# A VIEW FROM THE FRONTLINE 2019

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# Contents

# Introduction

The third iteration of this report in 2017 took a deeper look at the way technology has impacted the ITSM industry after it recovered from economic difficulties. This report takes a snapshot of the industry and looks at what services desks benefit from and struggle with in terms of their ITSM tools, their vendors, and their innovation.

The previous report highlighted a shift in focus to trends based around technology, as well more attention to the customer experience, and the desire for more feature-rich tooling options. With Digital Transformation at the forefront of the minds of many organisations, and access to innovative technologies at the fingertips of service desk professionals, the industry has undoubtedly developed exponentially since 2015. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the focus points throughout this report, as dictated by respondents, are centred around technologies like self-service, automation, AI, chatbots, and so on. However, other topics like ESM, methodologies and frameworks, and reporting functionalities also proved to be pertinent for service desk professionals in 2019.

Between February and March 2019, the A View From The Frontline survey was sent to a wide variety of service desk professionals, working in both public and private sector and covering a wide range of organisational sizes.

# Main Findings

## Key Trends

- According to the data, reporting has become a more important feature of ITSM tools, and this is a recurring theme throughout the report.
- Since 2017, automation and self-service capabilities have become more prevalent for service desks in several aspects.
- AI and Chatbot technologies emerged as a common trend and appear to be something many service desks aim to focus on over the next 12 months.

## Tools and Vendors

- Usability and functionality of a tool has remained as the most common frustration for service desk professionals. However, an equal proportion of respondents highlighted that the usability and functionality of their tool was a benefit.
- In terms of tool vendors, for the most part, the proportion of responses relating to frustrations were very close, if not matched, by the proportion of responses relating to benefits.

## Tool Selection and Innovations

- The most notable changes to influences for tool selection since 2017 include an increase in importance of automation, self-service, and integration capabilities.
- A tool being marketed as ITIL aligned has also become a more significant influence on tool selection.
- The key innovations service desk professionals would like to see in their tool have changed markedly since 2017. The most common innovations include automation/AI, self-service/chatbots, reporting, and process integration.
- Knowledge was also frequently mentioned as a key innovation, which led to a new category being created.

## Pain Areas

- There are two significant changes in the pain areas of service desk professionals since 2017. The most common pain area has become the inability to easily produce reports, and as previously mentioned, reporting has become a more significant feature of ITSM tools for service desk professionals.
- The main cause of pain for service desks in 2017 was a lack of budget and resources to help meet business expectations. This pain area has decreased significantly from 60% to 44%.
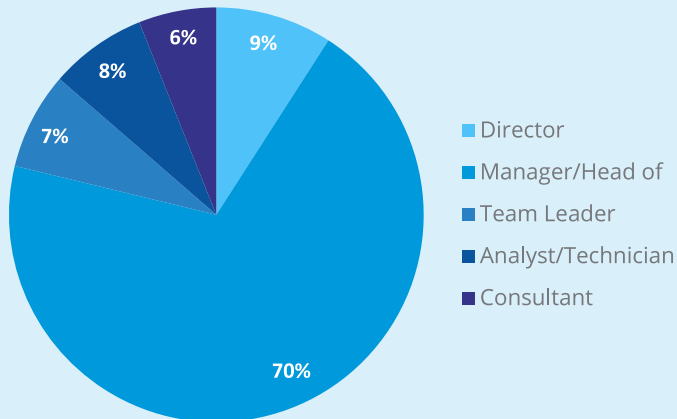
## The Last 12 Months

- Since 2017, larger proportions of service desk professionals have found their lives on the service desk have either become more difficult or stayed the same. However, nearly half of respondents highlighted that their life on the service desk has improved.
- Service desks are still spending a majority of their time firefighting due to a heavy workload.
- Only 30% of respondents highlighted that they struggle with low self-service adoption, which has decreased by 20% since 2017.

## The Next 12 Months

- The most common priorities for service desks over the next 12 months are using more automation, increasing value to the business, and increasing service desk performance.
- 12% of respondents have implemented or are implementing AI and Machine Learning technologies, and 6% are working with a potential partner.
- During the next 12 months, service desk professionals expect to see a greater use of chatbot and live chat technologies and a greater focus on the Customer Experience.
- Nearly half of respondents expect to see adoption of ITIL4 within the industry.

# Demographics

## Job Title



- Director — 9%
- Manager/Head of — 70%
- Team Leader — 7%
- Analyst/Technician — 8%
- Consultant — 6%

## How would you describe your customers?



- External Business Customers — 17%
- External Consumers — 15%
- Internal Business Customers — 68%
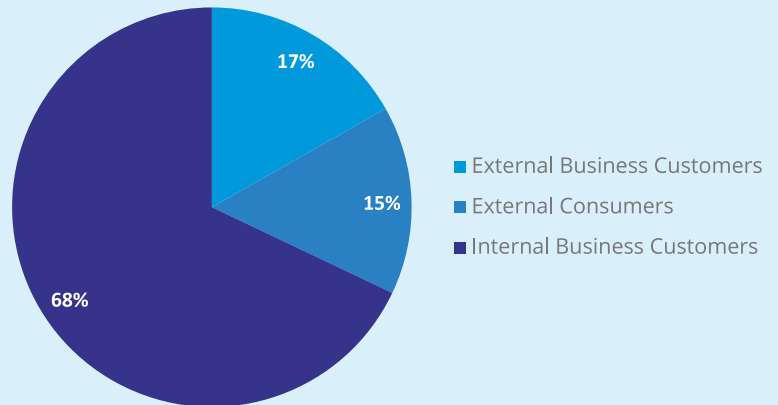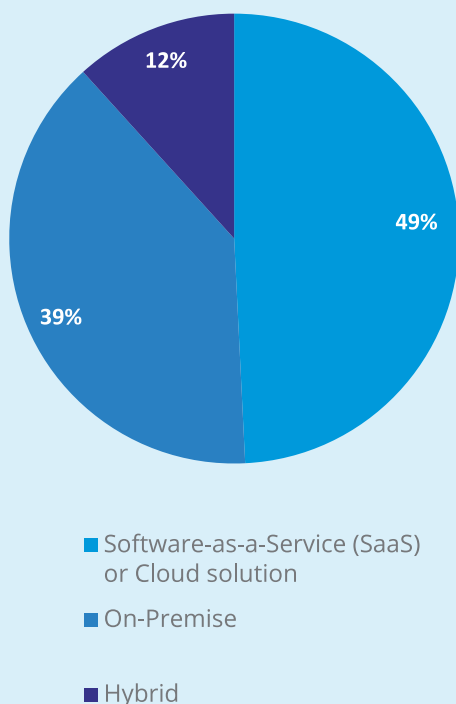
# ITSM Tool Deployment

## How is your ITSM solution provided?



- Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) or Cloud solution — 49%
- On-Premise — 39%
- Hybrid — 12%

It is important to ask how an ITSM solution is provided, as the answer will usually lead to predictable frustrations with the ITSM tool. It also gives some insight into the diverse needs of the service desk industry.

Just under half of the respondents have an on-premise ITSM solution. There are benefits and challenges to this; for example, there may be less of a security risk and the tool is more customisable, but this solution also requires on-site system administration and support staff, who have the skills to maintain and upgrade the tool, thus increasing overheads.

Nearly 40% of respondents' tools are provided through cloud services (SaaS). The benefits and challenges of a cloud-based tool are essentially the opposite of on-premise solutions. Clearly there are benefits to both, and it is possible to cherry-pick the right solution for you, as evidenced by the 12% of respondents who have opted for a hybrid solution.

