DIGITAL TRANS—FORMATION

SDI Service Desk Institute

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Introduction

On 24th August 2017, SDI and Ivanti hosted a forum for service desk professionals to voice and express their concerns and ideas surrounding Digital Transformation. We wanted to hear real industry opinions on the future of Digital Transformation and what it means to service desk professionals; we did so by hosting our very first open space conference. The day was lead majoritively by audience group discussion, where participants spoke about what their service desks and businesses are doing in terms of Digital Transformation and the challenges involved with undertaking a project or initiative surrounding this. This report is the product of the questions they asked, the answers they gave, and their thoughts on the impact and future of Digital Transformation.

Overall, the conversations of the day revolved less around the technologies that Digital Transformation is often associated with, but instead there was more focus on how Digital Transformation changes culture, and what it signifies at this point in time. Instead of considering the future that Digital Transformation can bring, participants were prone to discussing whether their organisation was ready for Digital Transformation, or what steps the service desk would need to take in order to support a Digital Transformation project.

Digital Transformation is a very broad term, and there is a vast amount of information available surrounding it. However, the problem has arisen where there is no clear definition of Digital Transformation; there is a lot speculation of what it means as a methodology. Simply put, Digital Transformation is the term given to the catalytic technologies that are making our jobs easier, whilst improving efficiency, productivity, and customer experience.

Transformation can be a scary prospect, and it can be difficult for some people to accept change. However, as pointed out by Damian Bowen of ITSM Value and Chris Powell of Ivanti, if businesses resist change and do not adapt, they risk becoming irrelevant. The group's consensus was that Digital Transformation is no longer something organisations can ignore, yet decision makers and project managers need to understand the capabilities and limits of the service desk before successfully undertaking a Digital Transformation project.

Key Challenges to a successful Digital Transformation

Digital Transformation can be difficult to implement for a multitude of reasons. The key challenges identified by service desk professionals included:

- Lack of staff and resources;

- Lack of budget or buy-in;

- Lack of understanding and profile of the service desk within the business.

Each of these were identified as common challenges among service desks, and can put a strain on any project.

Participants also highlighted other struggles, such as battling against resistance to change, be it from customers or employees. For example, a Digital Transformation project could involve updating the service desk internally by implementing a new, more advanced ITSM tool. Some service desk staff may not be comfortable with the change, which would cause dissatisfied and unproductive employees if not executed properly.

Participants laid heavy emphasis on the importance of customer experience (CX) throughout the day, and the necessity of ensuring CX is not negatively affected by transition initiatives. They suggested that implementing a Digital Transformation project can have a negative impact on customer satisfaction. For example, if the service desk implements a new self-service portal, but does not design it with end users in mind or if the portal is not adequately marketed, this can lead to low adoption rates, an influx of calls to the service desk, dissatisfied customers, and potentially loss of productivity.

Undertaking a Digital Transformation project, irrespective of the size of the project, will require training of service desk staff, and in particular, service desk analysts. This can be challenging as running a Digital Transformation project can take up a significant portion of budget, time, and resources, which can cause problems when trying to change the working style of the service desk. Without proper training, analysts will not be able to properly support new services, which will inevitably lead to dissatisfied customers.

Another common challenge identified by participants was the struggle of decision makers and project managers being out of touch with the service desk, and not fully understanding the impact their proposed changes would have on the service desk. A lack of cohesion and clear communication between project managers and the service desk can ultimately lead to a fractured deployment of a Digital Transformation project, with service desk staff left potentially unaware of unplanned work that could arise from new implementations. In addition to divisions between the service desk and decision makers, participants also expressed that organisational silos between IT and the business can be detrimental to a Digital Transformation project. Some participants admitted that they were not fully aware of their business's objectives. Clearly, the silo mentality within IT and the wider business is still commonplace, yet it is understood to be a negative characteristic. Although participants expressed the desire to break down the silo mentality, there was uncertainty of how to go about doing this.

Key Considerations

PEOPLE

The group identified multiple groups of people who will be involved in a Digital Transformation project; service desk staff – from analysts to managers, multiple factions within IT and the wider business, executive management, and customers. It could be beneficial to formulate a Digital Transformation project team, as suggested by some participants, to ensure good communication and optimum workflow between each department involved. It was further suggested it was important to communicate with your customers to gain an understanding of what they need and expect from the service desk in terms of a Digital Transformation project.

