

WHITE PAPER

ITSM Evolution AI-Powered Transformation

ENTERPRISE IT

ITSM Evolution: AI-Powered Transformation

The IT service management (ITSM) industry is currently subject to the biggest change it has experienced in its thirty-plus year history – artificial intelligence (AI)-powered transformation. ITSM people, processes, and technology are all affected by this AI-powered transformation, from the skills required of ITSM professionals to the capabilities offered by ITSM tools or platforms.

Technology change is nothing new. It has long powered businesses and their evolution—from the introduction of Mainframes to “personal PCs” to the Internet, mobility, and the cloud, with corporate ITSM capabilities facilitating the effective use of these technologies.

Now, AI is the latest technology transforming how organizations work and the value created for customers. Like digital transformation a decade ago, AI-powered transformation offers multiple dimensions of change for your organization, including:

- The products and services provided to customers, with AI either embedded in their make-up or contributing to their design, development, and delivery
- Customer engagement, including AI-enabled engagement mechanisms and customer insights
- Corporate back-office capabilities that leverage AI to better enable employees and business operations and outcomes.

This crowdsourced paper looks at the latter of these AI-powered transformation opportunities, based on how AI is changing corporate ITSM capabilities and the ability of IT organizations to serve employees better, align with business expectations, and meet customer needs.

ITSM at the Crossroads of AI Transformation

By Charles Araujo, Global Head of Strategy, SymphonyAI Enterprise IT



What will the future hold?

It's a question that we, as humans, are perpetually seeking to answer. Understanding the possibilities of the future, particularly in times of significant change, help us plan and invest to the benefit of ourselves and our organizations.

And, if there ever was a time of “significant change,” this would be it.

The rise of generative AI (GenAI) has sparked the imagination of IT and business executives alike, and kicked off a period of technology innovation, evolution – and hype – unlike anything we've ever seen.

However, this rapid state of change does not provide future clarity. Instead, it creates a sense that you must act, despite an ever-evolving cascade of potential paths.

This conundrum may be no more pronounced than within the world of IT Service Management. The relative high cost of providing IT support, the data- and process-centricity of the practice, and the fact that GenAI seems to hold the key to finally unlocking ITSM's long-held promise of self-service, has made ITSM a logical place for organizations to look to leverage AI.

But while that represents a profound opportunity for ITSM professionals, it's also fraught with risk as enterprise leaders will be scrutinizing every action and investment. To help you navigate these seas, we decided to bring together the collective wisdom of some of the brightest minds in the ITSM industry.

Their insights below speak to both the promise – and risks – of ITSM's AI-powered future. They explore a future in which AI fundamentally changes the way IT operates and the experience it delivers to employees. They examine the criticality of data as an enabler of this transformation. And they imagine a future in which IT organizations leverage AI to finally fulfill the true promise of ITSM.



These glimpses of the future are perfectly aligned with our vision of the role of AI within the enterprise. While we are a technology and AI company, our primary focus is always on the business problems we can help solve – from creating better employee experiences to improving productivity. In that, we acknowledge and embrace that this is a journey of exploration – one that we are honored to be taking with you.

But the one unmistakable message that comes through this collective wisdom is that AI will change the practice of ITSM – and you must begin adapting to that future now.

In a period of unrelenting transformation, that's sage advice.

CHARLES ARAUJO

Global Head of Strategy



The main areas of AI-powered transformation

In creating this crowdsourced paper, SymphonyAI asked ten ITSM and IT industry authorities how they thought AI would transform IT's ability to deliver IT services to employees and customers, better-enabling business operations and the outcomes and value they produce.

While the various ITSM and IT industry authorities each offered insights aligned with their own areas of expertise, there were three common themes across their responses.

These are that AI-powered transformation would support:

- 1 Better consumer interactions and outcomes
- 2 Data-driven decision-making
- 3 Improved ITSM capabilities

All these areas leverage AI's power to facilitate "better, faster, cheaper" operations and outcomes.

A common thread was that, for AI to be transformational, it needs to be focused on solving business issues rather than the IT organization simply using technology to optimize the operational status quo. Another was that the successful adoption of AI is not merely a case of "doing things differently." It also needs the ability for people to think differently.

The detailed responses are included in the following three sections, with the ITSM and IT industry authority future-looking insights grouped across the themes mentioned above.