# ITSM Tools and Vendors: Benefits and Frustrations

## What are some of the main benefits and frustrations of your current service desk or ITSM tool?



| Category | Benefits | Frustrations |
|---|---|---|
| Usability/Functionality | 19% | 19% |
| Features | 15% | 15% |
| Customisation | 14% | 7% |
| Reporting | 8% | 16% |
| Processes | 8% | 4% |
| Integration | 7% | 5% |
| Automation Capabilities | 6% | 4% |
| Deployment | 5% | 4% |
| Price | 5% | 3% |
| Vendor Support | 4% | 8% |
| Out Of Box/Development Needs | 2% | 10% |
| Reliability | 2% | 7% |
| Speed | 1% | 9% |
| Appearance | 0% | 6% |
| Outdated | 0% | 4% |
| None | 3% | 4% |

■ Benefits ■ Frustrations
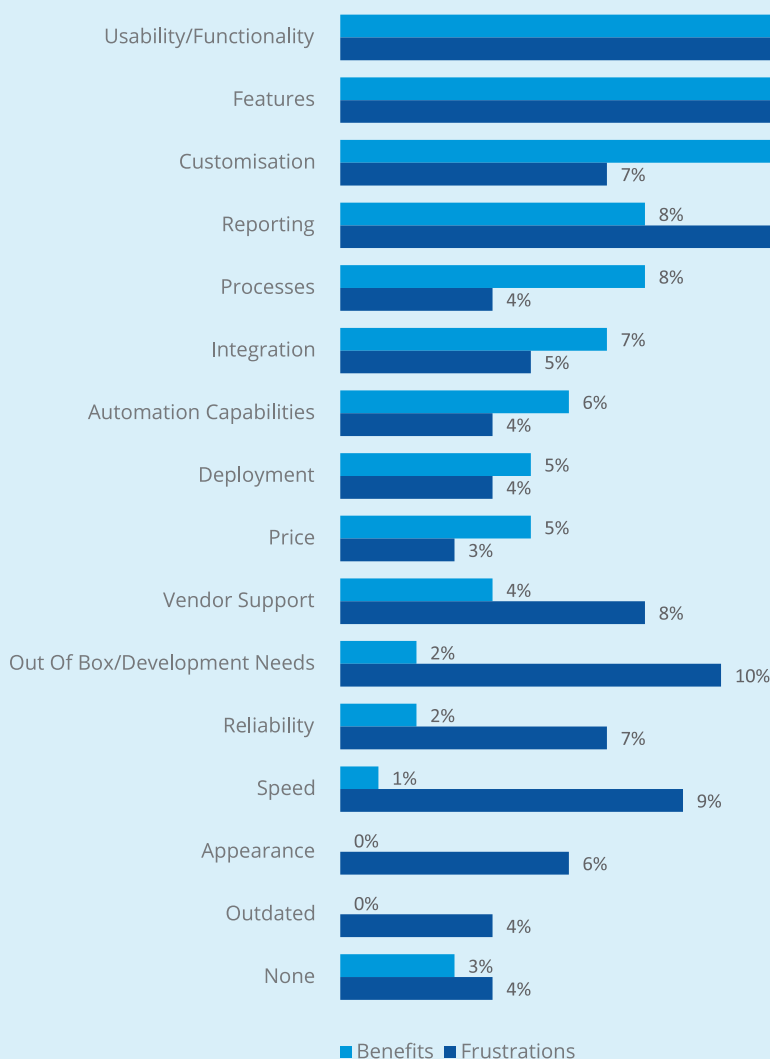
In previous years, we have asked respondents to list their top 5 frustrations with their current service desk or ITSM tool. However, the relationship between service desk professionals and their tools and tool providers have changed, and in many cases, improved over time. As a result, in this iteration, we have decided to ask respondents to list not only the frustrations they face with their tool, but also the benefits of their tool. It is worth noting that there were a larger number of frustrations provided in comparison to the number of benefits provided by respondents.
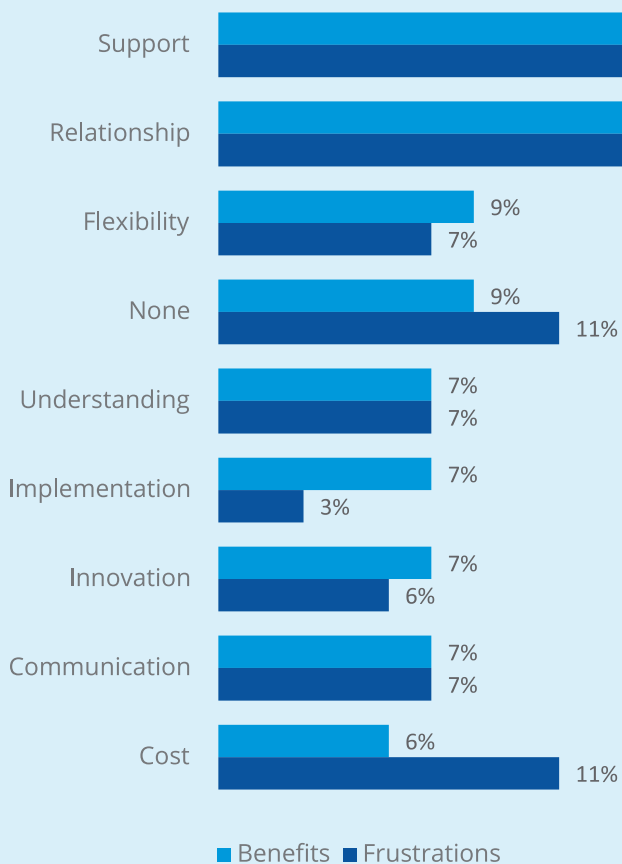
The most common factor, comprising 19% of all responses regarding the benefits of a tool and 19% of all responses regarding the frustrations of a tool, was centred around the usability or functionality of the tool itself. In terms of frustrations, this is consistent with what we saw in 2017, where 25% of responses centred around the usability of a tool being a main frustration. Usability and functionality can have a major impact on the experience of a tool and how easy it is to use. It is interesting to note that an equal proportion of responses demonstrate service desk professionals are frustrated by the usability of their tool, or lack thereof, as those who see it as a benefit. In 2017, usability comprised 25% of all responses in relation to the frustrations of an ITSM tool, so while usability is still the most common frustration, this seems to be less of an issue in 2019.

Responses relating to features comprised 15% of both frustrations and benefits of an ITSM tool, making it the second most common benefit, and the third most common frustration. In 2017, features of an ITSM tool attributed to 14% of all responses relating to respondents ITSM tool frustration, which led to features being the second most common frustration. This year, while features comprises a slightly larger proportion of frustration since 2015, it has been surpassed by reporting. This suggests that features are still a significant frustration for many service desk professionals, however, reporting capabilities have become more of a frustration.

There could be a number of reasons that explain why reporting has become a more significant frustration since 2017. For example, changes in the industry such as proactive service management, closer relationships between IT and the rest of the business, and advancements in technology have potentially changed the reporting needs of service desk professionals since 2015. Alternatively, perhaps tool vendors have developed their reporting functions in line with changes in the industry to a point where they are more difficult to use as a basic functionality, which could lead to frustration for some service desk professionals.

Aside from reporting, the factors where the proportion of benefits were outweighed by the proportion of frustrations include vendor support, out of the box readiness or development need, reliability, speed, appearance, and outdated tools. Aside from out of the box readiness and outdated tools, which are new categories to the 2019 report, the proportion of frustration-related responses for each of these factors has increased since 2017. Given that there is a significant disparity between the proportion of responses labelling these factors as a benefit versus a frustration of a tool, it is fair to say these are fairly common frustrations among service desks and more likely to be issues across many ITSM tools.