It is also important to ensure that there are employees in IT who have the necessary skills to implement and maintain the outcomes of a Digital Transformation project on the service desk. It is possible to bring outside expertise into the service desk to implement required development and automation into the identified products, services, or processes. However, as participants pointed out, this can present problems, as outside professionals may not fully understand the business. Therefore, it is important to fully understand the scope of skills and abilities and associated gaps of your IT staff before undertaking a Digital Transformation project. If external expertise is necessary, you should ensure that

there is sufficient time, budget, and resources available to actively communicate and engage with an outside team. This will help to avoid the project moving in a direction or pace that the service desk, rest of IT, or business is not comfortable with.

PROCESSES

Participants also stressed the importance of having required processes in order before undertaking a Digital Transformation project. A service desk's processes need to be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are as efficient as possible, and there are no waste or non-value-add procedures. Having multiple unnecessary or complex processes that service desk staff are required to undertake can make implementing a Digital Transformation project more difficult and time consuming, as well as create a demotivating atmosphere for service desk staff.

For example, if the aim is to decrease the amount of time analysts spend on email support, participants suggested the service desk could implement a live chat feature instead. However, if the implemented process requires analysts to ask for multiple different pieces of information from a customer, this can take up time which could be spent resolving the incident or service request. Perhaps the customer could be required to input required information prior to the chat, so as to save the analyst time, and speed up the process.

TECHNOLOGY

The main concern for participants was not the technologies that could be implemented, but the limits in the technology they already have; specifically, ITSM tools and portals. Some attendants still claimed they struggled with overly complicated tools, leading to inefficiencies such as unnecessary steps to log tickets. Others expressed that their tool did not meet all their requirements, and some were planning on changing their tool vendor. Therefore, it is pertinent to ensure that your current technologies meet the needs of your organisation and customers, are not wasteful, and can be easily upgraded and maintained before implementing any newer and more complex technologies.

Self-service was a popular topic among participants, with some suggesting self-service could facilitate 24x7 support, help grow the business, and can be used as an alternative to less structured support channels, such as email. However, some participants stressed the importance of involving customers in all steps of designing and implementing a self-service portal. Their suggestion was that consulting your customers can allow you to gain a better understanding of what your customers require from a self-service portal, and can lead to greater adoption rates and higher customer satisfaction.
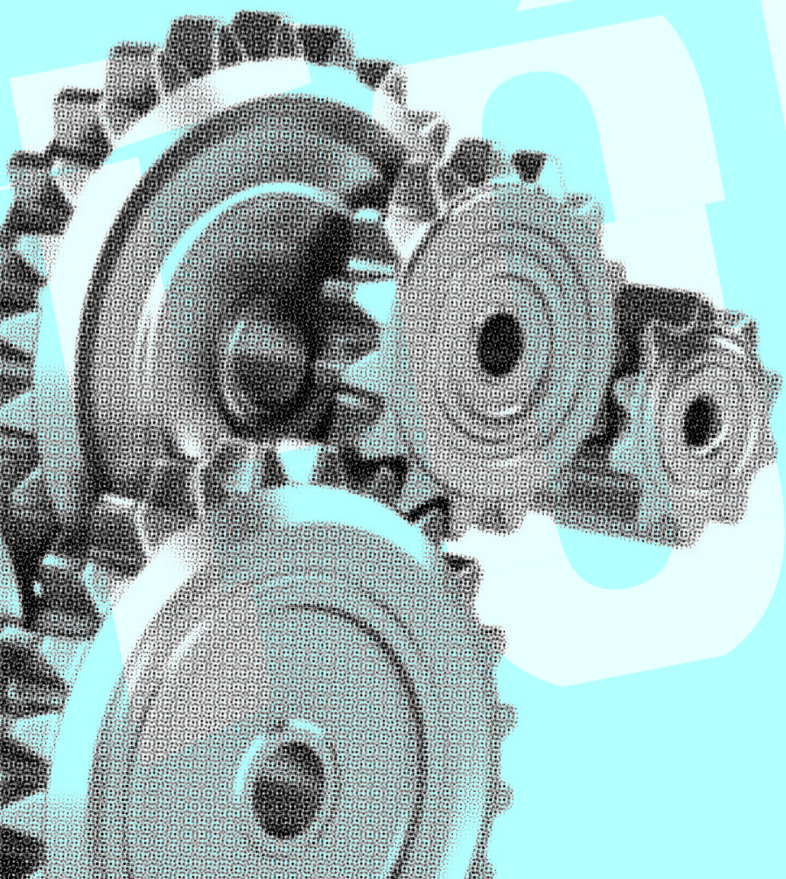
Participants' Comments

Throughout the day, participants made collaborative notes about key points their groups discussed. These were collected and sorted, and became the basis of this report. Here are some of the most interesting notes that came out of the day.

Self-service only works if you involve users throughout design and implementation. This ensures better customer experience.

