SOLARWINDS

The Keys to Unlocking the Power of AI in Service Desk

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Integrating service desk goals and artificial intelligence (AI) represents a highly effective synergy. Since introducing office technology, IT leaders have sought methods to ensure tools and devices empower employees rather than hinder them. The evolution of best practice frameworks (such as ITIL), service desk tools and software, and IT and service infrastructures contribute to a positive, frictionless employee experience.

AI, in its current state, enhances traditional user experiences by helping eliminate friction. For instance, modern AI solutions allow users to request music from a digital assistant instead of using outdated methods like record players. Similarly, AI-driven ride-sharing apps provide seamless transportation services with transparent pricing and driver information.

These advancements address problems, shortcomings, or inconveniences in the user experience that went unnoticed until AI demonstrated superior approaches. Because of these benefits and more, most IT professionals are optimistic about AI, with 88% of surveyed companies having already adopted or planning to adopt AI technologies, according to the 2024 SolarWinds IT Trends Report. This widespread adoption highlights the trust and expectation that AI can significantly enhance operational efficiency and service delivery.

This whitepaper examines four key elements central to service delivery and how AI offers solutions or streamlines processes, resulting in an improved employee experience and a more coordinated, seamless process for service providers. Read on to learn how your organization can leverage AI to unlock the power of your service desk.

ADOPTION OF AI TECHNOLOGIES

☑ **88%** Already adopted AI or plan to do so

☑ **56%** Want their companies to invest more in AI

☑ **46%** Wish their organizations would implement AI faster

Source: 2024 SolarWinds IT Trends Report

MAXIMIZING THE VALUE OF AI ENHANCED KNOWLEDGE BASES

The importance of the knowledge base cannot be overstated. It serves as the engine for self-service, the first point of reference for tier-one agents, and every organization should strive to build an expansive, constantly updated set of solutions.

Recent data from the consumer world underscores this investment. The Salesforce 2022 State of the Connected Customer report indicates that 59% of customers prefer self-service over interacting with support representatives, reflecting a growing trend. The report also reveals that 91% of millennials will use a search engine before contacting customer service. These preferences increasingly influence workplace expectations. Finally, the survey shows that 60% of IT professionals believe self-service will become their organization's primary internal support channel within the next five years.

Building a knowledge base for self-service is crucial, but encouraging employees to utilize it fully is equally important. AI can significantly ease the burden of repetitive issues on agents by connecting employees directly to solutions without requiring extensive searches through the knowledge base. The key is to meet employees wherever they ask questions. Whether using the search bar in the service portal or opening a ticket to type their issue, AI can provide suggested solutions from the knowledge base.

This is a classic example of machine learning (ML). By identifying patterns in how teams submit tickets, search keywords, use (or decline to use) articles, and resolve tickets, AI can suggest solutions with up to 99% accuracy. This satisfies many employees who prefer resolving issues rather than interacting with support.

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IDENTIFYING AND UTILIZING AVALIBLE SERVICES

Historically, IT departments relied on phone support lines and email inboxes for issue reporting. Employees were asked to communicate their issues through these channels, often using third-party services to create ticket management and task allocation queues.

These manual processes were adequate for simpler times. However, as technology and IT responsibilities have expanded, so have employee service expectations and the variety of requests. The development of service management frameworks and best practices has brought order to this complexity, complemented by the functionality of modern service platforms. The integration of AI and ML capabilities has added even more capabilities and further helped to simplify and expedite ticket response.

Automated Workflows

Today, automated workflows can be created for numerous service requests from IT or other departments. Whether an employee needs to order a device, update a benefits document, or report a maintenance issue, forms and workflows can be built to automate these processes. Automation reduces the time spent on manual tasks and minimizes errors, allowing employees to focus on more human-centric activities.

Even with extensive education, some employees will prefer to enter a ticket directly. AI supports this behavior, too. By identifying keywords in the subject line, AI can suggest an appropriate service catalog form, creating a more efficient experience and expediting ticket creation. This intelligent routing not only speeds up resolution times but also helps ensure accuracy in addressing the request and consistency over time.

Service Catalog

Rather than dumping all types of requests into a queue with limited context, a service catalog can collect data to drive efficient service delivery, helping ensure employees receive what they need more quickly. The remaining challenge is directing employees to the correct service catalog items. With potentially dozens or hundreds of services offered, finding a specific request can be daunting for employees who may only submit a few requests annually.

By learning from the behavior of requesters and identifying how service catalog workflows are used, AI can offer suggestions for service catalog items throughout the user experience. The search bar is a starting point. When AI recognizes a search query matching a service catalog form, it will present the relevant form to the requester. Additionally, incorporating user feedback into the service catalog helps continuously improve and adapt the catalog to better meet employee needs, further enhancing efficiency and satisfaction.

