship
- No interest in building a relationship with customers
- Don’t understand or care about the culture of our organisation
- No pro-activeness
- Vendor will sell the ITSM tool, but want to charge heavily for training, development etc
- Cost of consultancy
- Want more money for more features

Key:
- Support
- Relationship
- Lack of communication
- Implementation
- Understanding
- Cost of consultancy
- Want more money for more features
The frustrations service desk professionals experience when dealing with ITSM tool vendors provide a valuable insight into the ITSM industry. When procuring a tool, service desk professionals need to recognise that the software is not a single product that needs to be evaluated. Indeed, ITSM tool procurement is the beginning of a partnership between a vendor and a service desk that is likely to last for many years.

As a result, it is essential that the expectations of the service desk are carefully considered beforehand to ensure they can be met by the selected vendor. The subsequent frustrations experienced by service desk professionals and captured in this report, highlight areas where the expectations of the service desk have not been met, and areas where vendors can work to improve.

Primarily, the technology provided by the vendor needs to meet the changing needs of the service and support environment; so it is not surprising to see a lack of innovation featuring as a key source of frustration. Since the first report, the percentage of respondents who voiced their frustration with a lack of innovation from their ITSM vendor has increased from 19% to 23%, revealing that service desk professionals are becoming increasingly concerned about vendors’ ability to provide innovative solutions and capabilities.

As the central toolset for the service desk, the reliability of an ITSM tool should not be in question. However, sometimes there is a need to put things right should they go wrong. Support, therefore, is an essential aspect of the service desk and vendor partnership. Somewhat surprisingly, given the industry ITSM vendors serve, poor support features highly as an area of frustration for service desk professionals, comprising the largest proportion of respondents for both the 2012 and 2015 surveys at 39% and 30% respectively. Service desk professionals need reassurance that, should their central resource experience an issue, support will be at hand for a timely resolution. It is concerning to see support still the main source of frustration for service desk professionals with many advising that the sales oriented nature of their vendor relationship leaves the all-important support aspect lacking.
Interestingly, the vendor-service desk relationship itself has increased as a source of frustration, with 25% of the 2015 respondents noting this as a concern compared to only 7% in 2012. The partnership formed when a service desk procures an ITSM tool needs to be effective to ensure both parties are able to achieve the most value. Disappointingly, relationship management on the part of the ITSM vendor appears to have serious limitations with many service desk professionals advising that their ITSM vendor has little interest in forming a meaningful and collaborative relationship or, perhaps more disappointingly, that the relationship is geared primarily to build new revenue streams.

However, it is encouraging to see that one of the most significant frustrations of 2012 has reduced significantly. Vendor understanding, specifically in relation to the needs and challenges of the individual service desk, was considered one of the major frustrations in 2012 with 18% of respondents noting this as a key concern. Three years later, this percentage has reduced dramatically to 2%. It is encouraging to see that service desk professionals have reported fewer concerns about vendor understanding of their operation.

Similarly, ITSM tool implementation has seen a reduced proportion of service desk professionals highlighting it as an area of frustration, dropping from 14% in 2012 to only 3% in 2015. The few respondents who advised this was an area that concerned them noted the source of their concerns as limited integration options and insufficient self-help features to meet their demand requirements.

Lack of communication, the source of frustration with the fewest responses in 2012, has increased significantly in 2015. Perhaps more concerning is the nature of the frustrations, with respondents to the 2015 survey advising that vendors are failing in essential communications such as planned outages, service interruptions, lack of clarity over the development of the tool and release schedules.
## Influences for ITSM Tool Selection

**What would influence your selection of a new ITSM tool?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automation capabilities</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product features and functionality</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use and UI</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-service capabilities</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to customise and configure</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to quality support</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration capabilities</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility and other modern capabilities</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketed as ITIL aligned</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of implementation and low on-going management</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of deployment model</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience with product or vendor</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant and/or analyst advice</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer or social media references</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive business platform capability</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor marketing</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor culture</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The increasing demand for automation capabilities is reflected in the results of this survey, with 62% of respondents advising that this capability would influence their selection of a new service desk tool. The benefits of automation are widely recognised in the service and support industry, with significant benefits for service desk staff such as a reduction in manual and repetitive tasks, quicker deliver, and a better customer experience. It is, therefore, not surprising to see this feature emerge as a key influence for tool procurement.

ITSM tools are developed in an increasingly feature-rich market in which software vendors strive to approach the challenges service desks are facing by building capabilities into their toolset. It is not surprising, then, to see product features high on the decision-making agenda with 60% of respondents advising that this would be a factor. Indeed, the drive for feature-rich toolsets can be seen in other high-ranking influences, such as the more specific demand for improved self-service capabilities.

