

What Is the Future of IT Service Management?

EMA Research Report Summary

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What Is the Future of IT Service Management?

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Executive Introduction

IT service management (ITSM) is a term that, like many terms in service management, carries with it a diverse identity—depending on whom you talk to (in role and organization) as well as on history and IT-related politics. On the one hand, ITSM is often linked to old-guard values associated with elaborate, time-consuming processes for managing change and traditional forms of governance that slow down IT resilience in the face of shifting business pressures and demands. On the other hand, ITSM is increasingly viewed as a dynamic center for expanding IT value, impact, and effectiveness in support of broader business requirements—in combination with operations, development, and business stakeholders.

Can both views be right? Again, it depends on whom you ask.

But the data in this research rather emphatically supports the latter view—that IT service management is more needed than ever as IT seeks to become a truly service-aware, business-aligned, enterprise-facing organization. This, as opposed to a bastion of technologists isolated in silos who define their value almost exclusively in terms of “things” rather than the people they serve.

What Is IT Service Management?

To be honest, one question we *didn't* ask was: What is IT service management? Based on ongoing dialogs and readings outside of this research, perhaps the most frequent industry answer is that ITSM is a process-based practice designed to align the delivery of information technology services with the needs of the enterprise and IT customers. Many ITSM descriptions rely heavily on IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) roots for ITSM, as well as other best practices focused on process.

However, this research approached ITSM via a triangle of vectors recognizing the importance of *technology* and *organization*, as well as *process* (including dialog and communication). We believe that ITSM has evolved to reflect multiple interdependencies that can only be understood by this multifaceted approach—and that this approach is also the best way to understand future ITSM directions. We even went beyond service-desk-specific technologies and looked at trends such as cloud and agile; big data and analytics; automation and mobile—along with examining questions relating to best practices, organizational priorities, and communication issues.

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Highlights

- Nearly 50% of ITSM organizations are slated for growth, and 35% remain the same size.
 - Executive suite and operations lead in coordinating broad ITSM strategies.
 - Only 11% of respondents have no plans to consolidate IT and non-IT customer service management.
 - Improved user experience management and integrated operations for incident, problem, and change management are leading ITSM strategic priorities.
 - Self-service, project management, and CMDB/CMS/ADDM are leading functional priorities.
 - 55% of respondents view big data analytics for IT as a priority shared by ITSM and operations.
 - 80% of respondents own or are about to purchase a CMDB or CMS-related solution—with an average of three active or planned use cases.
 - Of these, 81% plan to federate.
- 63% are using mobile in support of ITSM professionals.

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- 50% offer mobile support for ITSM/consumer interactions, and of these, 78% see meaningful or dramatic improvements in service delivery.
- Cloud is spurring integrated operations, runbook automation/IT process automation (ITPA), and automation for configuration and change management.
- 80% have plans to integrate ITSM and DevOps (agile).
 - Of these, 53% are creating a fast track for agile.
- 43% are actively using ITIL best practices, and of these, 71% view ITIL as “essential” or “very important” for their organization.

Methodology and Demographics

In February of 2015, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) reached out to 270 respondents—including 158 in North America, 100 in Europe (divided between England, France, and Germany), seven in Central and South America, and five in the Pacific Rim. For reasons of consistency in terms of IT outlook and requirements, we eliminated companies with fewer than 500 employees. We also eliminated all respondents not actively engaged in ITSM in some capacity.

ITSM Functional Priorities

Strategic priorities for ITSM growth also featured integrated operations for various values, as is shown in Figure 1. The top five were the following:

1. Improved end-user experience (internal to the business)
2. Improved operations-to-service-desk integrations for incident and problem management
3. Improved operations-to-service-desk integrations for configuration and change management
4. Improved support for the move to internal/external cloud
5. Improved customer/supply-chain end-user experience

Strategic priorities for
ITSM growth also featured
integrated operations
for various values

It would be no stretch of logic to claim that all five of these require integrated operational insights to be effective, as optimizing any kind of end-user experience, as well as insights into cloud adoption, should ideally include strong operational insights. Significantly, these priorities were almost a one-to-one pattern match with the ITSM priorities EMA found in 2013 research, suggesting that these broader strategic goals are not short-term but rather long-term priorities with transformational overtones.

