ONWARD TO THE FUTURE OF IT SUPPORT

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In this Aberdeen report, we look at how new technologies and evolving consumer expectations are transforming IT support. Organizations primed to deliver innovative solutions and meet the high expectations of customers can expedite support, resolve issues faster, increase productivity, reduce costs, and leave end-users satisfied.

Accurately predicting the future is nearly impossible, and even the best futurists and predictive models often get it wrong.

But when it comes to predicting how businesses will deliver IT support, the future is clear. Just look at the technologies consumers have embraced in their daily lives.

Consumer adoption of AI-powered services like Alexa and Google Home, smart devices, and "connected" everything, has created an appetite for newer technologies that are easy to use and simplify daily life. These tech-savvy consumers are mobile first, and use a variety of cloud-based apps throughout their business and personal lives.

On top of that, they've been conditioned by data breaches and scammers. They're wary of downloading anything that would give an individual access to their data or device, and often turn to DIY support first in an effort to avoid these malicious scenarios.

Compounding this is the growing complexity of the modern workforce: traditional workspaces are giving way to a remote workforce and the gig economy. These workers bring their own devices with them for use at work, and expect business tools to be as lightweight and frictionless as the technology they use in their consumer lives.

Unfortunately, many support centers are ill equipped to manage this complexity. With limited resources, they've been conditioned to a "put-out-fires" mentality and quickly move through an endless queue of routine, "one-and-done" support interactions that follow a standardized approach. These support teams often lack the modern tools and technology necessary to cater to users who are problem-solvers, to provide the effortless interaction users expect, or to tailor agent-assisted support to the unique needs of the end-user and their situation.

Revamping Your Old-Timey IT Support

Compared to the way that most of us interact today, dealing with IT support can definitely feel like a journey to the past. Think of the way it typically works: *You need support from IT, so you fill out a ticket (which has limited or outdated options), or you try to call someone in IT, or you end up in an endless and frustrating email chain with support staff.* Even in the best of situations, this can be a long and unsatisfying experience where resolution is not guaranteed.
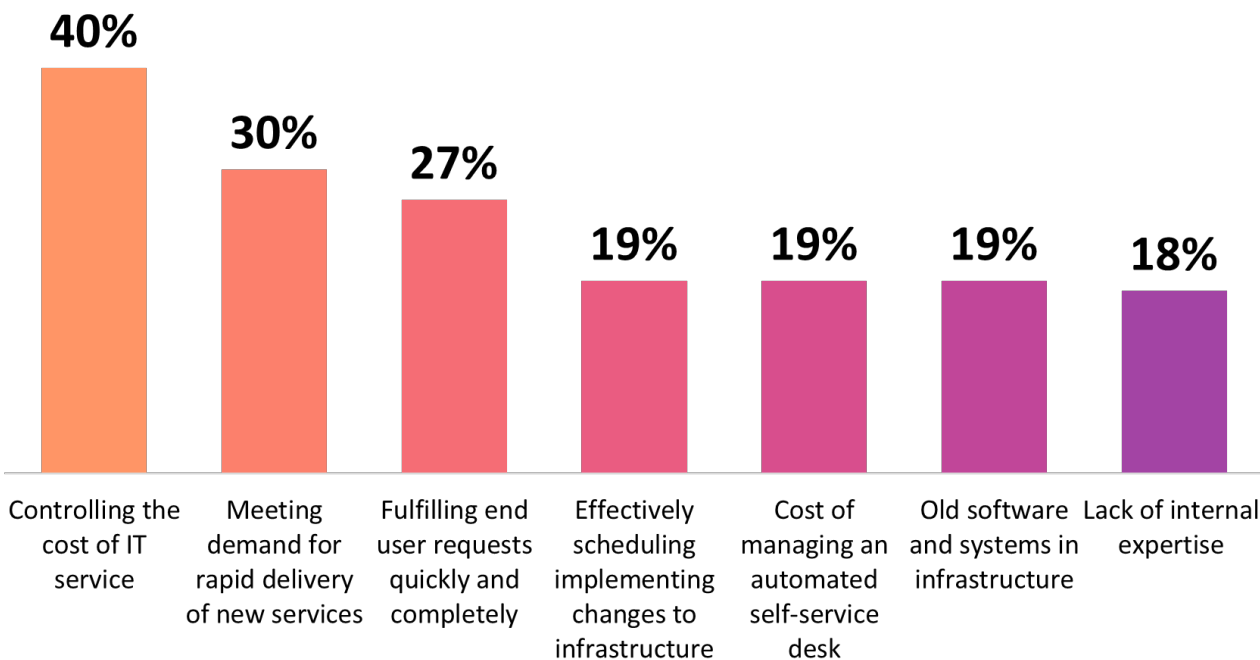
This experience was less than ideal in years past, and now, with sky-high consumer expectations, this type of "old-school" support is unbearable. In fact, when Aberdeen asked consumers what their biggest pain points with IT were, poor interactions and out-of-date systems were among the chief complaints (see sidebar).