ENSURING COMPLETE AND ACCURATE DATA COLLECTION

AI enhances the requester experience and significantly benefits service providers on the back end. One of the most significant advancements in service management is the ability to collect data upfront. Accurate data is essential for successfully automating processes because it drives automated workflows, ticket routing, and prioritization. Accurate data can drastically improve reporting, identifying key areas for improvement.

Due to haste or inexperience, requests often misdiagnose categories and subcategories, negating the benefits of collecting comprehensive information initially. AI-powered suggestions can alleviate this burden. By learning from previous tickets across all employees and departments, **AI can offer exceptional accuracy suggestions for these fields**. This high accuracy level enhances data quality, which is crucial since **only 38% of IT professionals surveyed trust the data quality** and training used in AI technologies, according to the 2024 SolarWinds IT Trends Report.

For example, automatically routing tickets categorized under "Hardware / Laptop" directly to the device support team eliminates any uncertainty about the accuracy of this information. This precise routing is essential, considering that 46% of IT professionals in the same report identify increased efficiency as the main driver of AI investments.

AI can also assist in building progressive fields for specific details like "device type" and "model" or other relevant information, depending on the AI-assisted category and subcategory. This approach allows reports to pinpoint precisely the types of devices, software, applications, or other organizational areas generating the most tickets. Consequently, it helps identify the most common and highest-priority issues employees are dealing with, enabling targeted improvements and more efficient problem resolution.
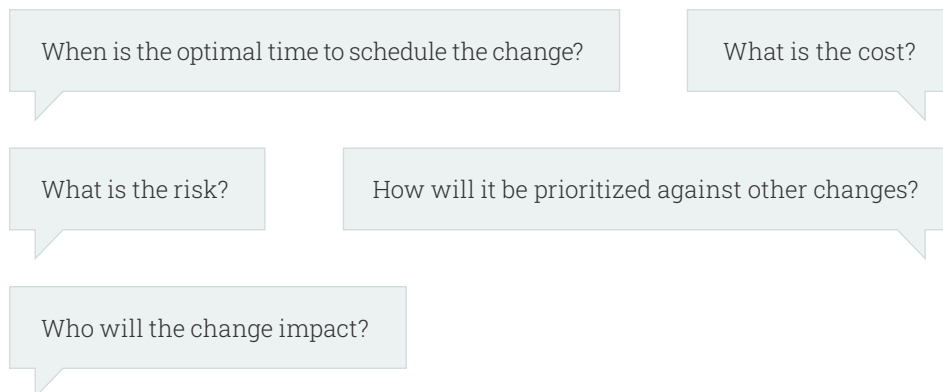
In addition, **AI's ability to handle large volumes of data quickly and accurately means service providers can stay ahead of trends** and proactively address potential issues before they escalate, further boosting overall efficiency and effectiveness.

LEVERAGING DATA TO ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY

At SolarWinds, we've explored automated workflows, ticket routing, and priority rules, but these are just the beginning of how data can transform service delivery. AI can harness various service data to enable teams to act proactively rather than reactively.

Enhancing Change Management

Consider change management, which relies heavily on analysis:

When is the optimal time to schedule the change?

What is the cost?

What is the risk?

How will it be prioritized against other changes?

Who will the change impact?

Artificial intelligence offers an advanced perspective to address these questions. AI can identify the configuration items (CIs) affected by a change, predict the impact and potential outages, and help prioritize and avoid change collisions, providing an additional layer of defense against disruptions.

Swift Diagnosis of Potential Problems

Potential problems can often appear as ordinary tickets. When anomalies arise in tickets, outages, or impacted devices, AI can save valuable time by quickly diagnosing issues that seem more complex than they are. The period between receiving the first "Outlook is down" ticket and the start of troubleshooting can significantly affect internal operations.

Information Technology Intelligence Consulting (ITIC) published a survey in 2022 on server reliability, putting the cost of IT downtime at a minimum of $5,000 a minute and up to over a million dollars per hour. The disparity in cost depends on the number of servers affected, employees assigned, and outage severity. While it's impossible to eliminate outages entirely, integrating AI into your monitoring capabilities can help foresee potential issues. And when issues do arise, integrating AI into your service desk can help quickly diagnose issues, mitigating their impact.

Investing in AI for Future Benefits

Today's employees have access to various tools and technology for success. In the 2024 SolarWinds IT Trends Report, 90% of respondents said they're investing their budgets in AI, creating new AI processes, and envisioning future use cases and benefits. This high level of investment reflects strong confidence in AI's potential to transform IT operations. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of companies have already invested $5 million or more in AI technology, with 31% investing over $25 million. Managing their needs with technology is a primary goal for internal service providers.

