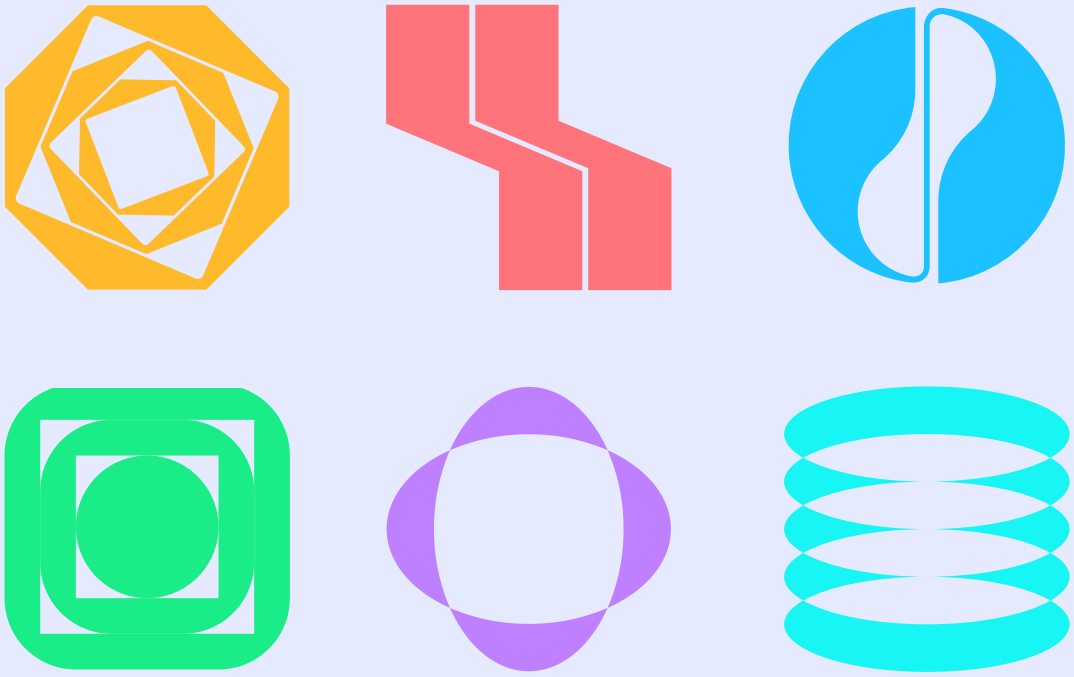


Starhive's top ITSM trends shaping 2025

in partnership with HiQ

starhive

HiQ

IT Service Management (ITSM) is evolving rapidly.

With cloud proliferation, the rise of AI, and shifting expectations around user experience, IT teams face new challenges and opportunities. Staying ahead requires keeping up with industry trends and actively preparing for what's next.

That's why we created this guide.

Written by IT industry experts this combines real-world insights with the latest research from Gartner to highlight the top ITSM trends of 2025.

Through expert analysis, interviews with IT professionals, and hands-on experience, we've identified the key forces shaping the future of ITSM.

What you'll find in this guide

We'll walk you through each trend, explaining:

What's changing and why It matters

The challenges and opportunities it presents

Practical recommendations to help your IT team prepare

Meet the experts behind this report

Our insights come from industry veterans with hands-on experience in ITSM and Enterprise Service Management (ESM):

Tommy Nordahl

Tommy has 20 years of experience running an IT consultancy firm where he helped implement ITSM best practices in hundreds of organisations. At the same time, he ran an asset management software company used by 2000+ businesses (now part of Atlassian's offering). Today, he's the CEO and co-founder of Starhive and still helps organisations implement all aspects of ITSM and ESM.

Eva Rehn

Eva started her IT career in an unlikely place — working in hospitality. Then, she moved into process management for customer service, where she gained a deep appreciation of both the business and technology aspects required to implement new processes. This sparked her interest in IT, and she now works at HiQ as a consultant specialising in service management for all teams.

Roland Bürk

From Unix administration to data centre service engineering and ITSM consulting, Roland has seen ITSM from all angles. Now leading a team of consultants at HiQ, he helps IT teams overcome challenges and implement service desks that truly work.

