

WHITE PAPER

4 predictions that will impact your ITSM strategy

12 industry leaders share where you should
focus your IT service management strategy

Planning for the future of your organization's IT service management (ITSM) and wider service management capabilities has never been easy, now even less so thanks to the continued pressures of the global pandemic. To help, SymphonyAI Summit asked a number of service management authorities to predict what they deem to be the most important changes, or trends, for service management professionals to understand and address in 2021 and beyond.

The service management authority responses, while helpful in isolation, were analyzed for commonality and the top four areas of predicted future change were:



The introduction of intelligent automation into business, not just IT operations



Growth in the importance of employee experience



Increased digital workflow adoption across the enterprise (enterprise service management)



Changes to leadership styles and ways of working

1 The introduction of intelligent automation into business, not just IT operations

The first common trend was the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled capabilities which is commonly now termed "intelligent automation." Not only is this something that improves operational efficiency and the quality of outcomes it's also an employee expectation. As **Roy Atkinson, CEO and Principal Advisor at Clifton Butterfield LLC**, pointed out in his AI-related trend "The workforce is currently using technology like chatbots and virtual agents in their dealings outside of work; they're ready and expecting the same type of technology at work."



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Roy Atkinson,
Clifton Butterfield LLC



Plus, that this need for intelligent automation isn't limited to IT, but that it's also expected in other lines of business wherever it makes sense, including human resources (HR), facilities, finance, sales, and others.

John Thompson, Associate Director of IT Operations at Pearson International Airport, stated that “As an airport, we see the future with people walking through an airport and being digitally scanned. Immediately we’ll know who they are and they won’t have to show their ID to walk through the security gates. And this is also the future of ITSM. IT immediately knows which assets are running, where, what’s gone wrong, and the resolution utilizing tools built on a vision of artificial intelligence and self-healing, not just chatbots. The future is incorporating technology that helps humans to solve issues in minutes, not hours.”

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John Custy, ITSM Consultant at JPC Group, pointed out the use of intelligent automation to help with the “need to make better decisions faster, lowering risk or providing better risk assessment about the decisions made.”

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John Custy,
JPC Group



That AI/machine learning, augmented/virtual reality, and data analytics will all be used to augment human decision-making. For example, in correlating data to understand causal factors for IT service failures or customer experience issues.

Doug Tedder, Principal Consultant at Tedder Consulting, also called out the continued advancements in the use of AI-related technologies to benefit service management capabilities, but from a slightly different perspective – the need to deal with the increasing complexity of business and technology environments.

Doug offered up three things that organizations can do now to prepare:



Capture and maintain knowledge



Map organizational value streams



Define clear criteria for the successful use of automation and AI-related technologies



Service management will become an organizational capability, not limited to IT. The pandemic amplified the need for organizations to interact with both employees and customers in a holistic, outcome-focused approach."

Doug Tedder,
Principal Consultant at Tedder Consulting



Stephen Mann, Principal Analyst and Content Director at ITSM.tools, hopes to see the smarter use of intelligent automation and other technologies given that the need for the smarter use of people – as called out later – also needs the smarter use of technology by default. Importantly, it's not always about using more technology, it's about using the right technology, in the right places, for the right things.



We could see technology replacing currently-human tasks that are better undertaken by people. Hence, leaders need to understand the types of work where people are still better than the technology."

Stephen Mann,
ITSM.tools



2 Growth in the importance of employee experience

The second of the most commonly identified trends related to employee experience. As **Karen Ferris, Director at karenferris.com**, pointed out "This is not a new concept and has been talked about for many years but appears to be getting increased focus lately. If you look after the employee experience it'll take care of the customer experience. Happy employees mean happy customers which mean happy CFOs."



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Karen Ferris,
karenferris.com

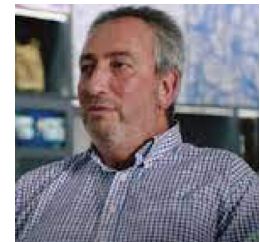


Nigel West, IS Director at Milliken and Company, stated that "As we get to the other side of the pandemic, remote and in-office teams are the future of business operations and employee experience, and maintaining employee productivity is critical. ITSM solutions of the past, that were mostly service- and asset-focused, will create disjointed customer experiences." Continuing that "Self-service and knowledge management will become more critical than incident management. Incident management will be the final step if an end user hasn't found what they're looking for. By taking the time to build out workflows, knowledge articles, and areas for automation, IT will spend less time triaging tickets and more time engaging in more important business objectives."