Indeed, the importance of self-service capabilities has been identified by 56% of respondents. For many service desks, self-service support channels have become a staple of their customer support strategy - unsurprising given the increasing quality of self-service capabilities and the prospect of significant benefits if implemented effectively. Ensuring the ITSM tool that is selected has the self-service capabilities to suit the service desk and the organisation is a vital consideration for a large amount of service desk professionals. Indeed, self-service capabilities need to be designed to address the challenges the industry is facing with end user adoption rates. Considering factors such as ease of use when developing the capabilities will ensure service desks reap the full benefits of self-service.

Access to quality support is considered a key influence by 41% of respondents - with good reason. Service desks expect support for the software they have purchased to ensure that, should the tool experience an issue, it will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently. As revealed in the vendor frustrations identified earlier in this report, although an important expectation, it is rarely met by software vendors.

Interestingly, ease of use and user interface are also key considerations for service desk professionals. Focus is often placed on the customer-facing side of an ITSM tool - in self-service provision as an example - however, it is becoming increasingly important for the tool to be simple and easy for service desk staff to use. This priority has been emphasised by 57% of service desk professionals, and is echoed by the 47% of service desk professionals who also factor the ability to easily configure and customise the tool as an important consideration.

Consultant and analyst opinion as well as peer or social media references feature towards the bottom of the list of influences with just 9% and 7% of respondents citing opinions as influencing any decision making. Similarly, vendor marketing and a previous relationship with a software vendor have received a comparatively low response with 2% and 12% respectively.
Since the 2012 research, ITSM tools have become more feature-rich and accessible to customers and service desk professionals alike. However, as the challenges of the service management industry change, so must the solutions vendors provide. Nevertheless, the top considerations noted in the 2012 research report are strikingly similar to those revealed in this research. Product features and functionality (55%), ability to easily customise and configure (50%) and ease of use and user interface (29%) were revealed as the top considerations for service desk professionals in 2012.

In summary, for service desk professionals in 2015, the key selection criteria have changed very little. The selected ITSM tool must have the features that service desk professionals need to face their particular challenges. It must be attractive and easy to use, and easy to adapt and configure when required. However, for the majority of service desk professionals in 2015, there is a singular new demand for their ITSM toolset – save us time and resources through automation.
Key Innovations and Improvements

List 3 key innovations/ improvements that you would like to see in your ITSM tool in the next 12 months?

Respondents were asked to list three innovations that they would like to see in a future ITSM tool. These were then placed into nine categories to allow comparison with the 2012 research. Some of the qualitative responses have been listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process integration</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile offering</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-service</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily configurable</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media component</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- 2015
- 2012
The call for innovative and improved features has jumped significantly to 40% in 2015 demonstrating the demand in the ITSM marketplace for increasingly feature-rich solutions. Indeed, when compared to the 2012 research findings – which had a more balanced covering of the different improvement and innovation categories – the push for more features is a distinct priority for ITSM tool procurement in 2015. Some of the improvements and innovations that fell under the features category include:

- Predictive knowledge management
- Ability to run problem analysis within the tool
- Improved chat capability
- Translations made easy
- Request fulfilment tracking module
- Better workflow functionality
- Better search functionality
- Release management interface

Coming in second, by quite some distance, is reporting, comprising just 14% of 2015 respondents. The call for improved reporting functionality in ITSM tools has increased since the 2012 research findings – where only 10% of respondents advised they would like to see an improvement – making reporting functionality a key consideration for vendors seeking to improve their service management technology. This resonates with key trends in the service management industry as organisations attempt to grapple with the increasing volumes of data they need to gather for better business decision making. The sheer volume of service and customer data can make distilling value challenging, so it is not surprising to see increased demand for improved reporting functionality to meet data challenges.

Interestingly, demand for social media components has decreased significantly, moving from 14% in 2012 down to 2% by 2015. There are two possible explanations for this. The first – a positive inference, is that over the past three years, service desks have utilised the increasing social media functionality built into service desk tools and, as a result, no longer see this as an innovation or improvement to their existing toolset. The second – a negative inference albeit a more likely one – is that service desks have attempted to reap the benefits of social media over the three years with limited success, and have subsequently made the decision to deprioritise social media components in their ideal ITSM tool.
Pain Areas

In your daily service desk life, what causes you the most pain?