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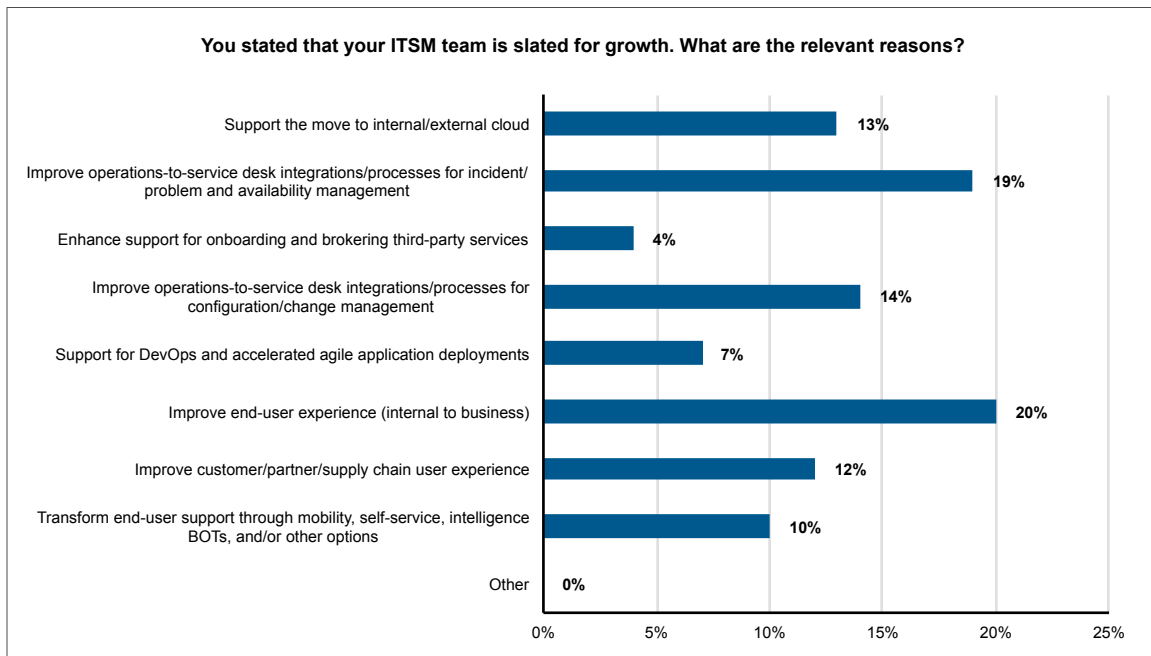


Figure 1. Strategic management priorities for ITSM centered on improved end-user experience and integrated operations for incident, problem, and change management. This data is very similar to data collected in 2013, suggesting a longer-term need for integrated service desk and operations management capabilities.

The top *functional* priorities for ITSM for 2015 were the following:

1. Improved *project management* and *improved automation for self-service* (tied)
2. New or enhanced CMDB/CMS or ADDM support
3. Service catalog for self-service and cloud
4. Cross-domain IT asset management and optimization
5. Mobile support for IT stakeholders.

Significantly, 55% of respondents viewed *big data analytics for IT* as a shared priority for ITSM and operations. Twenty-two percent viewed it as primarily an operations concern, and 14% viewed it as more of an ITSM priority. Only 9% hadn't thought about the topic sufficiently to comment. The most prevalent requirements for ITSM analytics were support for IT-to-business and ITSM-to-operations decision making.