# What are some of the main benefits and frustrations of your current service desk or ITSM tool vendor?

| Category | Benefits | Frustrations |
|---|---|---|
| Support | 33% | 23% |
| Relationship | 16% | 17% |
| Flexibility | 9% | 7% |
| None | 9% | 11% |
| Understanding | 7% | 7% |
| Implementation | 7% | 3% |
| Innovation | 7% | 6% |
| Communication | 7% | 7% |
| Cost | 6% | 11% |

■ Benefits ■ Frustrations

There are several aspects of the partnership between service desk professionals and ITSM tool vendors; some centred around the tool itself, and others stem from customer service. Often, problems with one aspect or another can lead to frustrations within a service desk professional's relationship with their vendor.

Support should be a major component of the relationship between the service desk and the vendor, and whilst it remains the most common frustration with a tool vendor, it also seems to be a much more significant benefit of many service desk professionals' relationship with their vendor. This suggests that many vendors can provide their customers with the support they require, though there are some which do not meet their customers' requirements or expectations.

Frustrations pertaining to relationship and cost outweighed the proportion of responses which saw them as a benefit of their tool vendor. In comparison to 2017, relationship has become more of a frustration as it comprises 6% more responses, however, it is worth noting that there is not much difference in the proportion of responses which highlighted relationship as a benefit of their tool vendor.

Overall, the proportions of responses relating to the benefits and frustrations of a tool vendor are fairly equal, which suggests that on the whole, there are vendors out there to suit a service desk's needs. It is important prior to choosing an ITSM tool to ensure the vendor meets your requirements in terms of ongoing support and communication. There are many resources available which compare tool vendors on factors such as innovation, so it would certainly be worthwhile to fully research potential tool vendors to avoid potential frustration further down the line.

# ITSM Tool Selection, Innovations, and Pain Areas

## What would most influence your selection of a new service desk or ITSM tool?



| Factor | 2019 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|
| Self-service capabilities | 70% | 65% |
| Ease of use and UI | 56% | 45% |
| Product features and functionality | 56% | 67% |
| Automation capabilities | 55% | 35% |
| Access to quality support when things go wrong | 46% | 45% |
| Ability to easily configure and customise | 44% | 53% |
| Marketed as ITIL aligned | 36% | 24% |
| Integration capabilities | 33% | 18% |
| Mobility and other modern capabilities (i.e. portal, browser, tablet, smart phone, social media etc) | 28% | 31% |
| Enterprise Service Management/ Enterprise capabilities (platform use can be extended to other business units) | 26% | 24% |
| Ease of implementation and low ongoing management overheads | 25% | 29% |
| Had previously worked with the product or vendor | 15% | 16% |
| Choice of deployment model, e.g. on-premise of SaaS | 10% | 5% |
| Peer or social media references | 9% | 13% |
| Consultant and/or analyst advice | 8% | 13% |
| Extensive business platform capability | 6% | 2% |
| Vendor Marketing | 0% | 5% |

■ 2019 ■ 2017

Immediately, we can see that self-service capabilities has become the leading influence when selecting an ITSM tool, having been identified by 70% of respondents as a key influence, showing an increase of 5% since 2017. Many ITSM tool vendors offer self-service portals as a product, and there are indeed many benefits to implementing a self-service portal. Until recently, arguably there was not much in the way of good practice around how to implement, develop, market, or support self-service portals, so many service desks ran into

issues such as low adoption, poor user experience, and inefficiency. However, many support functions are now succeeding with self-service implementations, and the capability as a whole has become generally more accessible for many service desks. It is possible that a combination of these factors, along with customer or business demand, has led to self-service capabilities being the most influential factor in ITSM tool selection.
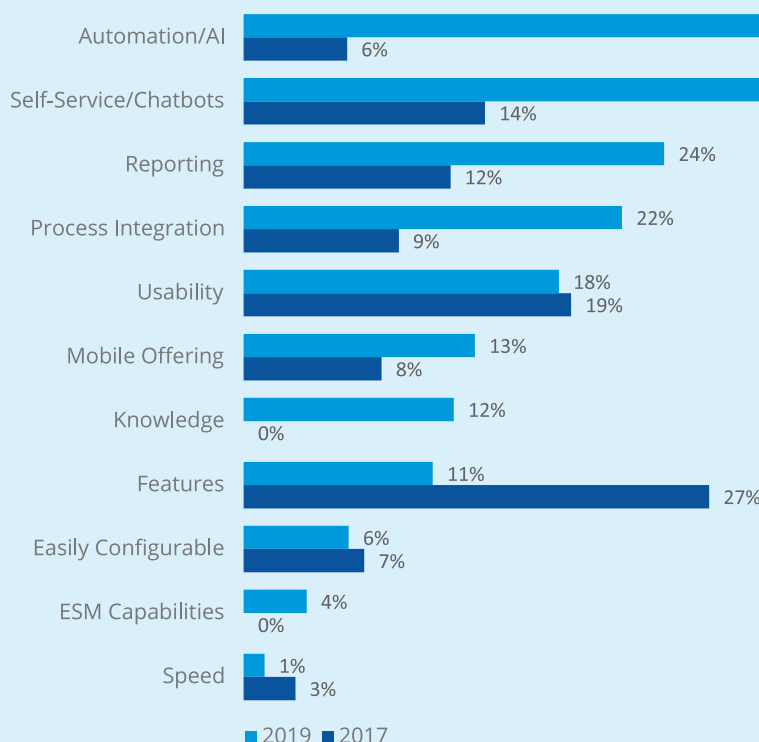
Automation capabilities have also increased significantly in its influence on tool selection. Similar to self-service, automation can have many benefits for the service desk, from workload reduction, streamlined processes, and increased speed and efficiency of IT services. 2017 actually saw a reduction in the proportion of respondents highlighting that automation capabilities are a key influence, dropping from 62% to 35%, yet this year we can see that this proportion has increased by 20%. Integration capabilities has nearly doubled in significance since 2017, which, again, indicates that the industry is wanting to work towards streamlining services and increased efficiencies.

Most other influences have remained at a similar level, although notably, product features and functionality has been knocked from the top spot. In previous reports, features has been a recurring key point of interest, in terms of influence, innovation, and pain areas.

Therefore, this change indicates a clear shift of focus in the industry toward self-service capabilities, which, while it has been important in previous years, has gained significant traction more recently. Arguably, self-service can be seen as a feature or functionality of a tool, but respondents seem to be more focused on self-service specifically.

The final thing to note is the increase in importance of a tool being "ITIL aligned". With the unveiling of ITIL4 earlier this year, it is unsurprising to see this become a more significant influence on tool selection. However, service desk professionals should consider what being "ITIL aligned" means for them and whether their tool vendor is able to support them in this way rather than taking the marketing term as a guarantee.