This guide isn't just about trends. It's about helping you take action. Whether you're refining your IT strategy, evaluating new tools, or looking to improve service delivery, our insights will equip you with the knowledge to navigate the changing ITSM landscape in 2025 and beyond.

So, let's explore it together...

Trend 1

AI in ITSM

Revolutionising support and automation

AI is undoubtedly one of the most prominent trends shaping the future of IT Service Management (ITSM). As AI technologies rapidly evolve, they're finding their place in various areas of ITSM, from automating routine tasks to enhancing the efficiency of support teams.

In fact, according to Gartner, **45% of Infrastructure and Operations (I&O) leaders expect AI to transform ITSM** — with chatbots and automation of repetitive tasks leading the way.

The AI revolution in ITSM comes with a wide array of applications, and while it holds immense potential, it can also be overwhelming for IT teams looking to harness its power.

The sheer variety of AI features offered by different ITSM vendors can often make it difficult to determine where to start. However, once the right use cases are identified, the value AI brings to ITSM is undeniable.

AI-powered support: Automating Tier 1 and beyond

One of the key areas where AI is already making a significant impact is Tier 1 support. Traditionally, Tier 1 support involves answering common questions, troubleshooting basic issues, and categorising incoming requests.

AI-powered chatbots have become instrumental in automating these tasks, drastically reducing response times and allowing IT support teams to focus on more complex issues.

AI chatbots are now commonly integrated with ITSM platforms to pull information directly from knowledge bases and use it to provide instant answers to users. This capability improves efficiency and enhances user satisfaction by providing immediate assistance. The ability to access accurate knowledge in real-time is transforming the way businesses handle support requests.

Another compelling use of AI is in inbox management. AI tools can automatically scan incoming tickets, categorise them based on content, and route them to the appropriate support agents. These tools can filter out spam too, ensuring support teams spend time on genuine requests instead of sifting through irrelevant messages.

Streamlining administrative tasks and data processing

AI is also being leveraged for document processing, a common challenge in service management. Many teams must manage large volumes of standardised documents, such as contracts, legal regulations, or user agreements.

AI can read and analyse these documents to extract key information, such as dates, customer numbers, and other critical data points. This information can then be automatically entered into tickets, saving agents valuable time and reducing the chances of human error.

Individual team members also use AI tools to automate tedious tasks like summarising meeting notes, rewording help desk replies to adjust tone, or even debugging scripts. These smaller yet highly impactful uses of AI ensure that teams can work more efficiently, saving time and enhancing productivity on a daily basis.

Overcoming challenges in AI adoption

Despite the clear benefits, several challenges are still associated with integrating AI into ITSM processes. One primary hurdle is the overwhelming nature of AI's capabilities.

With so many potential use cases and excitement surrounding AI, businesses often feel pressured to implement large-scale, transformative solutions. But AI doesn't have to be revolutionary to provide value.

Starting with smaller, more manageable AI use cases (like automating ticket categorisation or email routing) can deliver immediate, tangible results without requiring major overhauls of existing processes.

Another challenge is data security. Many AI tools from ITSM vendors require data to be processed outside the organisation's environment, which can create concerns for businesses that handle sensitive data or operate in highly regulated industries.

To mitigate these risks, some businesses build their own AI tools that integrate directly with their ITSM platforms via APIs. This way, organisations retain full control over where their data is stored and how it's processed, ensuring compliance with internal security policies.

Real-world examples of AI in action

HiQ has worked with customers to implement AI in various practical scenarios.

For example, Roland praises the use of AI-driven systems at HiQ in efficiently routing incoming traffic to the correct support teams. And, even though he acknowledges that the AI is by no means perfect all of the time (as far as occasionally misdirecting tickets), this is still achieving accuracy rates **above 90%**.

Even when mistakes happen, agents can quickly re-route tickets manually, ensuring minimal disruption to the support workflow. Plus, when it comes to making intuitive tweaks…

> You can still optimise it via prompts — and it's very quick and easy to implement."

Roland Bürk

Roland also celebrates another simple yet effective use case: integrating ChatGPT with the service desk to automatically categorise tickets based on the content of incoming emails.