Mobile, Endpoint, and Self-Service Priorities

Self-service is becoming increasingly instrumental in improving both end-user satisfaction and IT efficiencies. The top priorities for self-service enhancements in this research were the following:

1. More effective automation in supporting end-user access to services
2. Self-service enabled knowledge management (tied with the above)
3. More effective automation for resolving end-user issues
4. Self-service via a service catalog
5. Mobile access

Mobile endpoint priorities reflected a growing requirement to support a heterogeneous mobile environment including tablets, iPhones, and Android devices. In fact, only 15% of respondents had no mobile support for end users, and only 17% had no mobile support for ITSM professionals. Moreover, 62% of respondents saw the need for lifecycle mobile support for end users as *significantly* or *completely* impacting their organizations. Some other highlights in terms of end-user mobile support include the following:

- 65% of respondents indicated that there was some mobile access for end users to access corporate applications via mobile.
- About 50% allow end users to make ITSM-related service requests via mobile.
 - Of those, 78% saw meaningful or dramatic improvement in service delivery.

Only 15% of respondents had no mobile support for end users, and only 17% had no mobile support for ITSM professionals.

Figure 2 illustrates the benefits of providing mobile access to ITSM applications for *ITSM professionals*.

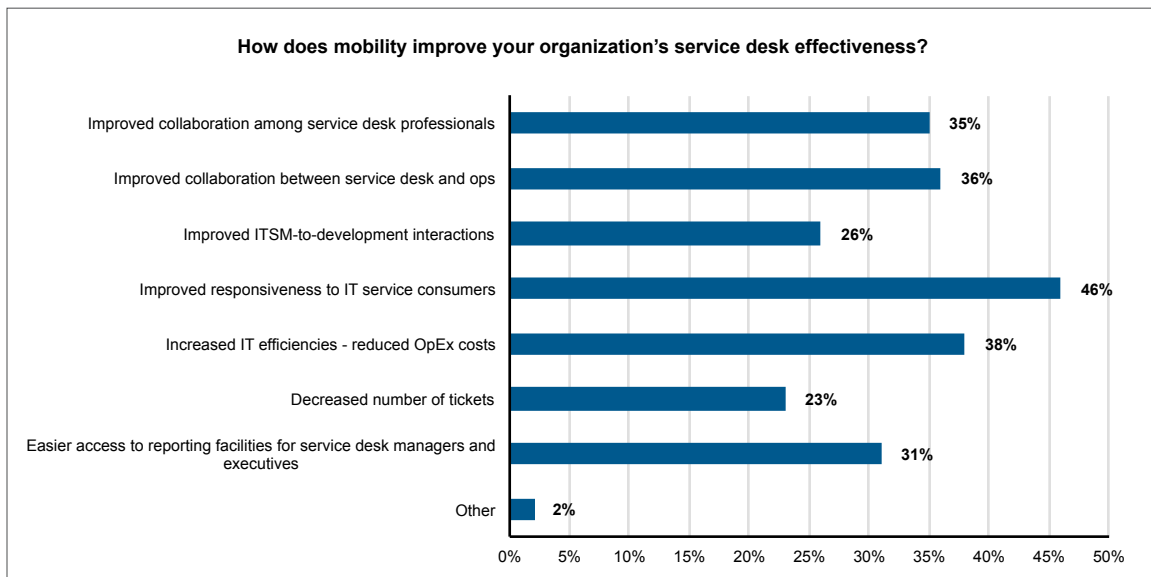


Figure 2. Improved consumer responsiveness, increased IT efficiencies, and improved collaboration between service desk professionals and operations top the charts as benefits achieved by providing mobile access to ITSM applications for ITSM professionals.

The Move to Cloud and Agile

Our respondents viewed cloud both as an opportunity for expanded functionality and as a challenge. The leading impacts, as seen in Figure 3, were viewing cloud *as a resource for expanding service desk capabilities* while also requiring higher levels of automation, driving more attention to DevOps, and making asset management more challenging. Significantly, only 14% saw “no impact from cloud” as compared to 21% in 2013. In parallel, the number of respondents who saw cloud as a resource for expanding service-desk impact and functionality rose from 25% to 34% in two years.