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



Automation/AI: 43% (2019), 6% (2017)
Self-Service/Chatbots: 41% (2019), 14% (2017)
Reporting: 24% (2019), 12% (2017)
Process Integration: 22% (2019), 9% (2017)
Usability: 18% (2019), 19% (2017)
Mobile Offering: 13% (2019), 8% (2017)
Knowledge: 12% (2019), 0% (2017)
Features: 11% (2019), 27% (2017)
Easily Configurable: 6% (2019), 7% (2017)
ESM Capabilities: 4% (2019), 0% (2017)
Speed: 1% (2019), 3% (2017)

■ 2019 ■ 2017

Process integration has also become a more common key desired innovation, and again this factor was highlighted as a significant benefit of some ITSM tools. Methodologies and frameworks like Lean and Agile have become increasingly influential on the ways of working among service desks, both of which discuss process refinement and integration to maximise efficiency and cost saving. Furthermore, process integration paves the way for better automation and functionality of alternative support channels, like self-service or chatbots. Therefore, seeing process integration increase in importance could signify that support teams are aware of and wanting to implement more efficient ways of providing their services.
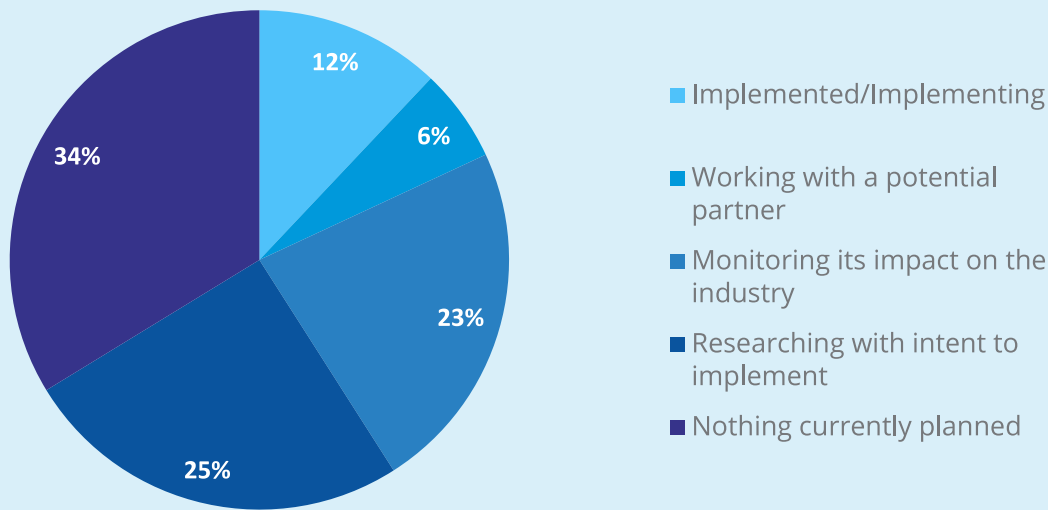
Since 2017, there has been a noticeable change in the key innovations service desk professionals would like to see in their tool. 43% of respondents highlighted automation and AI capabilities as key innovations they want to see in their tool, and 41% specified the same for self-service and chatbots. This demonstrates a significant shift since 2017, where the largest proportion of respondents, 27%, mentioned they wanted to see feature-based innovation. We have previously seen that self-service and automation have increased in their influence on tool selection, so it is somewhat unsurprising to see these factors being identified as the two most common innovations service desk professionals want to see in their tool.

Reporting has doubled in significance since 2017. We have previously seen that reporting has become more of a matter of frustration for service desks, comprising 16% of all frustration-related responses. Therefore, it is logical that the proportion of desired innovations relating to reporting has increased significantly since 2017.

One innovation which was mentioned enough times to warrant a new category was knowledge capabilities. Knowledge management and effective knowledge bases have become generally more integral for support teams looking to implement or improve alternative support channels, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and self-service. Furthermore, a well-established, thorough, and regularly reviewed knowledge base is an excellent basis for AI and Machine Learning enabled services, as it can improve the efficiency and speed of support teams, as well as improve the experience of alternative support channels for customers, which in turn can assist in creating and growing a self-service culture.

Conversely, the proportion of respondents wanting feature-based innovations has more than halved since 2017, and we have previously seen that the features of a product have slightly less influence on tool selection. This seems to suggest that service desk professionals' priorities have shifted in terms of ITSM tools, and other factors have taken precedence.
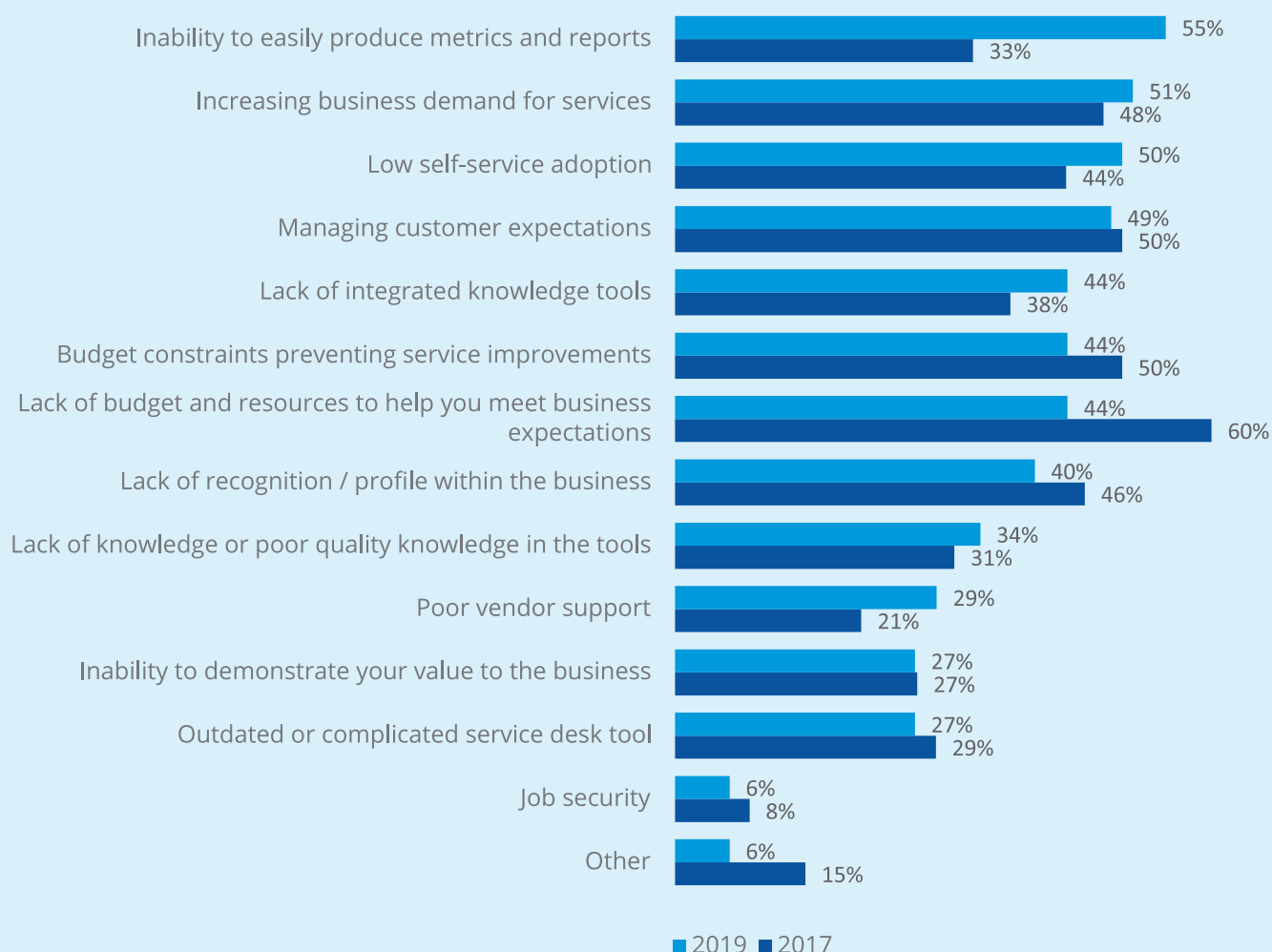
# Has your organisation started looking into implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI)/ Machine Learning (ML) technologies?