By scanning the email body and attachments, the AI extracts valuable information that helps route the ticket more seamlessly and efficiently.

As he explains...

> It's saving a lot of time as nobody in first level has to read a PDF file attached to the email to get the idea of the message."

These organisational and time-saving benefits will be more critical in 2025 as teams continually seek new ways to leverage AI without completely overhauling their operations.

Tips for getting started with AI in ITSM

If you're considering adopting AI for your ITSM processes, taking a structured approach is essential. To get you started, here are a few tips our experts suggest you keep in mind.

1

Ensure quality data

AI tools require high-quality data to function effectively. Whether you have a knowledge base missing a few key articles or a service map that could be clearer, ensure your data is structured and accurate.

Poor data will result in poor AI performance, so build up your data quality alongside your AI tool implementation.

2

Assess your current ITSM platform

Many ITSM vendors offer built-in AI features, such as chatbots or automation tools. Investigate your current platform to see if these tools can be easily activated.

However, be mindful of where your data is processed. Data security and compliance are critical considerations, and they can be compromised by inconsiderate application of AI.

3

Explore what tools are out there

If the AI offerings within your existing ITSM solution are unsuitable, or if you're at the start of your ITSM journey, it's worth exploring popular AI tools like ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, and Claude. Although we appreciate that time is a precious commodity for many IT teams, test these tools correctly to get a true sense of how they could align with your needs.

It's also a good idea to give your wider team access to these tools, ensuring they don't rely on their personal accounts, for example. This also carries potential security risks, which brings us to our next point.

4

Invest in AI education

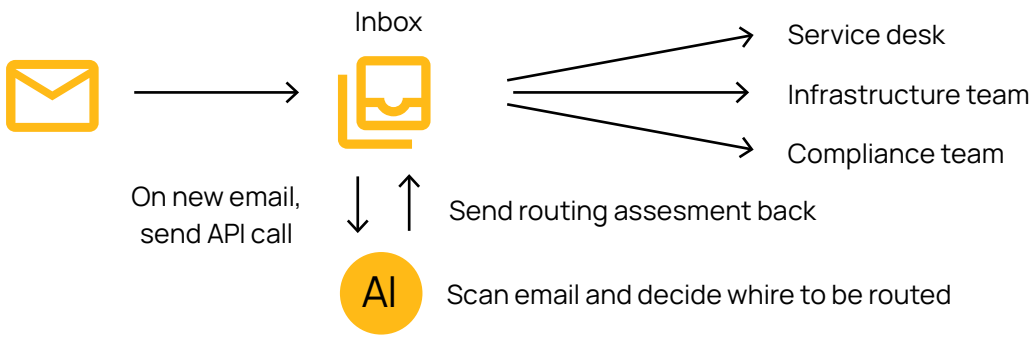
As AI becomes a fundamental part of ITSM, building knowledge within your team is critical. Many free and paid courses, such as Google's AI Essentials Course on Coursera, can help your team become familiar with AI tools and their applications.

5

Start small

We recommend that you identify a time-consuming, repetitive task that AI could automate. First, ask the AI for suggestions on automating specific processes, starting with a single use case.

Then, once you've successfully implemented one AI-driven solution, you can expand into other areas more confidently. Here's an example of this in action:



Summary

- AI is transforming ITSM by automating repetitive tasks, improving support workflows and reducing human error.
- However, businesses must consider their specific needs and challenges before adopting AI.
- Starting with small, manageable use cases and prioritising data security will help teams leverage AI to its full potential without being overwhelmed.
- AI can become an invaluable asset in any ITSM strategy with the right approach.

Trend 2

ESM

Continuing to gain traction in 2025

Although Enterprise Service Management (ESM) has existed for some time, its adoption has only increased in recent years.

Traditionally, service management was the domain of IT teams, but now, ESM is expanding to cover services across the entire enterprise. The increasing interest and adoption of ESM can be attributed to several factors, including the growing need for cross-departmental collaboration, the evolution of IT tools and the recognition that service delivery challenges extend beyond IT.

