

The Anatomy of a Service Desk – Part 2 **“The Heart”**



Mechdyne IT Services

[As noted in Part 1 of this whitepaper series](#), a well-run and effective professional service desk relies on key systems to function. If the Contact Center acts as a type of nervous system sending and receiving messages throughout the support team, then the IT Service Management (ITSM) tool acts as the heart. ITSM tools connect and enable most if not all of the functions and processes within a professional service desk, similar to our circulatory system. Much like our own heart, no service desk can operate without a proper ITSM tool in place.

What is ITSM?

IT Service Management (ITSM) refers to all the activities involved in designing, creating, delivering, supporting, and managing the lifecycle of IT services. Think of any piece of technology you use at your workplace – your laptop, the apps installed on it, the printer that your entire team uses, or the option to reset your password even after the first 15 times. The IT department is responsible for all of these pieces of the organization. In other words – IT Services.

Although the most common perception of ITSM among IT users (employees) is often “IT support,” ITSM goes well beyond just resolving day-to-day issues. Your IT team is responsible for end-to-end management of all technology-related operations within an organization. The core concept of ITSM is the belief that IT should be delivered as a service. A typical ITSM scenario could involve asking for new hardware like a laptop. You would submit your request through a portal, fill out a ticket with all relevant information, and kick off a repeatable workflow. Then, the team sorts and addresses incoming requests according to importance and assigns them to the IT team’s queue.

ITSM practices are critical to managing operational efficiencies within the business. ITSM also impacts the employee experience by standardizing redundant tasks and streamlining workflows. Most departments use an ITSM platform to effectively manage available services and automate the workflows.

What is an ITSM Platform/Tool?

An ITSM platform/tool is software used to deliver IT Services. It can be a standalone software or a suite of applications, consisting of multiple apps to perform various functions. ITSM tools help regulate the delivery of IT services within an organization. Teams pick a commercially available tool or create a “homegrown” one based on budgets, people, processes, and outcomes.

There is a wide range of ITSM tools available to consider to streamline and create automation for ITSM capabilities, processes, and functions. Two critical aspects should be reviewed beyond organizations’ unique requirements to help decide which tool fits best:

- What type of organization was the tool built for?
- What information security requirements govern the organization’s processes?

Enterprise vs SMB ITSM Tools

ITSM tools help mitigate some of the IT department’s needs, but not all tools fit all organizations. Enterprise and Small and Midsize Businesses (SMBs) often face different IT challenges. Enterprise companies require more complex solutions and management structures compared to SMBs. This complexity stems from the size and scope of the organization. Whether provisioning

devices and servers for a global workforce, maintaining infrastructure or looking for ways to automate processes, enterprise teams require robust and mature solutions.

SLA performance must be achieved across a variety of cloud and on-premise apps, and the ITSM tool must support change management (more on that later). Knowledge management and the need for technology tools to support an up-to-date knowledge base also come into play to standardize processes performed by the IT team.

Both Enterprises and SMBs have a variety of tools to choose from which are built to address the specific needs of organizations of similar size and complexity. ITSM platforms like ServiceNow and BMC Remedy are especially geared toward enterprise service management.

SMB ITSM tools are suitable for small and growing businesses but are also designed to scale with future growth. SolarWinds, Cherwell, and SpiceWorks provide various tools to build an IT service management system while keeping costs aligned with SMB budgets, and each scales to the enterprise level.

Information Security

ITSM tool vendors keep information security in mind when building tools. From the safe transfer of data between systems, backing up data across your organization, knowledge management, blocking outside threats, and supporting machine learning.

Symantec, Autotask, and SysAid are designed to give users, customers, and/or end-users access to services while securing sections of the environment. Help Desk tools give customers a self-service portal with a knowledge base, while ticketing and automation features move service providers more quickly toward a solution for streamlined IT service management. These ITSM tools utilize ITIL methods and include capabilities for service desk problem management, mobile device management, and workflows.

Cloud vs On-Premise ITSM Tools

Besides choosing from the specific features and benefits, IT teams need to determine whether to host a tool on-premise or in the cloud. Unlike our own hearts, these tools can exist outside of the organization and still provide knowledge and guidance. Cloud-based products or on-premise solutions require different resources to operate, so IT teams should understand the differences.

Cloud-hosted ITSM Tools

A cloud-hosted software solution means that the software vendor provides the server infrastructure. To add another level of complexity, the vendors may host themselves or outsource hosting to a technology provider such as Microsoft Azure. These solutions usually sell as a subscription for access to the software without any of the server responsibilities. A few benefits of going hosted include:

- **Less investment and implementation time-** The absence of large capital investment in hardware and server infrastructure is a large benefit when opting for a cloud-based tool. To implement cloud-hosted software, the vendor handles all infrastructure and, depending on the complexity of the software, your organization can “go live” within days. Cloud

solutions also enable organizations to rapidly expand with less cost than an on-premise solution.

- **Data Security in hands of the software vendor** - Outsourcing data security to the vendor is usually a key reason why companies purchase cloud-based software. Cloud hosting providers will provide strict data security guarantees, which are usually supported by third-party technology providers. This can allow companies to focus on other parts of their business rather than spend money on expensive security procedures.
- **Better software support** - When the software vendor has direct access to the server infrastructure, it generally can make it easier to support than on-premise hosted products. This is because, with direct access, there are no firewall and security barriers to overcome to identify and fix issues. It also means it is less likely for support agents to ask for a remote session to view the end-user's computer screen as they can test potential issues directly on the system remotely via a web browser.