- Implemented/Implementing
- Working with a potential partner
- Monitoring its impact on the industry
- Researching with intent to implement
- Nothing currently planned

SDI have asked this question across several reports, and while the data shows movement towards more organisations adopting or planning to adopt AI or ML technologies, it is certainly a gradual change. However, this is not necessarily a negative observation. Investing in these technologies should be considered more than a factor of money or budget; service desks and the wider business should also consider the resources it has available to enable efficient implementation and development, as well as assessing existing infrastructure and processes to ensure they are as efficient as possible and can be integrated with AI or ML technology to improve and aid performance rather than hinder it.

Many service desks are still struggling with self-service adoption, and this could be due to how the portal has been implemented, integrated, and/or marketed. Furthermore, budget, workload, and efficiency are still major issues for many service desks. Therefore, it would be surprising and concerning if the data were to show large proportions of respondents implementing these technologies.

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

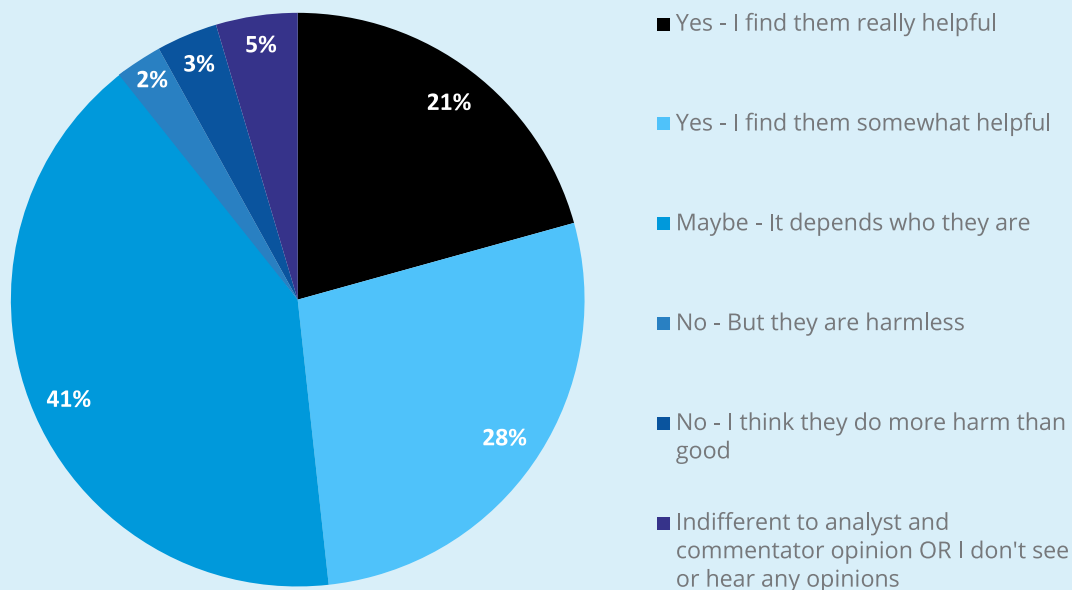| Pain area | 2019 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|
| Inability to easily produce metrics and reports | 55% | 33% |
| Increasing business demand for services | 51% | 48% |
| Low self-service adoption | 50% | 44% |
| Managing customer expectations | 49% | 50% |
| Lack of integrated knowledge tools | 44% | 38% |
| Budget constraints preventing service improvements | 44% | 50% |
| Lack of budget and resources to help you meet business expectations | 44% | 60% |
| Lack of recognition / profile within the business | 40% | 46% |
| Lack of knowledge or poor quality knowledge in the tools | 34% | 31% |
| Poor vendor support | 29% | 21% |
| Inability to demonstrate your value to the business | 27% | 27% |
| Outdated or complicated service desk tool | 27% | 29% |
| Job security | 6% | 8% |
| Other | 6% | 15% |

■ 2019 ■ 2017

The most common cause of pain on the service desk, according to 55% of respondents, is the inability to produce metrics and reports easily. Issues with reporting is certainly a common theme throughout this report and has clearly become a much more significant issue since 2017. Perhaps tool vendors could consider their reporting features and possibly work with customers to improve what they offer in this respect, while customers can ensure they have sufficient training and understanding of what is available.

Contrarily, lack of budget and resources has become less of a cause of pain, having been identified by 16% fewer respondents since 2017. This is certainly a positive change, as it suggests that organisations are seeing the value in investing in the service desk, and service desks are becoming better at demonstrating and communicating their value to the business.

Most other pain areas have remained at a similar level of significance since 2017, which begs the question of how far the industry has changed over the past two years. While there are some small improvements, and some factors which have become more challenging, the lack of significant movement could suggest that many service desks have been unable to work towards improving their daily life. Data which we will examine later in this report revealed that the majority of service desks are still spending the majority of their time firefighting due to a heavy workload, therefore service desks may feel unable to take steps to tackle certain pain areas if they are overwhelmed with reactive work.

# Industry Analysts and Commentators

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



Legend:
- Yes - I find them really helpful
- Yes - I find them somewhat helpful
- Maybe - It depends who they are
- No - But they are harmless
- No - I think they do more harm than good
- Indifferent to analyst and commentator opinion OR I don't see or hear any opinions

Pie chart values: 21%, 28%, 41%, 2%, 3%, 5%

Almost half of respondents' opinions surrounding industry analysts and commentators seem to be positive, with 21% of respondents specifying they find industry analysts and commentators really helpful, and a further 28% finding them somewhat helpful. 41% identified that they believe the level of understanding an industry analyst or commentator has of the industry depends on who they are. The proportion of respondents who are indifferent, or do not think analysts and commentators understand the service desk industry, have stayed roughly the same. Overall, this shows a shift of views since 2017, with a higher proportion of respondents finding industry analysts really helpful.
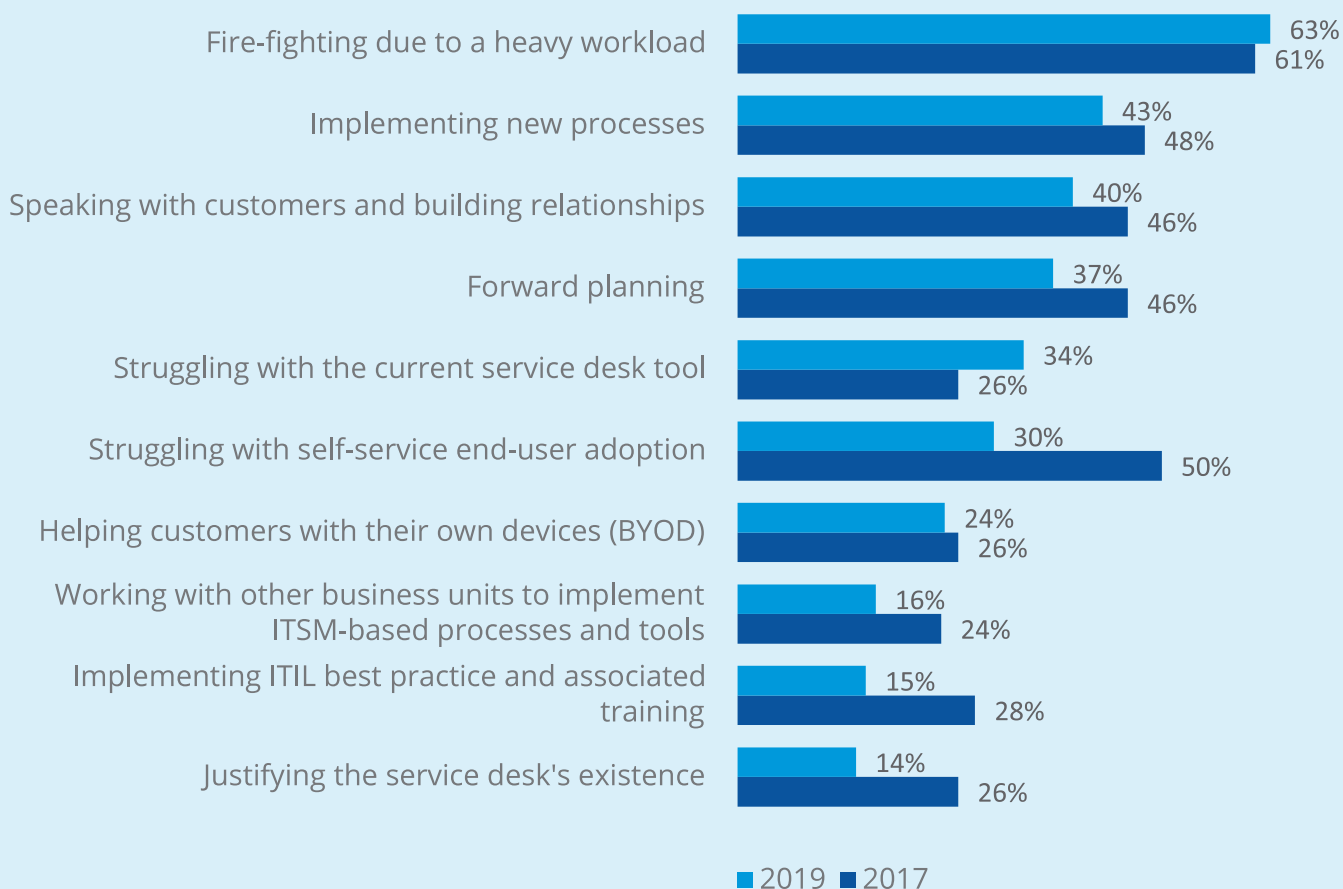
# The Last 12 Months