> Although Service Management might have been pioneered by IT teams, there is a universal need for it across the entire business. Your purpose, regardless of function, is to serve the business needs and objectives — so how can you make your services accessible for your internal customers? By rolling out Enterprise Service Management"

Tommy Nordahl

Why ESM is picking up momentum

One of the primary reasons is that non-IT teams are becoming more familiar with the idea that software can streamline their service delivery processes. Whether it's HR, finance, or legal, departments outside of IT are increasingly seeing the value of implementing ESM solutions to address their specific service management needs.

At the same time, IT teams have become more adept at spotting bottlenecks in other teams and suggesting solutions. With more ITSM vendors now offering some level of ESM capabilities, IT teams are better equipped to support requests from non-IT teams.

Some IT teams are no longer waiting for departments to approach them. Instead, they're taking the initiative to address service delivery inefficiencies in other areas of the business. This proactive approach fosters stronger cross-functional collaboration and a shared commitment to improving service management and the employee experience throughout the organisation, which is a good thing.

Plus, this trend is only expected to continue...

> 40%
>
> By 2026, 40% of I&O leaders will be tasked with supporting an enterprise-wide service management programme. This is a significant jump from less than 10% in 2023, signalling that ESM is no longer a niche concept but rather an integral part of the service management landscape.
>
> - Gartner report, Hype Cycle for ITSM 2024

The challenges of ESM adoption

Despite its growing importance, successfully implementing ESM presents several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of a standardised framework.

Unlike ITSM, which is guided by frameworks like Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), there's no equivalent for ESM. This makes it challenging to define a common language or set of processes when discussing the implementation of ESM solutions. This lack of uniformity can lead to confusion, miscommunication, and, ultimately, poorly-scoped projects.

The absence of a clear framework also means many organisations turn to ESM vendors for guidance on implementing these solutions. However, this can create problems when the vendor's platform becomes the de facto standard for how things should be done.

In this scenario, businesses may adapt their processes to fit the capabilities of the vendor's platform rather than aligning the platform with the real challenges they need to address. This can result in missed opportunities to solve broader organisational problems, lower adoption rates, and unmet expectations.

> Many organisations attempt to extend ITSM tools to support ESM, but this often leads to poor scalability, inefficiency, and user dissatisfaction. While ITSM and ESM share some principles, traditional ITSM tools are often not the right tool for broader enterprise-wide service management. It's like using a hammer to put in a screw."

Tommy Nordahl

Making ESM a more realised possibility

At Starhive and HiQ, we've seen first-hand how companies integrate ESM into their day-to-day operations. Whether organisations explicitly label their efforts as ESM or not, the principle of extending service management beyond IT is becoming a reality.

Teams across the whole picture, from finance to HR to legal, are starting to recognise the value of service management tools in addressing their specific needs.

The key is to identify these pain points, regardless of the department, and find ways to implement software that supports a more efficient and streamlined process.

Tips for getting started with ESM

If you're considering adopting AI for your ITSM processes, taking a structured approach is essential. To get you started, here are a few tips our experts suggest you keep in mind.

1

Engage with other departments

If your organisation hasn't yet implemented a formal ESM programme but you're looking to introduce ESM principles, start by speaking with different departments.

Understand their inefficiencies or challenges, even if they don't specifically identify them as ESM problems. For example, HR might struggle with managing recruitment requests, or finance could be overwhelmed with contract reviews. By identifying these pain points, you can explore the best way to address them through ESM tools.

2

Define ESM independently

If your organisation already has a formal ITSM or ESM platform, one of the first things you should do is create your own definitions of ESM terms, such as a service and an incident, for each department involved. Don't rely solely on the terminology or framework provided by the vendor.

By clearly understanding what ESM means within your organisation, you can focus on solving the issues each team faces, rather than tailoring your processes to fit a vendor's platform.

3

Choose the right platform

If you're still selecting an ITSM or ESM platform, choosing a flexible and customisable solution is essential. This will allow you to tailor the platform to your organisation's unique needs and ensure better adoption.

Flexibility is key to addressing the specific service delivery challenges different departments within your organisation face.