Of course, IT departments have their own pain points when it comes to providing support (see Figure 1 below). And, not surprisingly, many of the issues that consumers have with IT support are reflected in the challenges that IT faces.

Top Consumer Pain Points with IT Support:

Slow response time - **61%**

Lack of critical knowledge - **40%**

No in-person interaction - **23%**

No self-service support - **15%**

Figure 1: Top IT Support Challenges

40%	Controlling the cost of IT service
30%	Meeting demand for rapid delivery of new services
27%	Fulfilling end user requests quickly and completely
19%	Effectively scheduling implementing changes to infrastructure
19%	Cost of managing an automated self-service desk
19%	Old software and systems in infrastructure
18%	Lack of internal expertise

Source: Aberdeen, July 2018   n=217

Adding to these problems is the use of the wrong tools, or tools not designed for support – such as online meeting applications – which creates even more unnecessary friction for end-users. In these cases, IT departments are adding

to frustrations and slowing response times, while making their job harder and sacrificing functionality.

However, modernized IT support solutions are designed to address many of these problems.

Aberdeen research has shown that many businesses are either in the process of upgrading or have already upgraded their IT support capabilities through the use of modern technologies such as AI for self-service, integration with collaboration tools such as Slack, and cloud-based assistance whenever and wherever they need it (see sidebar).

New support systems, powered with artificial intelligence and machine learning, put increased knowledge and problem solving into the hands of even novice support personnel. And these modern AI-enabled systems are often more affordable and easier to implement than many organizations realize. Aberdeen research shows that by giving employees the ability to self-solve even some advanced problems, they are giving these DIY-oriented consumers the tools they want, as 41% prefer self-service capabilities when they need IT support.

Modernized IT support tools also increase consumer satisfaction. With the use of integrated social collaboration and accessible cross-platform support, the users of today can effectively connect with IT within the interfaces and mediums that they prefer to work in.

Becoming a Next-Generation Support Organization

The capabilities and gains outlined above aren't simply anecdotal. Aberdeen research has found that organizations that adopt modern AI-enabled and collaborative IT support solutions see a number of key benefits and gains.

And these benefits are specifically in the same areas where many of the pain points that both IT organizations and consumers of IT support struggle with. From slow problem resolution and end-user friction to bloated tools and lack of knowledge that can boost IT costs, businesses that take advantage of AI-powered support are defeating these challenges. And by leveraging purpose-built agent-assist technologies which aim to reduce barriers and painful process, such as flexible, situationally appropriate remote support tools, they make the entire support experience painless for both end-users and support technicians.

In fact, as shown in Table 1 below, businesses that have adopted IT support systems with strong AI, automation and social capabilities see significant

IT Support Tech that Businesses Have Adopted or Plan to Adopt:

Support for IoT in IT service - 58%

Real-time video assistance - 53%

Internal collaboration integrated with IT support (Slack, HipChat, etc.) - 52%

Mobile video assistance - 50%

AI for self-service - 46%

External social integrated with IT support (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) - 46%

Virtual reality-assisted support - 42%

Augmented reality support - 40%

Bots - 35%

benefits in reduced costs, faster problem resolution, reduced support calls and increased user satisfaction.

Table 1: Winning the IT Service and Support Challenge with a Modern ITSM Solution

Businesses with an AI-enabled IT support solution are:

70%	more likely to lower the cost of IT services
2.25x	more likely to deliver new services more rapidly
33%	more likely to see fewer calls to the service desk
40%	more likely to reduce the time needed to solve IT incidents
22%	more likely to have satisfied or very satisfied end-users

Implementing a new IT service and support system is about solving your IT organization's problems and reducing pain points, And this data clearly shows why leaders in IT support and service are more likely to adopt new and innovative systems to drive their organization.

Key Takeaway

Earlier we outlined the top challenges and pain points that both IT and end-users experience with IT support today. But it's important to understand how these challenges impact IT and productivity on a day-to-day basis.

For example, the use of out-of-date technologies (such as no mobile support) and frustrating ticket-based support needlessly increase friction between IT staff and users, which leads to slow response times and the inability to fulfill requests completely. Today's end-users expect support that is consistent across devices, and they want to be able to address as many issues on their own, without the need for full IT support.

To meet these demands, we've found that successful businesses are embracing new technologies like AI and powerful but lightweight support tools, and they are implementing these tools through methods that cause the least amount of friction and don't force users to download fat clients on their personal devices. With these improvements in place, these leading IT organizations are three times more likely to rate their workforce as extremely productive, and are 2.5 times more likely to report a decrease in end-user helpdesk costs.

For many people, the future can be hard to see. But for leading businesses, the future is today, and it's an opportunity to improve processes, reduce costs, and gain a competitive edge. In the world of service and support, getting your organization primed now for today's transformative technologies will also enable you to leverage future emerging technologies that will transform support even further.

This means giving end-users mobile access, immediate engagement using the real-time social and collaborative tools that they prefer, and support systems that are powered by AI and machine learning.

It may not be as exciting as a future with flying cars and hoverboards, but it is one that businesses can benefit from today.

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