Decision makers do not know why they are making the decisions.

All aspects of the business, Security, IT, the Service Desk, Networks, etc, need to move forward together.

The business is not fully aware what they want to achieve, and are bad at communicating with the service desk.

The service desk has to have a voice.

Getting rid of silos is important, but we aren't sure how to achieve this.

The key to communication is to identify the disconnects, gain executive buy-in, not influence, and listen to your customers

It is important to build a trusting relationship between all aspects of the service desk, IT, the wider business, and customers.

Communication & Collaboration

We have mentioned that challenges surrounding Digital Transformation can arise from a lack of understanding from the business. Open communication with business units outside the service desk can help to break down the barriers that are too commonly associated between the business and IT. This notion was reiterated by participants, who stressed that the whole of IT should align their goals, which should also be in-line with business goals, and move forward together. Many service desk professionals mentioned that keeping communication at the forefront of a Digital Transformation project, no matter how small, is necessary for its success.

Participants also stressed the need of communication with your customers. It would be counterproductive to implement, for example, a self-service platform, without communicating and collaborating with your customers to better understand their needs. Undoubtedly, both internal and external customers are one of the groups of people who will be affected most by a Digital Transformation project, therefore involving them throughout the process and gauging what they require from the service desk can be a great asset in terms of improving customer satisfaction and service delivery.

Digital Strategy

Participants were asked to consider whether their organisation had a Digital Strategy. Whilst some did and others did not, most had views on what a Digital Strategy should consist of, and how it should be executed.

Some participants differentiated between their organisation's IT strategy and its Digital Strategy. This brought about the questions to whether there should be a distinction at all, as surely, they should be aligned and similar enough to be one strategy. However, a Digital Strategy should affect an entire organisation, and not just IT. Therefore, while there should be significant overlap, it makes sense to have a broader Digital Strategy that will affect the entire business.

There was some discussion regarding the length of a strategy, and whether it is better to have a short-term strategy that can be updated regularly, or a long-term strategy which sets out more substantial goals. Ideally, a Digital Strategy should consider both short and long-term goals, however, they should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the objectives are still relevant and encompass customers' needs. Furthermore, appropriate KPIs should be defined related to the strategy to ensure that the service desk is moving in the right direction.

The topic of shared services was also a popular strategic topic among participants. In a Digital Strategy, the benefits of merging tools, processes, or even physical service desks (such as HR, IT, and Finance) are obvious; a more holistic approach to service, refined processes, and fewer overheads, just to name a few. It also offers better communication between departments, and a greater understanding of the needs of the business, which can ultimately aide a Digital Transformation project.