2015

- Inability to easily produce metrics and reports: 56%
- Outdated or complicated service desk tool: 50%
- Increasing business demand for services: 46%
- Lack of integrated knowledge tools: 44%
- Budget constraints preventing service improvements: 43%
- Low self-service adoption: 42%
- Managing customer expectations: 41%
- Lack of recognition/profile within the business: 40%
- Lack of budget and resources to help you meet business: 33%
- Lack of knowledge or poor quality knowledge in the tools: 32%
- Poor vendor support: 27%
- Inability to demonstrate your value to the business: 23%
- Other: 13%
- Job security: 9%
In your daily service desk life, what causes you the most pain?
2012

- Ability to easily produce metrics and reports: 35%
- Lack of resources to help you meet business expectations: 33%
- Managing customer expectations: 33%
- Budget constraints preventing service improvements: 29%
- Increasing business demand for services: 28%
- Lack of integrated knowledge tools: 26%
- Outdated service desk tool: 23%
- Lack of recognition/profile within the business: 21%
- Ability to demonstrate your value to the business: 20%
- Lack of appetite (business or customer) for self-service: 17%
- Lack of career progression: 16%
- Job security (i.e. threat of outsourcing): 9%
- Poor vendor support: 7%
- Other: 4%
The ability to easily produce metrics and reports is once again highlighted as a top cause of pain in everyday service desk life. In 2012, 35% of service desk professionals highlighted this area as a cause of pain; this increased to 56% in 2015. As previously noted in this research, reporting also featured as the second highest cause of ITSM tool frustration, emphasising the important role reporting plays, and the challenges it can cause when it is not fit for purpose.

A further 50% of service desk professionals highlighted an outdated or complicated ITSM tool as a major cause of pain. Arguably, a clear theme running through this research is that the ITSM tool must be both simple to use and easy to modify. This demand appears to be driven out of frustration with the outdated or overly complicated tools that they are currently working with. ITSM tool vendors need to simplify their products and ensure that they can be readily adapted and configured by customers.

However, service desk professionals have highlighted another major cause of pain outside of the immediate control of ITSM vendors. Increasing business demand for services has been noted as a cause of pain by 46% of respondents, revealing the toll that increasing demand is having on the service desk industry. ITSM tools can help to remedy this; through intelligent automation - noted in this research as a significant factor in ITSM tool selection - alongside optimising other aspects of the service management technology such as further process integration.

On the subject of integration, 44% of service desk professionals regard a lack of native knowledge tools as a cause of pain. For many service desks, capturing knowledge poses a significant challenge as, largely due to the nature of service desk work, a significant amount of the knowledge is tacit or ‘know how’ which is challenging to capture in conventional knowledge management systems. Integrated knowledge management tools can help service desks on two levels. Firstly by capturing knowledge that may have been challenging to explicitly work into knowledge articles and, secondly, by reducing the significant time and resource cost associated with traditional methods of harvesting knowledge.

Finally, it is important to note that budget constraints preventing service improvements remains high on the list for service desk professionals - in 2012, 29% of respondents cited this as a cause of pain, by 2015 this had risen to 43%.
Industry Analysts and Commentators

Do you think industry analysts and commentators truly understand the service desk industry?

- **9%** Yes - I find them really helpful
- **6%** No - I think they do more harm than good
- **4%** In different to analyst and commentator opinion
- **2%** No - But they are harmless
- **44%** Maybe - It depends who they are
- **35%** Yes - I find them somewhat helpful

The role of industry analysts and commentators in the ITSM community can be contentious. It is crucial, therefore, to investigate how analysts and commentators are perceived by the professionals they represent and assist. A large proportion of service desk professionals, 44%, think industry analysts and commentators truly understand the industry, of which 9% find them really helpful and 35% find them somewhat helpful.

The largest proportion of service desk professionals, comprising 44%, argue that the level of understanding analysts and commentators have, varies from individual to individual. 2% of service desk professionals believe analysts and commentators do not understand the industry they represent but are harmless, however, a concerning 6% believe that they do cause harm.

A further 4% of service desk professionals are completely indifferent to analyst and commentator opinion.
The Last 12 Months

During the past year, has life on your service desk...

2015

- 48% Improved
- 23% Become more difficult
- 29% Stayed the same

2012

- 39% Improved
- 33% Become more difficult
- 28% Stayed the same
When compared to the results from the 2012 research, service desk professionals appear to have had a more positive year. In 2012, only 39% of respondents advised that life on their service desk had improved; by 2015 this had risen to 48%.