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



- Improved
- Become more difficult
- Stayed the same

49%

27%

24%
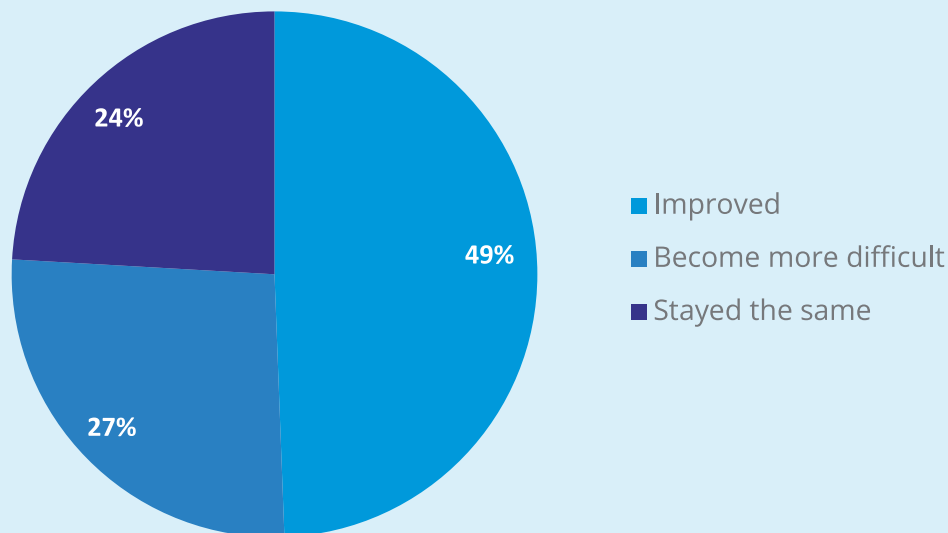
Since 2017, there is a trend which suggests that life on the service desk has become more difficult. Although around 50% of service desk professionals specified that their life on the service desk has improved, this is a drop of 10% since 2017, whereas the proportion of service desk professionals who identified that their life has become more difficult has jumped from 19% to 27%.

Some of the reasons service desk professionals gave for their lives becoming more difficult included a lack of resources, lack of investment, increased demand for services, and poor strategy; some comments even mentioned a combination of several factors. For those who specified their lives had improved, comments centred more around the benefits being realised from automation and self-service, improved knowledge management, and better communication across support teams and the wider business.

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

| Category | 2019 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|
| Fire-fighting due to a heavy workload | 63% | 61% |
| Implementing new processes | 43% | 48% |
| Speaking with customers and building relationships | 40% | 46% |
| Forward planning | 37% | 46% |
| Struggling with the current service desk tool | 34% | 26% |
| Struggling with self-service end-user adoption | 30% | 50% |
| Helping customers with their own devices (BYOD) | 24% | 26% |
| Working with other business units to implement ITSM-based processes and tools | 16% | 24% |
| Implementing ITIL best practice and associated training | 15% | 28% |
| Justifying the service desk's existence | 14% | 26% |

■ 2019  ■ 2017

Once again, the largest proportion of respondents, 63%, have spent the most time over the last 12 months fire-fighting due to heavy workloads. Given the focus that we have seen throughout this report on implementing self-service and improving knowledge management, it is interesting to still see so many service desks still struggling with heavy workloads. Implementing support channels like self-service and innovations like process automation can help service desks to reduce the amount of reactive incident handling and firefighting they have to undertake. Therefore, perhaps this data suggests that while service desks are eager to adopt these technologies, they have yet to fully realise the benefits.