Summary

- ESM is more than just a buzzword. It's becoming an essential part of modern businesses. As non-IT teams become more familiar with service management tools and as IT teams take a more proactive role in supporting their colleagues, the rise of ESM is inevitable.
- However, businesses must carefully navigate the challenges of the lack of a standardised framework (like ITIL) and the potential for vendor-driven definitions to shape implementation.
- By taking a thoughtful, collaborative approach to ESM adoption, organisations can break down silos, improve service delivery across all departments and ensure greater success in their service management initiatives.
- As Gartner's prediction suggests, the future of ESM is bright, and organisations that act now to build a strong, well-defined foundation for ESM will position themselves ahead of the curve.

Trend 3

Flexibility

An essential for ITSM and ESM

In recent years, we've seen a significant shift in how organisations approach ITSM and ESM processes. Traditionally, many businesses had to adapt their processes to fit the rigid frameworks and workflows defined by their chosen software platforms.

However, there's a growing trend where companies seek a more custom approach, wanting their technology to be tailored to their unique practices and needs. This desire for flexibility is driving a change in how both ITSM and ESM solutions are developed and implemented.

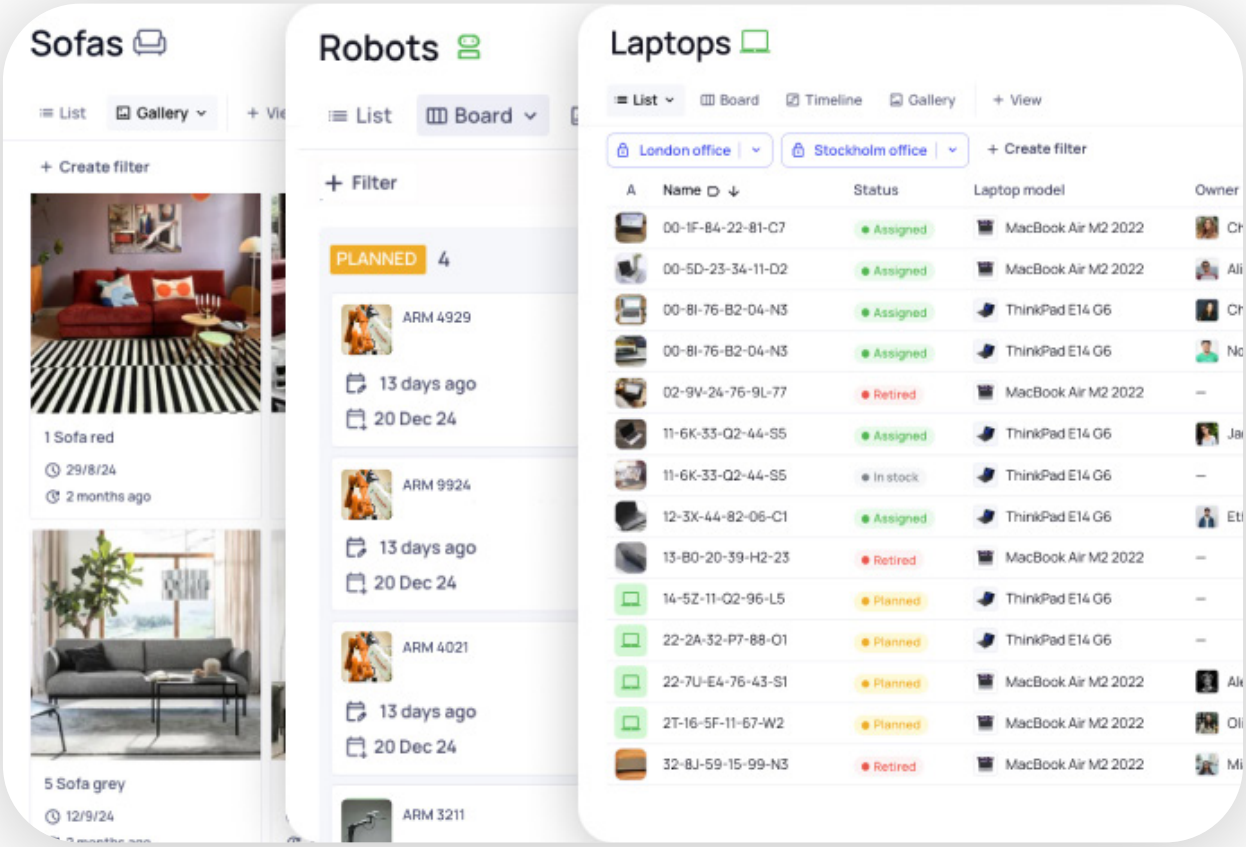
The demand for customisation and flexibility

One of the most notable examples of this trend is in asset management. IT Asset Management (ITAM) systems often follow ITIL best practices, which provide a standardised approach that can work well for many organisations.