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Nigel West,
Milliken and Company



Stephen Mann sees this leading to ITSM practice changes – with the need to optimize employee productivity and business outcomes rather the traditional focus on services and their management.

Melanie Karunaratne, Independent, pointed out that “The rise in the importance of employee experience will change the skill set of ITSM staff.” Such that the soft skills of service management professionals will need to be measured more precisely (to both ascertain suitability and facilitate improvement).



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Melanie Karunaratne,
Independent



Erin Casteel, Managing Consultant at Veridity Pty Ltd, tied the importance of experience with digital transformation, “As ITSM has evolved in the digital age, experience management as a capability has become increasingly important. Many organizations today are establishing an experience management office (XMO) and appointing an experience management officer. We’re seeing more focus on XLAs, not as a replacement for SLAs, but as an important means of measuring experience against defined targets.” Erin continued to point out that “Experience management as a practice includes customer experience, employee experience and that of other stakeholders, such as partners and suppliers. It has a strong interface with relationship management, but the focus is orchestrating and improving the stakeholder experience lifecycle, to maximize mutually beneficial and sustainable value.”



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Erin Casteel,
Veridity Pty Ltd



3 Increased digital workflow adoption across the enterprise (enterprise service management)

The global pandemic accelerated digital transformation strategies for 80% of organizations, with the need for digital workflows being a big part of this. There are various ways in which organizations can deliver the required digital workflows across the enterprise, with enterprise service management – the use of ITSM capabilities by other business functions to improve operations, services, experiences, and outcomes – a proven and popular approach.

Roy Atkinson nominated “the continued increase in workflow automation across all aspects of the business, including but not exclusive to, IT services” as one of his key trends. This includes the applicability of ITIL service management best practices outside of IT, especially given the 2020 publication of the ITIL 4 Digital and IT Strategy guidance.

This was echoed in Doug Tedder’s statement that “Service management will become an organizational capability, not limited to IT.” Especially because “the pandemic amplified the need for organizations to interact with both employees and customers in a holistic, outcome-focused approach.”

While digital transformation and the adoption of an enterprise service management approach might appear to be an enterprise-level solution, we shouldn’t forget the potential positive impact of digital workflows on employees and their productivity. **Rae Ann Bruno, Owner at Business Solutions Consulting**, nominated “Employees expect their companies to continually improve the digital experience so that they can be productive, work at any time and from anywhere, and they expect reliability and ease of use” as her #1 trend. That “the line between what we can do outside of work and at work has gone and employees should be able to access what they need, when they need it, with any device.”



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Rae Ann Bruno,
Business Solutions Consulting



While the importance of ITSM, via enterprise service management approaches, is great for the reputation of IT departments, **Barclay Rae, Consultant at Barclay Rae Consulting**, also pointed out that this operational convergence across the enterprise brings with it “more demand for digital and joined-up working, and of course an emerging appreciation of the need for corporate governance.” Plus, a knock-on to the entire service management ecosystem with “more similarity across frameworks and standards, more collaborative working and better tools. Also, more tools that actually do work together. We’ll also see more use of composite frameworks, more service management tool vendor consolidation, and mergers and acquisitions, and better management information and data analysis from the use of data warehouses.”



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Barclay Rae,
Barclay Rae Consulting



Changes to leadership style and ways of working

Finally, with so much change happening in ITSM and the wider service management ecosystem, including the global pandemic’s impact, it was always going to be unlikely that ways of working and leadership styles would continue unaffected. Karen Ferris expressed this nicely when she stated that “The future of work is the future of leadership.”

The pandemic dramatically altered ways of working. In no small part due to the forced, wide distribution of employees in non-business-premises locations. As Karen pointed out, “Most managers have never led a hybrid team. This is uncharted territory.