Conversely, 33% of service desk professionals believed service desk life had become more difficult in 2012; this was the case for only 23% in 2015. The amount of service desk professionals who believe service desk life has remained the same is similar for both 2012 and 2015 with 28% and 29% of respondents selecting this option respectively.

**During the last 12 months, where has your service desk spent most of its time?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire-fighting due to heavy workload</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing new process</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling with the current service desk tool</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with customers and building relationships</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling with self-service end-user adoption</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing ITIL best practice and training</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Planning</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping customers with their own devices (BYOD)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying the service's desk existence</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Throughout this research, there are references to increased business demand and outdated ITSM tools. It is, therefore, unsurprising to see the majority of service desks spending most of their time fire-fighting due to a heavy workload.

This interesting result reveals the significant time reactive support can take up and further emphasises the need for service desk professionals to identify areas where a proactive approach can be used to mitigate the impact firefighting has on the service desk. ITSM tools can support the service desk in this effort through improved and innovative functionality and features.

Many service desk professionals, however, are working on implementing new processes that will support the service desk in becoming more proactive. Evaluating processes and streamlining them appropriately ensures that the service desk is utilising resources in the most efficient manner.

It is disappointing to see such a large proportion of service desk professionals spending a significant amount of their time struggling with their current service desk tool. ITSM tools should enable the service desk to efficiently deliver a consistent and quality service to their customers, with the capacity to scale up to deliver more services should the need arise. It is clear from this research that many service desk professionals do not consider their ITSM toolset to be an enabler for developing their service delivery. Instead, there is a strong theme that ITSM tools are a hindrance to service desk professionals as they attempt to gain the most value from complex, cumbersome and outdated technology.

On a positive note, however, an encouraging proportion of service desk professionals spend most of their time speaking with customers and building relationships. Proactively engaging with customers and the business can help service desks address issues early, potentially reducing future negative impact. Additionally, building strong relationships with customers ensures that services that cater for customer needs and work towards objectives that align with those of the wider organisation are developed.

### 2012 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fire-fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Implementing new process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Helping customers with their own devices (BYOD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Implementing ITIL best practice and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Justifying its existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Speaking with customers and building relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Next 12 Months

What are your top service desk priorities for 2016?

2015 Responses

- Improving service desk performance: 74%
- Increasing our value to the business: 63%
- Using more automation: 59%
- Increasing first time fix rates: 59%
- Succeeding with self-service and/or service catalogue: 47%
- Reducing inbound calls/emails: 43%
- Reacting to business change: 39%
- Using chat and remote control more: 24%
- Investing in a new ITSM tool: 16%
- Consolidating multiple service desks: 15%
- Cost reduction: 14%
- Supporting more devices (i.e. BYOD): 13%
- Other: 6%
For the majority of service desks, improving service desk performance is the highest priority. As business demand for IT services increases, it is not always the case that service desks will benefit from a comparative increase in resources. As a result, it is not surprising to see the majority of service desks working to improve performance to meet increased demand.

For some, this can be achieved through automation - noted as the highest influence for ITSM tool selection - and, indeed, using more automation has been noted as a priority for 2016 by 59% of respondents. Similarly, service desks are prioritising the success of their self-service and service catalogue capabilities to ensure that their customers are able to access the services they need through channels that have the potential to reduce resource overheads and improve the customer experience.

There is a recognisable drive to increase the value of the service desk to the business. For many service desks, this will be a marketing activity, a drive to change the perception of IT and the service desk and communicate the value IT services bring to the business. For others, there is a need to transform the services offered to ensure that they deliver what the business needs.

Other service desks may achieve this increased value through incremental steps such as gradually increasing first-time fix rates, a priority highlighted by 59% of service desk professionals.

Encouragingly, cost reduction is low on the list of priorities with only 14% highlighting this as necessary for 2016. Indeed, the emerging trend from this research is not that service desks will deliver value by cutting costs, but that value will be delivered by increasing efficiency and developing the resources the service desk already has at its disposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increasing our value to the business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Improving what we have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Increasing first time fix rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Managing changes within the business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reducing inbound calls/emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supporting more devices (i.e. BYOD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cost reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Consolidating services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Investing in a new ITSM tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During 2016, which of the following do you expect to see?