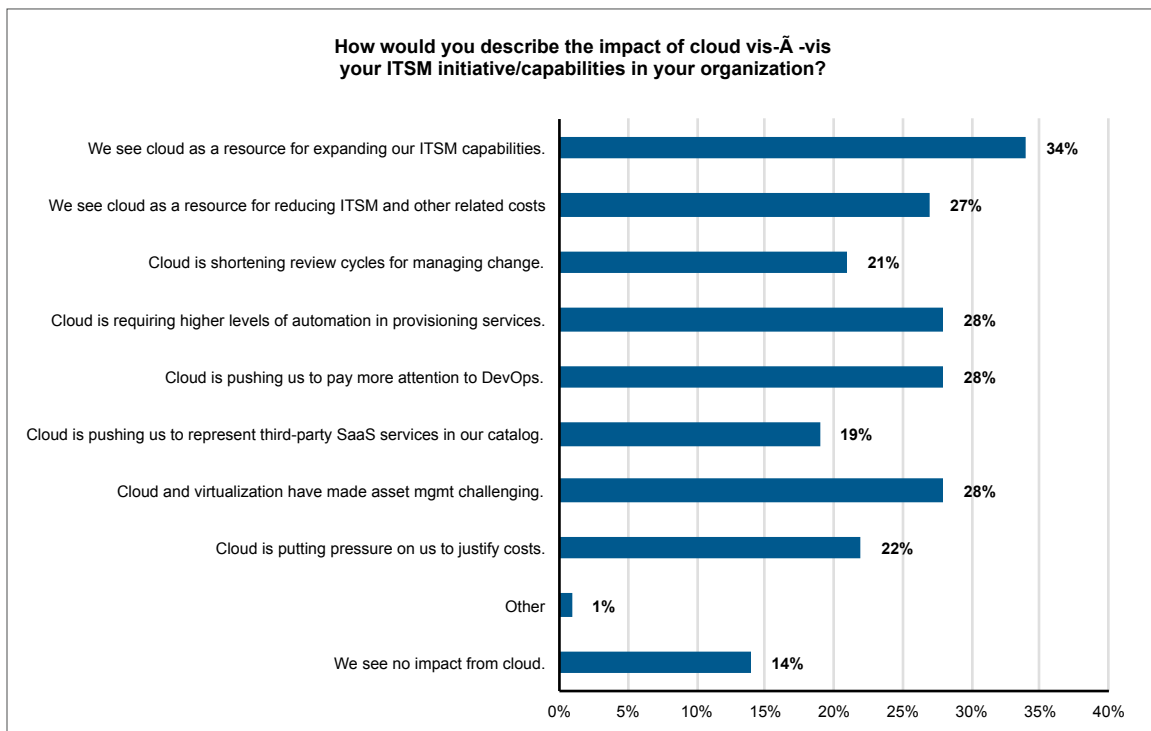


Figure 3. Not surprisingly, cloud has become even more of a catalyst for ITSM transformation over the last two years, with 34% of respondents currently (versus 25% previously) viewing cloud as a resource for expanding service desk capabilities, and only 14% (versus a previous 21%) seeing “no impact from cloud.”

Integrated support for agile and DevOps has also grown significantly over the last two years. When asked if integrated release management for new application services had been integrated into ITSM capabilities, 65% of respondents said “yes,” of whom 34% indicated that integrated release management had been available for more than a year. This figure of 65% contrasts with only 39% who claimed some support for integrated release management just two years ago! Moreover, in our current research, an additional 16% claimed to have imminent plans for integrated release management.

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Figure 4 highlights how ITSM and DevOps are coming together, with a focus on scheduling, workflow, feedback loops, and pre-production provisioning via a CMDB/CMS. In fact, recent dialogs with CMDB deployments included one development team leveraging a CMDB using Scrum and pushing the modeling out into a less mature (more siloed) operations organization. Moreover, 55% of respondents viewed integrated ITSM and DevOps as “very positive” or “transformative,” while only 1% viewed it negatively.