In March and April 2020 **the interest in employee surveillance software increased by around 80%** compared to the previous year. This was evidence that managers don’t know how to lead when they don’t have a line of sight of their employees.”

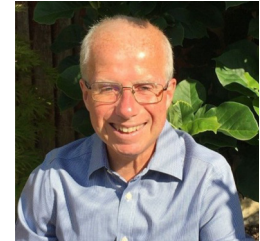
In terms of what’s needed to address this leadership challenge, Karen stated that “Organizations should invest in leadership development. We need a fundamental shift from command and control to a position of empowerment and trust. We need leaders who lead with empathy, care, and compassion. Leaders have to create an environment of psychological safety where no one fears speaking up or asking questions. Leaders need to be inclusive.” This applies to all business functions, including corporate service providers such as IT.

Daniel Breston, an independent consultant at danielbreston.com, added that “Leaders need to create value statements based on outcomes for the business and customers.” This need for the focus on value was another trend that narrowly missed the cut for the top trends and is covered in this eBook’s penultimate section.



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Daniel Breston,
danielbreston.com



Rae Ann Bruno stated that the remote workforce is here to stay with companies needing to “provide hybrid models of people working on-site and remotely.” Importantly, the impact of these “work from anywhere” models is so much more than the location change. Instead, Rae Ann pointed out that there’s a need for “new policies, procedures, security mechanisms, integrated tools, differently equipped conference rooms, robust collaboration capabilities, increased capacity, and reliable digital experiences.” Plus, of course, corporate service providers such as IT, human resources, and facilities need to ensure that they have the service and support capabilities to assist these employees no matter where they might be.

Stephen Mann predicts a need for the smarter use of service and support personnel – where rather than asking “What can we use AI for?” we ask, “What are we best using our people for?” and use the technology for the rest. Otherwise, by taking a technology-led approach to people augmentation, we could see technology replacing currently-human tasks that are better undertaken by people. Hence, leaders need to understand the types of work where people are still better than the technology (however smart it is).

Other service management trends

The above four areas were the most commonly called out service management trends but others need to be mentioned. Especially since there’s an overlap between the top four already presented and the following four areas:

- **Better management and greater use of data across the enterprise** — with the use of data fundamentals to the assessment and improvement of performance (from several perspectives), plus the introduction of new capabilities such as intelligent automation.

Erin Casteel stated that “Good governance, management, and integration of the organization’s data, has become an essential capability for our digital age. Hyperautomation, experience management, and value mapping are not possible without sufficient, relevant, clean, and well-managed data.”

- **The increased focus on employee skills and well-being** — for employees, new ways of working not only need new skills but also the personal motivation and capacity to change. The new ways of working also bring new pressures. For example, the introduction of intelligent automation, while providing greater operational efficiency and augmenting employee knowledge and capabilities, does alter the work profile for IT staff. Especially where the technology takes on the easier tasks such that employees are left with what are consistently more complicated work tasks. Karen Ferris pointed out that “Employee well-being and engagement is at an all-time low. **86% of your high potentials are at risk of burnout.** If we don’t act, we’ll see increased stress, anxiety, fatigue, and eventually burnout. No one should want that. No one.”

Adding that the solution needs “an ecosystem of interceptions, information, instruction, individualization, interventions, integrations, improvements, immunity and it is illimitable. We need a holistic approach, and we need to address cause not just effect.”

- **Information security will continue to be a top business and IT priority** — the risks of security breaches will continue to increase, and their impact will have an increasingly greater impact on organizational success. John Custy stated that “Security must be better architected into all products and services. Products must be better designed and hardened to reduce the risk and impact of security breaches. More, better, and new ways to protect products and services, in less intrusive manners are needed to protect people and organizations. This will be done via regulatory, legislative, and technical measures, and people being more cognizant.”
- **Value measurement and delivery is now critical** — one of Erin Casteel’s trend statements summed this up well, that “Our digital age requires re-envisioning how an organization and its ecosystem creates and preserves value through information, technology, people, relationships, and practices. Business and IT leaders need to ensure that value measurement is built into the delivery of initiatives and investments.”

About SymphonyAI Summit

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