Interestingly, the biggest change since 2017 is that a significantly smaller proportion of respondents identified that their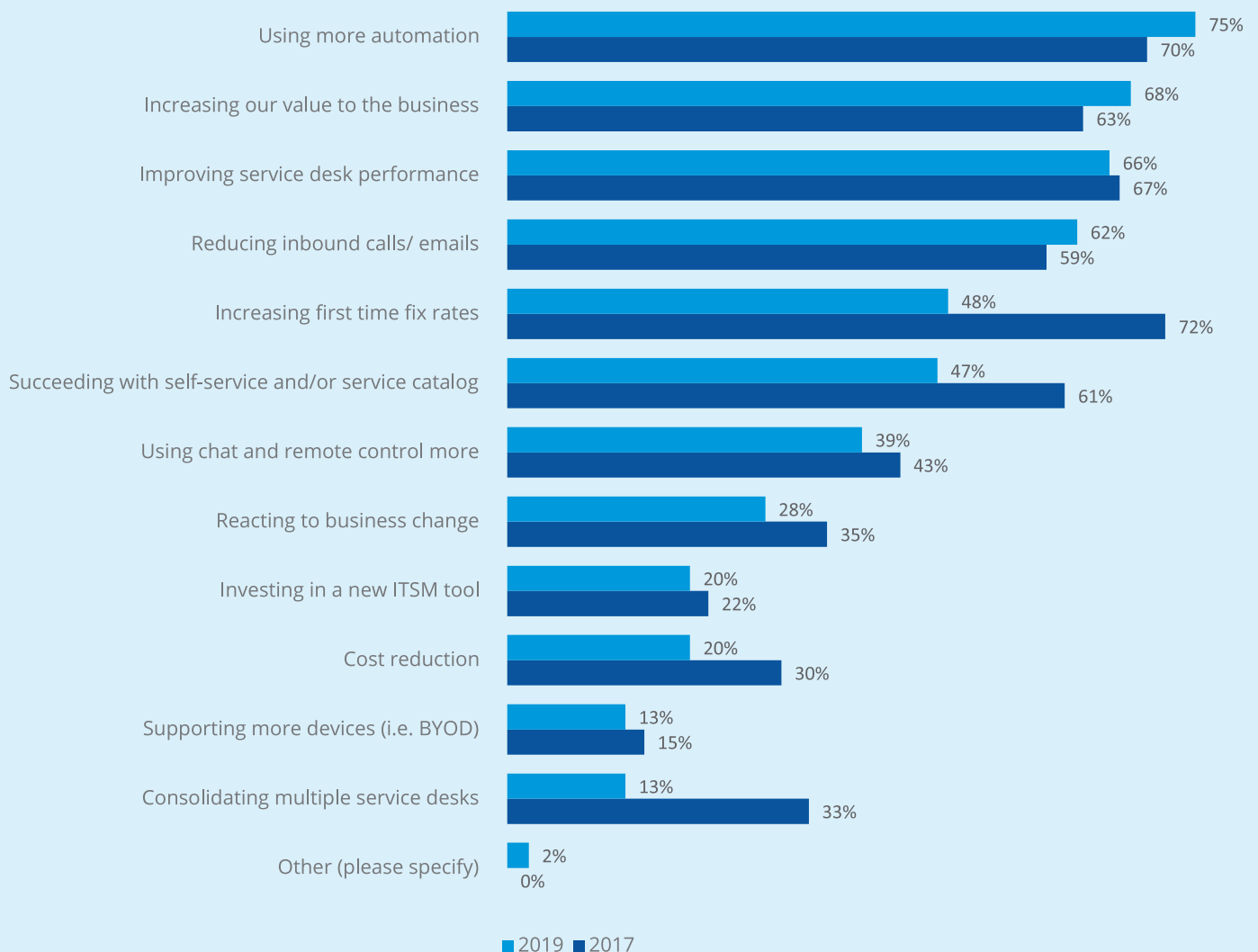 service desk spends the majority of its time struggling with self-service end user adoption. While this seems like a positive change, earlier we saw that 50% of respondents specified low self-service adoption as causing them pain in their daily work life. Perhaps this is because although it is a pain area, struggling with low adoption does not occupy a significant proportion of time.

For the most part, service desks are spending less time on the options listed above. Perhaps this is an indicator that what service desks are spending their time on has evolved, and these options are no longer relevant. Alternatively, service desks are still spending time on these things, but they do not necessarily agree that they spend most of their time doing them.

# The Next 12 Months

## What are your top service desk priorities for the next 12 months?

**Using more automation**
- 75% (2019)
- 70% (2017)

**Increasing our value to the business**
- 68% (2019)
- 63% (2017)

**Improving service desk performance**
- 66% (2019)
- 67% (2017)

**Reducing inbound calls/ emails**
- 62% (2019)
- 59% (2017)

**Increasing first time fix rates**
- 48% (2019)
- 72% (2017)

**Succeeding with self-service and/or service catalog**
- 47% (2019)
- 61% (2017)

**Using chat and remote control more**
- 39% (2019)
- 43% (2017)

**Reacting to business change**
- 28% (2019)
- 35% (2017)

**Investing in a new ITSM tool**
- 20% (2019)
- 22% (2017)

**Cost reduction**
- 20% (2019)
- 30% (2017)

**Supporting more devices (i.e. BYOD)**
- 13% (2019)
- 15% (2017)

**Consolidating multiple service desks**
- 13% (2019)
- 33% (2017)

**Other (please specify)**
- 2% (2019)
- 0% (2017)

■ 2019 ■ 2017

The largest proportion of respondents highlighted that their top service desk priority for the next 12 months is using more automation. Previously, we saw that automation is a key innovation that mentioned in nearly half of responses. Therefore, it is understandable that using more automation has remained the most common priority for service desks.
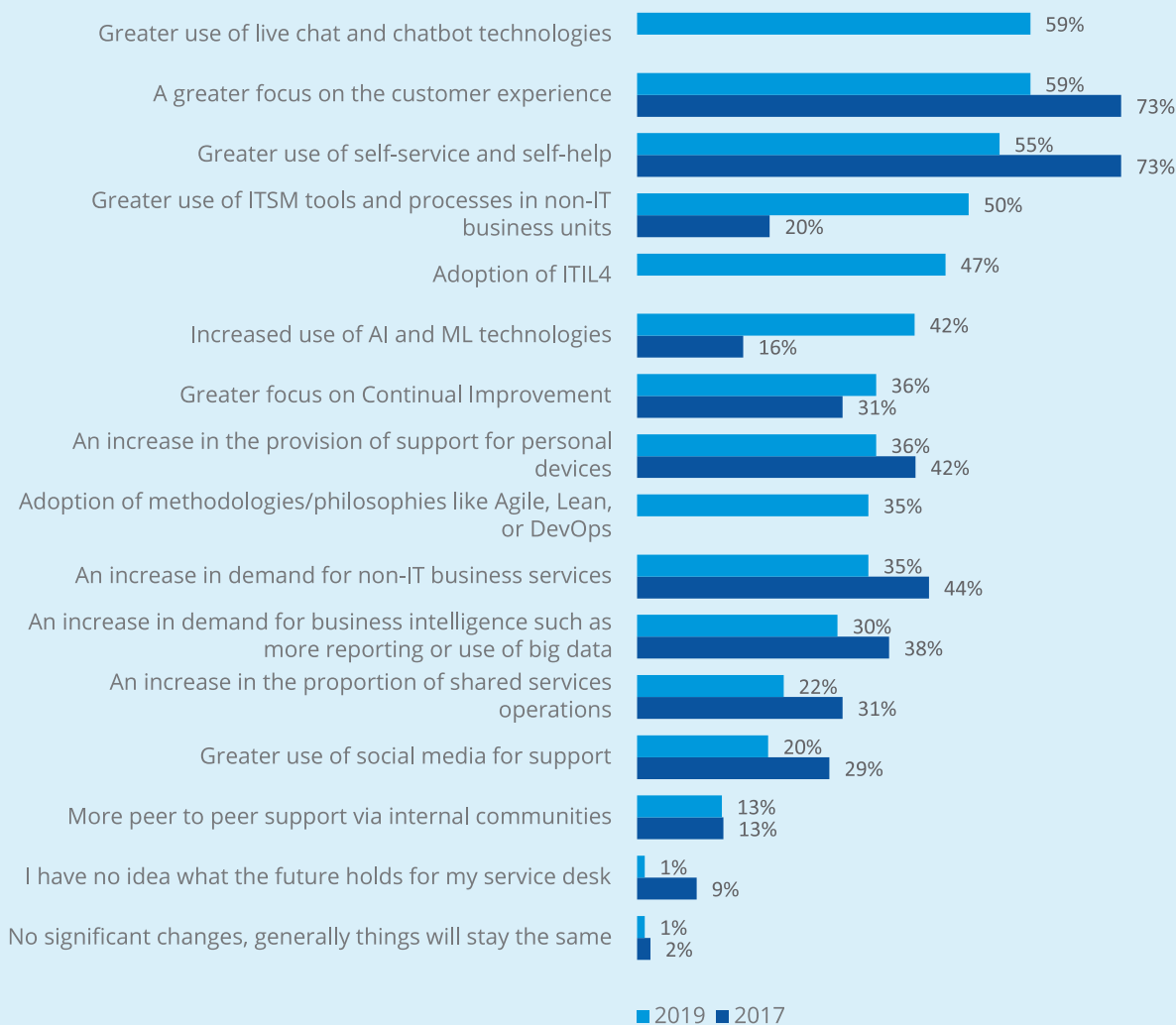
There are not many big changes in service desk priorities since 2017, but one of the more concerning changes is 14% fewer service desks will be looking to succeed with self-service and/or service catalogues.