1. Better consumer interactions and outcomes

Doug Tedder of Tedder Consulting LLC sees AI transforming employee and customer (consumer) interactions:

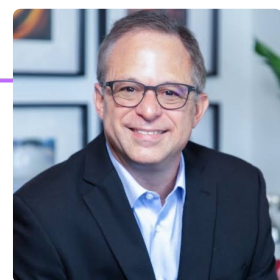


Perhaps the most significant ITSM transformation due to the introduction of AI capabilities will be in interactions with consumers of IT products and services. These interactions are the most visible aspect of ITSM within organizations, but those interactions are disruptive and interrupt-driven. Today, when the consumer encounters an issue with IT-provided services or technology, the consumer contacts the IT service desk, only to have to hold or wait to participate in a conversation with a service desk agent to collect the consumer's basic information (information that the service desk should already know) and then collect information about the consumer's issue. Sometimes, the service desk agent can resolve the consumer's issue; in many cases, the issue is passed off to another technician within IT for resolution.

Introducing AI capabilities to this interaction streamlines these interactions and makes them an easy part of the consumer's daily work. Rather than stopping what they're doing to contact the IT service desk, the consumer simply has to tag a service desk chatbot or virtual agent in a conversation within a collaboration platform (Microsoft Teams, for example). The virtual agent immediately knows who the consumer is along with supporting information, suggests actions, provides knowledge articles, or takes remedial action to resolve the consumer's issue or question.

DOUG TEDDER

Tedder Consulting LLC



David Barrow of Sol Seven Studio offers a bigger-picture view of AI-powered transformation enabling business operations and people:



Consider a global supply chain where manufacturers, logistics providers, retailers, and customs agencies from different countries are all interconnected through a unified service management platform. This platform, powered by advanced AI, doesn't just track shipments; it anticipates potential disruptions, suggests alternative routes and even initiates customs clearance processes before goods reach the border. It's a living, breathing ecosystem that adapts in real time to changes in weather, political climates, and market demands.

Or consider the realm of international travel. Gone are the days of fragmented systems and repetitive checks. In this new world, a traveler's journey is seamlessly managed, from booking their ticket to their return home. AI-driven systems coordinate between airlines, immigration authorities, and health agencies across multiple countries. The traveler experiences this as a smooth, personalized journey, where potential issues are resolved before they arise, and unexpected changes are handled with minimal disruption.

DAVID BARROW

Sol Seven Studio



Sanjeev NC of Stitchflow points out that we need to separate the impact areas for transformational AI in ITSM into two – employee experience and IT experience.



On the employee side, IT will become increasingly invisible. The impact of AI, especially large language models (LLMs), means that more and more end users will prefer communicating in natural language. It will become increasingly difficult to convince them to interact with a user interface (UI) and interface with IT. In an LLM world, even a simple UI will add complexity. The communication tools (Slack or Microsoft Teams) would be their primary interface. They won't log into any other tool unless you give them a good reason.

SANJEEV NC

Stitchflow



Stephen Mann of ITSM.tools has watched the rapid rise of generative AI (GenAI) in ITSM with interest and recommends that organizations start their ITSM transformation now:



Unlike other recent ITSM trends such as enterprise service management and experience management, which have taken a decade or more to achieve mainstream adoption, the rise in interest and adoption of GenAI capabilities has been rapid. From the public availability of and interest in ChatGPT in 2023, 2024 has seen the inclusion of GenAI capabilities in ITSM tools replace the previous (and slower) focus on 'traditional' AI.

Expect the variety of GenAI-enabled ITSM capabilities to grow as confidence in AI grows and ITSM tool customers better understand how GenAI can assist their operations and delivered experiences. While there are already many beneficial GenAI ITSM use cases, it's likely that the 'killer' ITSM applications of AI are still to be imagined.



So, starting now is important rather than waiting for mainstream AI adoption. For many organizations, not using the AI-enable capabilities already available in their corporate ITSM tool (for ITSM and ESM) will be a competitive disadvantage they can't afford. However, as with any new technology, the onus is on organizations to appreciate that introducing AI to the ITSM mix will alter ways of working and necessitate using organizational change management tools and techniques to improve the probability of adoption success.