However, these systems can feel inflexible and limiting for businesses in industries like heavy manufacturing, construction, or other sectors with highly specialised assets. Or, even for organisations that want to track all company assets in the same tool such as those in the charge of an office manager. These organisations may have unique assets (such as machinery, equipment, or vehicles) that need to be tracked in ways that traditional IT asset management tools can't accommodate.

Many of these businesses are looking for ways to simplify their tooling and manage all their physical assets, whether IT-related or not on one unified platform.

Unfortunately, many IT asset management solutions don't support such flexibility, making it challenging for companies to use a single system for a broader set of assets. In these cases, businesses are finding that they either need to work around the limitations of their current tools or explore new platforms that offer more adaptability. Here's how we do it in Starhive:



This demand for flexibility extends beyond asset management. Across all areas of ITSM, organisations are increasingly requesting more tailored solutions that meet their specific needs, whether it's in incident management, change management, or even service desk interface design.

However, many ITSM platforms were created with the more rigid definitions of ITIL v3 in mind and are trying to retroactively provide the flexibility ITIL v4 and ESM requires. This can lead to frustration for businesses with unique requirements, as their processes may not fit neatly into the established moulds of their current ITSM platform.

The shift toward process-driven customisation

As organisations realise the importance of aligning ITSM tools with their internal processes, the focus is shifting from vendor-driven processes to process-driven solutions.

Rather than forcing their practices to adapt to the capabilities of their software, businesses are now demanding that the technology be able to adjust to the processes they've designed.

This development is essential for ensuring that the chosen technology genuinely supports the organisation's needs without forcing unnecessary complexity or deviation from established best practices.

> More and more teams are understanding that it's really helpful to have a technical solution supporting the processes — and that it's not that processes should be done because the tool does 'this' and 'that'. It's the tool that should do what the process needs. This is a really good development."

Eva Rehn

Many businesses start with best practices often derived from frameworks like ITIL or other industry standards because they provide a solid foundation. However, many companies usually find that some of these best practices need to be customised to fit their specific requirements.

> A lot of customers want to start with best practices but then customise them. I think this is a great idea because then you have a good base without creating everything from scratch."

Eva Rehn

By taking this approach, businesses can leverage the benefits of standardisation while maintaining the flexibility to adapt the processes to their particular context. This approach avoids the trap of overcomplicating things by trying to customise everything from the start.

Tips for a more flexible, process-driven approach

Our experts suggest a few key strategies for embracing a more flexible approach driven by your processes' needs rather than the limitations of your chosen platform.

1

Define your requirements first

Before selecting a system or process, defining your specific requirements is crucial without letting vendor capabilities drive the decision. Understand your organisation's pain points and needs, and make sure your chosen solution can support those needs.

Also, avoid being influenced by the vendor's prescribed processes or pre-defined workflows until you've identified the necessary processes.

2

Understand the limitations of your current platform

If your organisation already has an embedded ITSM platform, you may find that it doesn't offer the flexibility you need. In such cases, there may be workarounds or customisation options available that you aren't yet aware of.

Before switching, talk to your vendor to explore any hidden flexibility in your platform and see if it can be tailored to your needs.

3

Prioritise flexibility in your ITSM/ESM platform

If you're just beginning your ITSM or ESM journey, look for solutions that offer customisation options to adapt to your internal processes, rather than trying to fit your practices into a vendor's pre-defined framework.

The ability to mould your ITSM solution to your organisation's specific needs will ensure better adoption, scalability, and long-term success.