Given the focus on self-service we have seen throughout this report, it is somewhat surprising to see that this will not be as much of a priority for service desks over the next 12 months. Without sufficient efforts going towards ensuring a self-service portal or service catalogue is a good asset for your customers, service desks may come to find they are struggling with customer experience, adoption rates, and efficiency. We can also see that around 60% of respondents specified that reducing inbound calls or emails will be a main priority, and succeeding with self-service would certainly be a good way of achieving this.

The biggest change can be seen in the 24% reduction in the proportion of service desks professionals who identified that increasing first time fix rate will be a priority for them over the next 12 months. This could be because other things are more of a priority for service desks, or simply that more service desks feel their first time fix rate is adequate or does not need significant improvement. Alternatively, considering the focus on improving the customer experience in the industry, some service desks may have discovered that first time fix rate does not have as much of an impact of the customer experience as perhaps other aspect of the service.

Finally, we can see that only 13% of respondents identified that consolidating multiple service desks, which is an aspect of ESM, will be a priority over the next 12 months. This is a significant fall from 2017, which suggests that ESM is less pertinent than it was two years ago. However, if we consider that consolidating desks is only one aspect of ESM, there may be other aspects which service desks will be focusing on. For example, organisations may be looking to share tools, best practice, knowledge, or processes across multiple desks or office functions, which may be more of a priority than consolidating desks.

# What are your top service desk priorities for the next 12 months?



| Priority | 2019 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|
| Greater use of live chat and chatbot technologies | 59% | |
| A greater focus on the customer experience | 59% | 73% |
| Greater use of self-service and self-help | 55% | 73% |
| Greater use of ITSM tools and processes in non-IT business units | 50% | 20% |
| Adoption of ITIL4 | 47% | |
| Increased use of AI and ML technologies | 42% | 16% |
| Greater focus on Continual Improvement | 36% | 31% |
| An increase in the provision of support for personal devices | 36% | 42% |
| Adoption of methodologies/philosophies like Agile, Lean, or DevOps | 35% | |
| An increase in demand for non-IT business services | 35% | 44% |
| An increase in demand for business intelligence such as more reporting or use of big data | 30% | 38% |
| An increase in the proportion of shared services operations | 22% | 31% |
| Greater use of social media for support | 20% | 29% |
| More peer to peer support via internal communities | 13% | 13% |
| I have no idea what the future holds for my service desk | 1% | 9% |
| No significant changes, generally things will stay the same | 1% | 2% |

■ 2019 ■ 2017

The most common prediction, which was offered as a new option for the 2019 report, that respondents expect over the next 12 months is a greater use of live chat or chatbots as support channels. Recent SDI research has shown that 37% and 4% of service desks offer live chat and chatbots as a support channel respectively. Both these channels can be beneficial for the service desk, though their functions differ. It will be interesting to see if future SDI reports show an increase in uptake of these channels, as there is certainly a greater focus on them in theory throughout the industry.

The same proportion of respondents, 59%, identified that they expect to see a greater focus on the customer experience. While this shows a drop of 20% since 2017, it is important to consider that there were more categories offered, and that this category is still one of the most frequently chosen by respondents in terms of their expectations for the next 12 months.

The proportion of respondents who expect a greater use of self-service and self-help has also fallen significantly since 2017. However, as previously discussed, there are several considerations to consider when analysing this statistic. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that self-service and self-help have been major topics in the industry for several years, and industry reports like this are showing that this is still the case. While many service desks are still struggling with self-service for one reason or another, the perseverance of organisations in trying to improve their portal and sharing what they have learned from their self-service journies, signifies that service desks recognise the impact that self-service is having and will continue to have on the industry. It will be interesting to see if topics such as AI, advanced automation, and ESM will be met with similar enthusiasm and persistence in the coming years.

Other significant changes since 2017 include the fact that the proportion of respondents who expect to see more ITSM tools and processes being used in non-IT business functions has more than doubled. This category is considered to be an aspect of shared services, or ESM, which shows that service desk professionals expect more organisations to adopt a shared services way of working over the next 12 months. Other SDI research shows that we are already seeing increasing proportions of uptake of ESM within the industry. This signifies that many support professionals are aware of what is going on outside their own service desk, which is an incredibly positive observation.

Aside from a greater use of live chat and chatbots, two more new categories have been added since 2017. Nearly 50% of respondents highlighted that they expect to see adoption of ITIL4 over the next 12 months, and 35% expect to see adoption of frameworks or methodologies like DevOps, Agile, or Lean. Firstly, it is clear that the addition of these categories was necessary due to the significant proportions of respondents who expect to see these frameworks or methodologies increase in significance over the next 12 months. Secondly, this iteration of ITIL has been influenced by Lean and Agile methodologies, therefore it makes sense to see these two categories being chosen by significant proportions of respondents.

The final significant change since 2017 can be seen in the proportion of respondents who expect to see a greater use of AI and ML technologies, which has more than doubled in 2 years. As previously mentioned, there is a trend showing that more and more organisations are adopting AI and ML technologies, however it is a slow and gradual transition.

# Conclusion

The ITSM industry is incredibly versatile. The term "service desk" is so broad, and it is difficult to comprehend the scope of industries which rely on service desks. ITSM tools need to be able to support all the tasks a service desk may require and services it offers. Vendors need to be able to stand out in a competitive market, while providing the products that service desks require. However, vendors also need to build great relationships with service desks, and offer them support beyond the purchase of their product. It seems that there are many service desk professionals who are satisfied with the service their vendor provides, but a large proportion are still unhappy with their tool or their relationships with their vendor.

Self-service and automation have continued to be a significant topic throughout this report, and in some areas has become more significant since 2017. However, it is concerning to see that while a large proportion of service desk professionals are still struggling with self-service adoption, succeeding with self-service is not as much of a priority for service desks over the next 12 months.

Chatbots and AI-enabled technologies have also become a more pertinent trend this year, with many service desk professionals highlighting that these have significant influence on tool selection, and they expect to see a greater uptake of these technologies over the next 12 months. However, many service desks are still struggling with more basic aspects of service, like reporting, and they are spending the majority of their time fire-fighting. These more advanced technologies require a great deal of investment in terms of time and resources in order to ensure they are implemented effectively and operate efficiently alongside existing infrastructure. Therefore, if service desks are looking to implement chatbots, virtual assistants, or other AI-enabled technologies, they may run into issues with efficiency and integration further down the line.

Overall, it is clear that the industry is focused on technological advancements and what this could mean for them. Generally, service desk professionals have a good outlook, and a fair grasp on factors affecting the industry as a whole, not just their own organisation. It will be interesting to see if the predictions made by respondents will match reality in the coming years, or whether the industry will change and develop in unexpected ways, and what implications this will have for support teams and professionals.

# 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 Sunrise

Sunrise's expertise in IT Service Management software is built on 25 years' experience, proven with hundreds of clients. Working hand-in-hand with enterprises, service providers and public sector entities, Sunrise provides easy to use, adaptable software that becomes the backbone for delivering and managing services within the organisation.

Sunrise's fully configurable solution can be implemented via SaaS on IBM Cloud or on-premise and extends from ITSM and external Customer Service and Shared Service desks, through to HR, Finance or Facilities Management teams. Sunrise ITSM's reporting capabilities are certified as being aligned to the SDI Best Practice Standard.

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