STEPHEN MANN

ITSM.tools



Simon Bradford of PeopleCert expects AI-powered capabilities to continue to help different groups of people through expertise provision. For example, with employees and customers assisted by virtual agents,



AI-powered agents are revolutionizing ITSM by automating responses to common Tier 1 support requests across different communication channels. This includes platforms like Slack, Microsoft Teams, and help centers. This automation frees human agents to handle more complex and demanding tasks.” And virtual assistants providing AI-powered agent recommendations, “AI algorithms can analyze incoming requests and recommend the most appropriate agent, expert, or response to address the issue quickly and effectively. This improves resolution times and enhances the overall customer experience.

SIMON BRADFORD

PeopleCert



2. Data-driven decision-making

Simone Jo Moore of HumanisingIT predicts reactive IT fixes moving to predictive intelligence and a need for AI ethics:



IT has been caught in reactive cycles for too long—fixing issues only when they arise. AI, however, introduces a shift from hindsight to foresight and requires ethical responsibility in how it learns from human behavior. This and system data must be transparent and carefully managed.

AI allows for a deeper, more proactive engagement with systems and customers – the difference between constantly patching a leaky dam and building smarter infrastructure that anticipates where the pressure points will be. As we move into proactive territory, the design of AI means we do so without compromising human trust in our systems or how we use their data – their rights are protected from being violated. It's a fine balance between intelligence and integrity.

SIMONE JO MOORE

HumanisingIT



Doug Tedder sees transformational AI delivering improved quality and speed using (big) data-driven decision-making:



Many ITSM actions are taken today based on a very small or limited data set. For example, look at how many organizations are doing problem management. Many organizations use the limited information the IT service desk captures during consumer interactions. And if the IT service desk doesn't capture critical information or incident management practitioners don't, problem management practitioners will likely not see it – much less be aware of potentially valuable data. AI capabilities will change this by leveraging machine learning and LLMs to analyze a much larger data set, from sensors to alerting tools to monitoring systems. With this more complete view and use of data, problem management not only make better decisions regarding repairing environmental errors – problem management can genuinely become more proactive.

DOUG TEDDER

Tedder Consulting LLC



Roy Atkinson of Clifton Butterfield LLC calls out the initial need for good data for exploiting data using AI:



Although data has long been a foundation of ITSM, it's more critical as AI is introduced into the workforce. With good data (i.e., accurate and consistent data), those working in and with ITSM can get a clearer picture of what's happening in the technology systems that underpin a business. This means that IT can hasten its movement from reactive to proactive with increased predictive capabilities.

Any time AI is added to an organization's toolset, transformation should be part of the plan. Dropping AI into current roles, processes, and procedures may increase speed and accuracy.



However, to gain the real advantages offered by AI, the organization itself should be realigned to coincide with AI-enabled workflows and capabilities. Currently, what happens (e.g., incidents, requests, events) is recorded by the ITSM tool and acted upon by people. This will shift as AI is adopted. AI and its attendant automation will both record and act upon the occurrences, and people will govern the design of these actions so that desired outcomes and results are achieved.

ROY ATKINSON

Clifton Butterfield LLC



Tim McElgunn of TMT Advisory wants companies to leverage transformational AI and data in a focused way:



As my friend Dr. Lorien Pratt observes, the single biggest reason so many early AI investments are being wasted is because organizations start with 'where can I apply (generative) AI in my organization to do something,' instead of 'what are the decisions that help me achieve my business objectives and where can those be augmented with technology?'

Despite their responsibility for and expertise in technology, IT service organizations are not looking for solutions as such. They are looking for pathways to make better decisions quickly in an environment of technical, political, financial, and cultural disruption. They don't have time to understand how a tool might help until they agree upon what they are trying to accomplish.

What many don't need is a massively complex, expensive, and inscrutable tool that wants all the data it can possibly consume in order to spit out more options faster. They need a better understanding of how successful decisions can be made using the minimum amount of data required and help to find and use just that useful data to make the best choice possible.



In the context of ITSM and enterprise service management (ESM), understanding what clients need to make their best decisions is vastly more valuable than trying to feed a firehose of data into a (uncontrolled) evolving model and hoping to glean insight into what clients need next. Service delivery is experience delivery. As various of my highly respected service management teachers have noted, experience = expectations – reality. The expectation is that service management and delivery teams understand how the technology and services they deliver actually matter in the success of the decisions those clients need to make every day and make service management development and delivery decisions accordingly.