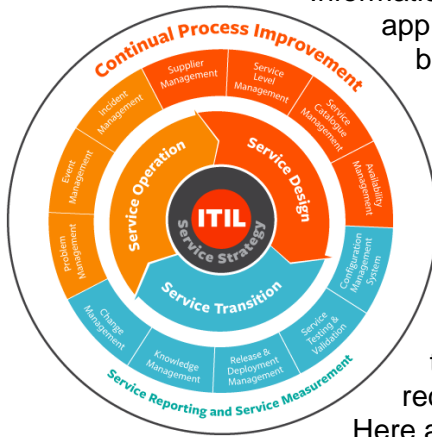
On-Premise ITSM Tools

On-premise simply means the ITSM software is installed locally on the organization's own computers and servers. Before technological advancements in cloud computing, this was the most common way of hosting software. This was when software was sold outright with perpetual licenses. It also included a large, up-front capital investment and was accompanied by a smaller maintenance contract. On-premise tools are not a thing of the past, however. Below are the three main benefits of on-premise solutions.

- **Physical control over server hardware** - Having control over your infrastructure is a common benefit of on-premise solutions. Teams can decide what hardware your servers are built on, and these can be optimized for your specific needs and requirements. Customizable hardware and purpose-built systems can sometimes offer an edge over publicly available, out-of-the-box cloud solutions.
- **Data security remains in the client's hands** - Depending on your industry, having control of your data security can be a key selling point when deciding to go on-premise. While outsourcing your data security to cloud providers can sometimes be beneficial, some industries are better off maintaining their own on-premise server infrastructure.
- **More control over up-time** - Having direct control over your infrastructure hardware and the infrastructure team means that you can ensure the correct amount of resources are allocated to maintain up-time. Sometimes cloud-based products will have scheduled downtime for server maintenance and improvements, which depending on your time zone, could clash with your business activities. Having your own servers can allow you to organize downtime around your core business operations.

ITIL & ITSM Tools

What is ITIL?



Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is the most widely accepted approach to ITSM. ITIL focuses on practices that align IT services with business needs. ITIL helps organizations adapt to ongoing transformation and growth. ITIL 4, the recent update to ITIL standards, represents a shift for IT teams. It guides teams to a holistic, business and customer-value frame of reference, and encourages a more flexible approach based on how your team works.

The ITIL 4 Guiding Principles promote collaboration, simplicity, and feedback. ITIL is sometimes misrepresented as “the rules,” rather than guidance. Yet, just because we need to use processes and documents to complete work, doesn’t mean teams need to generate masses of records and bureaucratic overhead to effectively manage their services.

Here are some of the core ITSM processes where ITSM tools:

- **Service request management** is a repeatable procedure for handling the wide variety of customer service requests, like requests for access to applications, software enhancements, and hardware updates. The service request workflow often involves recurring requests, and benefits greatly from enabling customers with knowledge and automating certain tasks.
- **Knowledge management** is the process of creating, sharing, using, and managing the knowledge and information of an organization. It refers to an approach to achieving organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge.
- **IT asset management** is the process of ensuring an organization’s assets are accounted for, deployed, maintained, upgraded, and disposed of when the time comes.
- **Incident management** is the process to respond to an unplanned event or service interruption and restore the service to its operational state. Considering all the software services organizations rely on today this process must be ready to quickly respond to and resolve issues.
- **Problem management** is the process of identifying and managing the causes of incidents in an IT service. Problem management isn’t just about finding and fixing incidents, but identifying and understanding the underlying causes of an incident as well as identifying the best method to eliminate the root causes.
- **Change management** ensures standard procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes to IT infrastructure, whether it’s rolling out new services, managing existing ones, or resolving problems in the code. Effective change management provides context and transparency to avoid bottlenecks while minimizing risk.

- **Ticket routing** is the process of tagging incoming tickets and assigning them to team members best equipped to handle them. When a customer query arrives at the help desk, customer service reps need to read it, categorize it, and route it to the person or team in charge of handling it. Even though most companies use different ITSM solutions to manage high volumes of tickets, tagging and routing them is still a very manual process in most cases.
 - Ticket routing can also be automated by using Service Request Management and ticket category classifications. Service requests are often recurring, using a repeatable procedure to handle them. Service request management uniquely involves a user submitting their request for something new – whether that’s access to a service, a new phone, or information. The request can be routed to a manager for approval and then forwarded to the best team or teams equipped to handle the request. Service requests are typically available from an IT service catalog which is a centralized database of information about active IT service offerings, and a subset of the IT service provider's service portfolio. The benefits of a Service Catalog are that the service catalog acts as the single point of contact for end-users to view the list of available services and provides workflows that create repeatable processes to deliver a consistent outcome to the users.
- **Ticket category classification schemes** will increase ticket trend reporting efficiency, enhance the ticket escalation process, improve reporting, and reduce overall support costs. Proper ITIL ticket classification of an issue when a Service Desk ticket is created, enables the Service Desk Agent to sort the issue into support buckets. These service desk ticket category buckets will allow knowledge to be presented to the IT support team when trying to provide proper support, enable proper routing of escalated tickets and allow trend reporting of ticket types.

A service desk team’s ITSM tool acts as the heart by enabling communication between different parts of an organization. Without this critical system, support teams and users would be disconnected with slow responses. This is just one of the main systems that support and underpin a professional, managed service desk. In the following whitepapers, we will examine the other systems that make up the “Anatomy of a Service Desk.”

About Mechdyne IT Services

Our 100% US-based IT professionals offer a full range of IT support services including an ITIL best-practices-driven service desk that enables end-users to get back to work quickly and improve the businesses for which they work. Mechdyne IT Services is a business unit of Mechdyne Corporation, a global technology leader creating distinctive electronic, software, and service solutions that enable discovery.

For more information, please visit mechdyne.com/it-and-audiovisual-services.