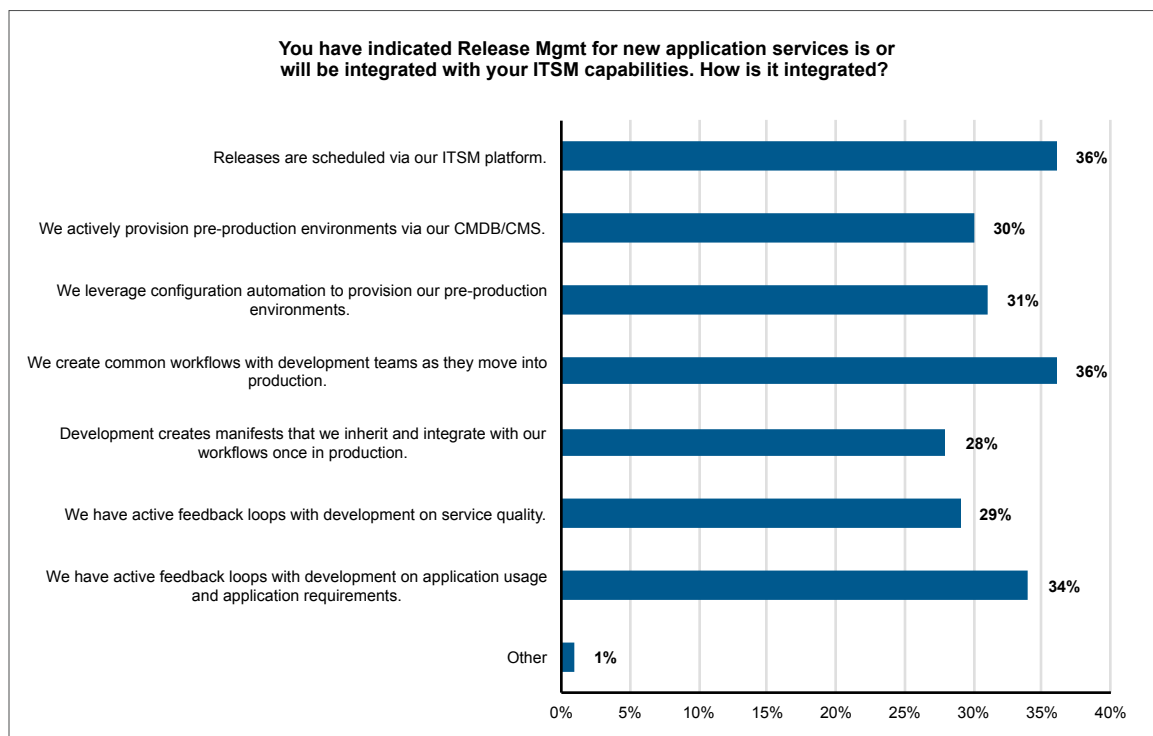


Figure 4. Scheduling, workflow, feedback loops on application usage, and pre-production CMDB/CMS enablement are among the most popular reasons that ITSM and agile are coming together with increasing benefits to IT as a whole.

Success Factors

Figure 5 shows how respondents viewed their success rates—with 52% claiming “extremely successful” or “very successful” ITSM initiatives.