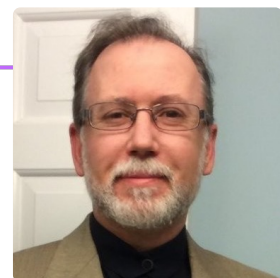
Nobody can wait for AI to figure out everything. Decision intelligence allows service management teams to determine the critical path to accomplishing their goals. Sometimes, that will require massive data feeding massive AI-powered models. Most of the time, however, AI can be applied effectively to support decisions only after teams understand which decisions to attack.

Turning back to Dr. Pratt, 'I'm looking forward to that breakout moment when the world gets over its AI obsession and realizes that decision intelligence (or, well, *some* methodology!) is needed to start with the *needs of decision makers* and work backward to technology, data, AI (and more), instead of the other way around.'

Organizations that realize this before their competitors will make better decisions immediately and over the long term. And, when the time is right, use appropriate AI-powered tools to drive real value for all of their clients and partners.

TIM MCELGUNN

TMT Advisory



Sarah-Jayne Bulley of Euromonitor foresees that



In the future, AI will play an even bigger role in predictive maintenance, using data to prevent issues before they impact the business. AI will also help optimize resource allocation, making IT operations more efficient. IT teams will shift from a reactive approach to a more strategic one, focusing on improving processes and delivering better value. To stay ahead, IT professionals must develop skills in AI tools and analytics while maintaining a solid understanding of customer needs and business goals.

SARAH-JAYNE BULLEY

Euromonitor



3. Improved ITSM capabilities

Roman Jouravlev of PeopleCert sees AI transforming IT service delivery and support capabilities:



AI offers numerous opportunities for more effective, efficient, and integrated ITSM. Some are relatively low-hanging fruit and already being harvested: chats, copilots, summarization of records, and other functions based on natural language processing and workflow optimization. Others have great potential but have not yet become common practice: knowledge management, configuration management, asset management, and risk management. All four require fast and smart connections of many disparate dots in a constantly changing landscape. Humans and predefined algorithms are not very good at it; self-learning models are, and are expected to improve further.

ROMAN JOURAVLEV

PeopleCert



Simone Jo Moore also echoes the ability of AI to continue to beneficially impact ITSM capabilities:



The beauty of AI lies in its ability to learn and evolve; in ITSM, this means a shift toward continuous, adaptive improvement. AI-powered systems don't just operate based on static rules; they learn from data and adjust.

As IT environments become more complex and interconnected, AI's adaptive nature becomes critical, and so is our responsibility through ethical AI guidelines and legal commitments. The future will be about AI-guided dynamic change, where ITSM systems continuously evolve, learning from both human behavior and infrastructure demands, pushing us to embrace fluidity in our approaches. AI doesn't confine us – it extends our boundaries, empowering us to work with greater precision and purpose, while ITSM finds its own rhythm in the chaos.

SIMONE JO MOORE

HumanisingIT



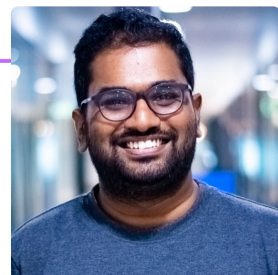
Sanjeev NC adds that



IT will start embracing agentic workflows. IT has forever been understaffed. With AI, especially AI agents, IT can now truly 'do more with less.' What's different now is the ability of AI to reason (rather than blindly follow orders). Agentic workflows will enable IT teams to add purpose-built AI agents into their workforce and train them as they train new team members.

SANJEEV NC

Stitchflow



Suresh GP of TaUB Solutions predicts greater use of AIOps capabilities:



For me, the biggest opportunity is in the AIOps space where we will have an opportunity to reduce repeat incidents, perform auto-remediation to reduce the toil and free up service agents' time to more value-added activities. AI will beat humans hands-down on intelligence, but as a species, our strong sense of caring, empathy, and relationships will drive success.

SURESH GP

TaUB Solutions



Next steps

The ten ITSM and IT industry authorities who contributed to this crowdsourced paper might have differing perspectives on how AI will change ITSM practices and outcomes based on their areas of expertise. However, besides the three common themes across their points, there's an additional “umbrella” theme – that AI is transforming and will continue to transform corporate ITSM capabilities and the value they deliver.

Ready to transform your ITSM with AI?

[Click here to schedule a call](#)