The final consideration for a Digital Strategy, as highlighted by participants, is to ensure that the service desk, IT, and the business have a unified end goal. Having separate strategies and visions for IT and the business can create a clashing relationship, and cause the two entities to progress in different directions. This could cause a disparity between what the business needs and what the service desk can deliver, which would inevitably lead to dissatisfied customers, and a less than productive relationship between the business and IT.
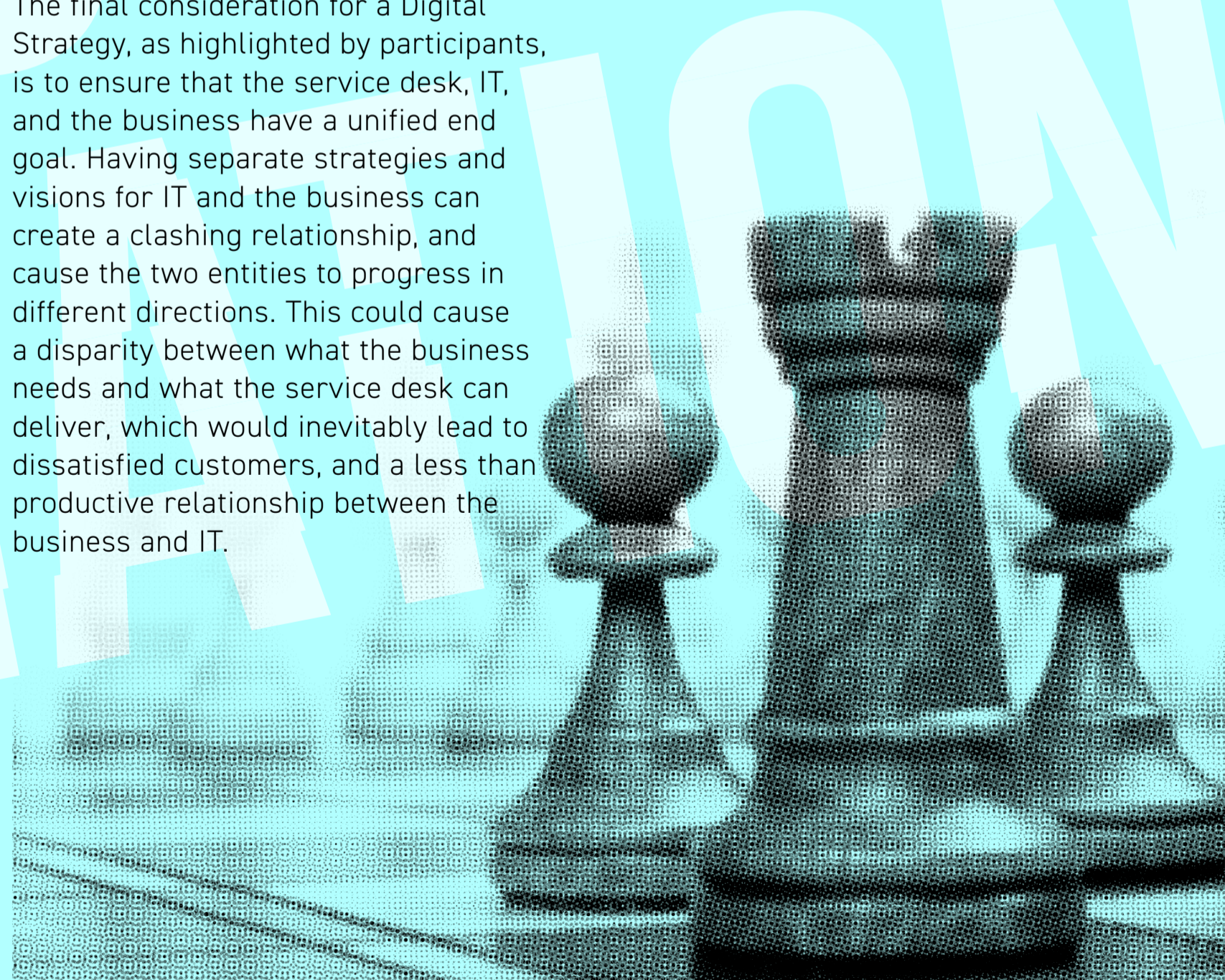
Conclusion

From the participants' discussion, it is clear that service desks are still struggling to gain recognition from other areas of the business, and this can make it difficult for service desks to obtain budget for a Digital Transformation project. This can cause unnecessary strain on service desk staff. An overworked service desk can affect the entire business, whereas a service desk with a successful Digital Strategy can help a business progress. There is also a risk of a Digital Transformation project being forced upon an organisation by management, with little consideration for how much the service desk, as well as other departments, can cope with and deliver in the short term. This can obviously have detrimental effects on the business. Seemingly, the cultural barriers between the service desk, IT, and the business can hold back an organisation and prevent it from performing at its best. Breaking down these barriers and ensuring good communication and collaboration across all departments can be a brilliant first step to unlocking an organisations full potential.

Certainly, participants saw keeping service desk customers involved in a Digital Transformation project as key to its success, and can make the difference between simply serving customers, and contributing to excellent customer service and satisfaction. If a main objective of a Digital Strategy is to improve customer satisfaction, then having customers at the centre of the project, and utilising their input and feedback throughout the process will undoubtedly lead to greater customer satisfaction.

By gauging what service desk professionals view the present and future of Digital Transformation is, we can begin to understand how the service desk could evolve in the near future. Given that participants were mostly concerned with ensuring their service desk is capable of evolving, over the next 3 to 5 years the industry may start to see a higher proportion of service desks with active Digital Transformation projects, and certainly more sophisticated support channels, such as live chat, self-help, and self-service capabilities. No participants brought up the subject of Artificial Intelligence, which suggests that a considerable proportion of the industry is not yet ready or has not yet considered implementing AI. However, participants evidenced foresight and future planning, therefore there may be more service desks implementing cognitive AI technologies in the foreseeable future.

About Ivanti

Ivanti Service Manager, powered by HEAT, helps enterprises meet today's business and user demands for modern service delivery, engaging stakeholders inside and outside of IT. The solution, with workflow automation and Cloud-based or on premise deployment options, enables IT organizations to quickly deploy and configure a world-class service management solution, and increase customer satisfaction.

Ivanti Service Manager fully supports Incident, Problem, Change and Release Management, Self-Service, 3rd party integration and more, and is Pink Verified on 13 ITIL processes, to improve IT support performance and efficiency. For more information, visit www.ivanti.co.uk and follow us at @GoIvanti.

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**