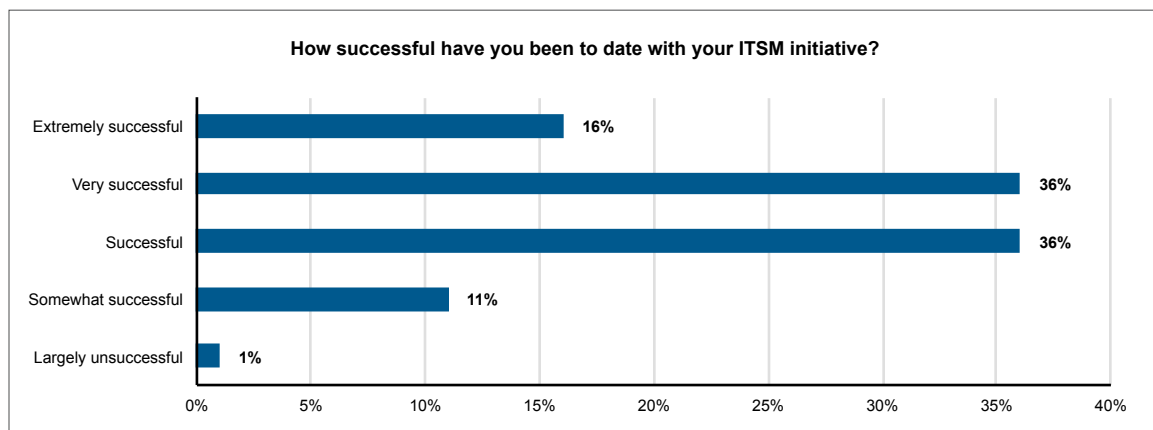


Figure 5. Most respondents felt they were either “very successful” or “successful” with their ITSM initiative. Only 1% believed they were “largely unsuccessful.”

EMA analyzed the data to contrast how the 16% “extremely successful” performed versus the “somewhat successful” and “largely unsuccessful” respondents. Compared to those with marginal success rates, those with extremely successful ITSM initiatives were:

- Four times more likely to have integrated IT and non-IT (enterprise) service desk requirements
- Two times more likely to have a CMDB/CMS-related technology deployed
- Nearly eight times more likely to have ADDM deployed or in plan
- More than two times more likely to have a service catalog in place and dramatically more likely to support cloud and non-IT services
- Two times more likely to be leveraging mobile for ITSM professionals
- Far more likely to see cloud as a resource for expanding service-desk capabilities
- Nearly four times more likely to have created a fast track for agile
- Twenty times more likely to view integrated ITSM and agile as “transformative”
- More than two times more likely to be slated for growth

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Conclusion

EMA embarked on this research believing that just as there are two tracks—a fast track and a slower track—emerging in integrating agile with ITSM, there are two tracks emerging in the profile of ITSM-related organizations, their technology adoption, and their success rates. These two tracks are the following:

- ITSM organizations that remain enclaves functioning more reactively in traditional modes
- ITSM organizations reaching out to embrace new technologies, such as mobile and analytics, along with more cross-domain integrations to support operations, development, and even non-IT enterprise services

While data is always open to interpretation—which is, on the whole, a good thing—I believe that the overall tenor of the data in this research supports this two-track vision. Moreover, the data indicates that ITSM “progressives” are not abandoning more established technologies, such as CMDB systems, application discovery, and dependency mapping, project management and workflow governance; rather, the data suggests that more successful ITSM teams are seeking more innovative technology adoptions and use cases for these investments—as the need to manage change in support of agile, mobile consumers, and hybrid public/private cloud infrastructures actually makes the disciplines and advantages of ITSM more apparent.

What the future will bring is always open to interpretation, as well. But this research, both in itself and when contrasted with ITSM research done in 2013, seems to indicate a clear trajectory that in many respects is ahead of existing “market thinking.” This trajectory underscores the need to bring process, workflow, automation, and dialog between the service desk and the rest of IT into a far more unified whole than in the past. It also suggests that technologies like “big data for IT”—so often referred to as “IT operations analytics”—belong as much to this shared mix of capabilities as does trouble ticketing and workflow.

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Perhaps less apparent from the data here, but at least as important, is the underlying need for cultural and, for lack of a better word, “political” change across IT. ITSM teams, their tools, and their processes cannot evolve to become a powerhouse for governance, efficiency, and added consumer value without IT leaders willing to actively promote new ways of working, sharing information, and making decisions. As is often the case with transformative initiatives, ITSM transformation is better understood as a “conversation” than as a technology-defined process, as important as technology can be as an enabler. We look forward to the day when these conversations will reach a new tipping point so that the dynamics of ITSM evolution can be better understood, promoted, and shared among IT organizations, and across the industry as a whole.

About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help EMA's clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals, and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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