2015 Responses

- Greater focus on the customer (end-user) experience: 69%
- Greater use of self-service and self-help: 67%
- Increase demand for business intelligence (i.e. the use of big data): 47%
- Increase in demand for non-IT business services: 40%
- Adoptions of ITIL’s continual service improvement practices: 35%
- Increased support for personal mobile devices: 34%
- Increased support for personal devices: 33%
- Increase in the proportion of shared service operations: 30%
- More peer to peer support via internal communications: 26%
- Greater use of social media support: 21%
- The use of gamification on the service desk: 14%
- Generally things will stay the same: 8%
- I have no idea what the future holds for my service desk: 6%
- Other: 3%
For many service desk professionals 2016 will be a year of increased focus on customer experience, with 69% expecting to see this over the course of the year.

Customers now expect access to their personal devices in the workplace, their technology to be as mobile as they are, and to have a fast efficient support service at a time and place that suits them. For many service desks, the constraints of enterprise IT may inhibit their ability to meet these demands. However, as the capabilities of ITSM tools increase the challenges that come with customer expectations will become less prohibitive. For example, enterprise mobility management is now widely supported in ITSM tools.

This can be seen most readily in the now ubiquitous self-service and self-help capabilities of ITSM tools. Indeed, 67% of service desk professionals believe there will be more self-service and self-help requirements in 2016. Similarly, 40% believe they will see more support for mobile devices.

Alongside increased customer expectations is the growth in business demand for less traditional IT services. The growth in demand for data and business intelligence is highlighted by 47% of service desk professionals, which is, perhaps, unsurprising as the ‘big data’ trend has solid foundations in technology, people and processes. As businesses begin to recognise the value of big data and data-driven decision making, the service desk will face increased demand to enable the business with the technology and services to satisfy these needs.

Furthermore, many service desk professionals expect the remit of the service desk to extend outside of technology and IT with an increase in demand for non-IT services expected by 35% of service desk professionals.

### 2012 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provide support/more support for mobile devices (BYOD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More use of self-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An increase in business service provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased demand for business metrics and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Service desks using social media more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Use more self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No big changes/things will stay the same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For many service desk professionals 2016 will be a year of increased focus on customer experience, with 69% expecting to see this over the course of the year.
Conclusion

As the challenges and needs of the service desk industry change swiftly, so must the ITSM tools that are developed to meet them. The solutions sought by service desk professionals to deliver the services their customers demand, are often delivered by ITSM vendors seeking to differentiate their product in a competitive market. However, delivering the features, capabilities and solutions that service desk professionals’ demand is not the only concern. At the beginning of an ITSM tool procurement process, a vendor forms a relationship with a customer. Truly successful relationships grow into collaborative partnerships in which vendors provide the expertise and support the customer’s service desk needs to be successful. It is disappointing, albeit unsurprising, to see that many service desks do not appear to be in a collaborative partnership, and rarely stray from the traditional buyer-seller relationship. For these service desks, frustrations with both the ITSM tool and the vendor are rife, with little sign of improvement.

To meet the needs of the industry, vendors must ensure the features they develop are innovative and consider the challenges service desk professionals are dealing with. Throughout this research, the current frustrations of service desk professionals have provided tremendous insight into what innovative solutions must be considered for the future. Furthermore, vendors need to concentrate on working with service desks more closely to ensure that the ITSM tool they are implementing is the right fit for the organisation. Indeed, engaging with the industry and understanding its challenges will provide ITSM vendors with the inspiration needed to further develop their offerings.
About SDI

The SDI company mission is to inspire service desks to be brilliant. To achieve this mission SDI has developed a set of goals by which it aims to inspire service desks to:

**Embrace:** To raise the quality of service delivery by valuing best practice

**Engage:** To create an inspiring and engaging customer experience

**Invest:** To empower their teams to be inspired, take action and be better

**Shine:** To demonstrate and deliver exceptional business value

SDI sets the globally recognised best practice service desk standards that provide clear and measurable benchmarks for service desk operations and professionals. The standards are designed to encourage service desks to embrace and value best practice in order to raise the quality of service delivery.

For more information about SDI please visit www.servicedeskinstitute.com
About Freshservice

Freshservice is a cloud-based IT service desk and IT service management (ITSM) solution that is quick to setup and easy to use and manage.

Freshservice leverages ITIL best practices to enable IT organizations to focus on what’s most important – exceptional service delivery and customer satisfaction. With its powerfully simple UI, Freshservice can be easily configured to support your unique business requirements and integrated with other critical business and IT systems. Native integrations are provided “out-of-the-box” with many of the most popular cloud services such as Google Apps, Dropbox, AWS, and Bomgar to speed up deployment and reach.

Freshservice is built on the proven Freshdesk platform, whose flagship customer service offering supports more than 50,000 customers worldwide, including Honda, 3M, Macmillan, Bridgestone, and Unicef.