Creating an intuitive experience connecting employees with resources they might not even realize they need makes it difficult for them to revert to older methods of submitting requests. For instance, 46% of survey respondents identify increased efficiency as the main driver of AI investments, while 67% cite the automation of routine tasks as a top benefit. These statistics underscore the importance of AI in enhancing productivity and streamlining processes.

Enhancing the Employee Experience

Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool for enhancing the employee experience. AI streamlines services to achieve significant business value and improve the employee experience. By automating repetitive tasks and providing real-time insights, AI enables employees to focus on more complex and strategic activities, making their jobs more engaging and productive.

In the SolarWinds IT Trends Report, 31% of IT professionals reported that AI enhances their job experience by automating repetitive tasks, while 27% said it streamlines their experience by providing real-time insights and predictive analytics. This demonstrates AI's role in not only improving efficiency but also in enriching the work environment for employees.

Embracing Smart Technology Now

The ideal time to explore the role of smart technology in service delivery processes is now. With AI, organizations can proactively address issues, optimize workflows, and enhance service delivery. As IT leaders recognize AI's transformative potential, the focus should be on integrating these technologies into daily operations to maximize their benefits. Nearly half (46%) of IT professionals wish their organizations would implement AI faster, indicating a strong desire to leverage AI's capabilities promptly.

By investing in AI and embracing its potential, organizations can help ensure they stay ahead in the competitive landscape, offering superior service experiences and achieving greater operational efficiency.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF
SOLARWINDS AI IN SOLARWINDS SERVICE DESK

Incorporating SolarWinds® AI into SolarWinds Service Desk offers transformative benefits, enhancing both employee experience and service delivery efficiency. As we've discussed, AI can significantly improve the accuracy and speed of issue resolution, streamline service workflows, and provide proactive support. Below are some of the ways SolarWinds AI can unlock your service desk capabilities.

Try It Free →

30 days, full version

Enhanced Issue Resolution

SolarWinds Service Desk leverages generative features to reduce decision time and cut down on repetitive and manual tasks. By analyzing vast amounts of data, AI can identify patterns and suggest helpful steps to help resolve issues. This proactive approach reduces downtime and mitigates the impact of IT outages, which can lead to significant productivity and revenue losses. Generative AI can dynamically create solutions and automate routine responses, supporting swift diagnoses and resolution of problems. This capability not only helps ensure minimal disruption to daily operations but also enhances overall efficiency and service quality by freeing IT teams from repetitive tasks and supporting consistency.

Streamlined Workflows

AI-driven automation in SolarWinds Service Desk facilitates efficient ticket routing, prioritization, and resolution. By leveraging machine learning, AI can accurately categorize tickets, suggest relevant solutions, and guide users through self-service options. This reduces the workload on support agents and empowers employees to resolve issues independently, fostering a more efficient and autonomous work environment.

Proactive Support and Data Utilization

SolarWinds Service Desk excels in proactive support by predicting potential issues and providing timely interventions with its SolarWinds AI integration. It analyzes data from previous tickets, user interactions, and system performance to anticipate problems and offer preventive solutions. This proactive approach enhances overall system reliability and user satisfaction. Additionally, the ability to collect and analyze comprehensive data allows for continuous improvement. AI-driven insights help identify recurring issues, optimize resource allocation, and refine service strategies. Accurate data collection and analysis are crucial for making informed decisions to drive productivity and efficiency.

Improved Employee Experience

Today's employees expect seamless and intuitive support experiences. SolarWinds Service Desk meets this expectation by providing personalized and context-aware assistance. Whether through automated workflows, intelligent search suggestions, or AI-powered chatbots, employees receive timely and relevant support, enhancing their overall experience and productivity.

SolarWinds AI integrates advanced machine learning and automation capabilities into SolarWinds Service Desk, delivering substantial benefits across the board. AI is critical to modernizing service delivery, from enhancing issue resolution and streamlining workflows to providing proactive support and improving the employee experience. By harnessing the power of SolarWinds AI in SolarWinds Service Desk, organizations can achieve greater efficiency, reliability, and satisfaction in their service management processes, making it an essential investment for the future.

ABOUT SOLARWINDS

SolarWinds (NYSE:SWI) is a leading provider of simple, powerful, and secure IT management software built to enable customers to accelerate their digital transformation. Our solutions provide organizations worldwide—regardless of type, size, or complexity—with a comprehensive and unified view of today's modern, distributed, and hybrid network environments. We continuously engage with technology professionals—IT service and operations professionals, DevOps and SecOps professionals, and database administrators (DBAs)—to understand the challenges they face in maintaining high-performing and highly available IT infrastructures, applications, and environments. The insights we gain from them, in places like our THWACK® community, allow us to address customers' needs now, and in the future. Our focus on the user and our commitment to excellence in end-to-end hybrid IT management have established SolarWinds as a worldwide leader in solutions for observability, IT service management, application performance, and database management. Learn more today at www.solarwinds.com.

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