4

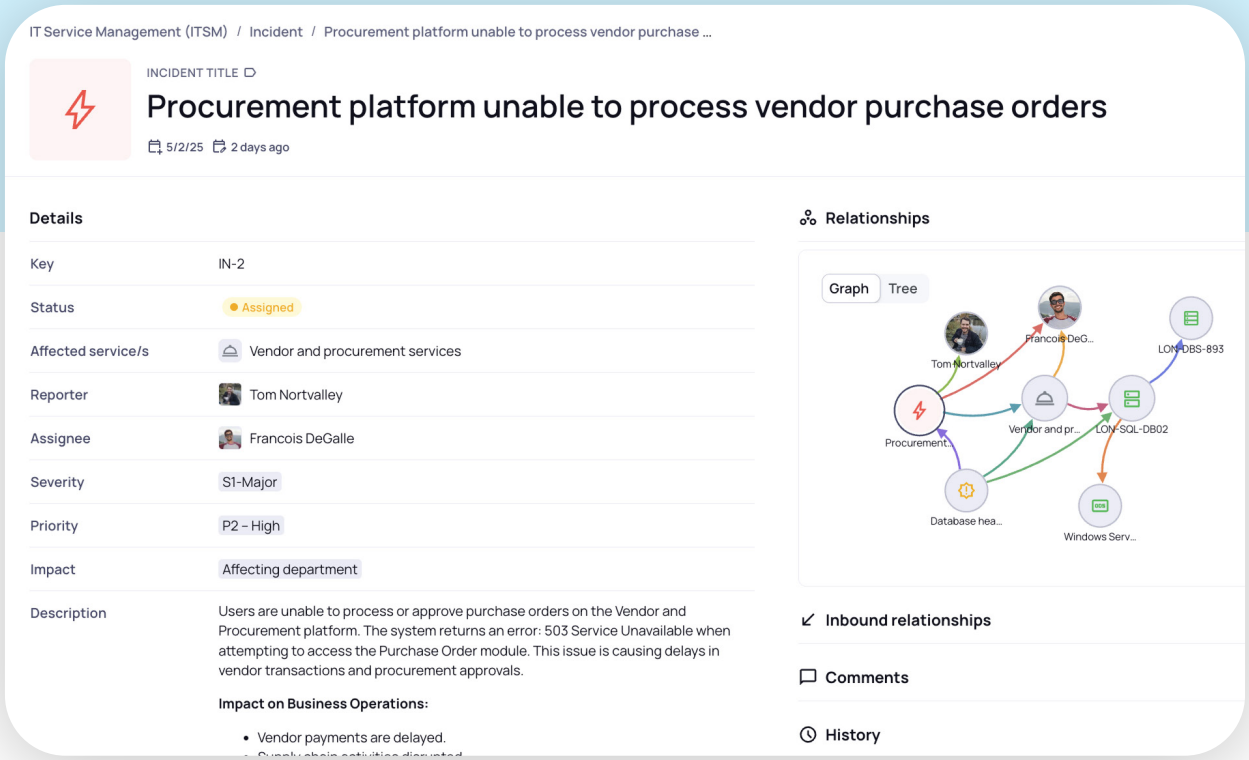
Start with core best practices, then adapt

As you implement your ITSM solution, consider starting with a solid foundation of best practices. This offers proven methods for managing service delivery effectively.

Don't be afraid to modify these practices as you learn what works best for your organisation. Customising processes gradually ensures you don't overcomplicate your workflows but still meet your specific needs.

Summary

- The increasing demand for flexibility in ITSM and ESM processes reflects a broader trend in how organisations approach their technology solutions.
- As businesses move away from rigid, vendor-driven platforms and embrace more customised, process-driven approaches, they're better positioned to address their unique challenges.
- By choosing tools that can adapt to their specific processes and offering the flexibility to modify workflows as needed, organisations can create more effective, efficient service management environments that scale with their evolving needs.
- Flexibility is key to achieving long-term success in asset management and other areas of ITSM and ensuring technology truly supports the processes it was designed to improve.



Trend 4

UI customisation

A growing desire for more in 2025

As companies continue to implement ITSM and ESM solutions, there's a noticeable shift toward a stronger desire for more robust, customisable user interfaces (UIs).

Especially within the ESM space, businesses are no longer satisfied with the basic configuration options that allow them to adjust a few elements or apply brand colours. Today, companies want their portals and systems to fully reflect their brand identity and provide a tailored experience to users. This trend is increasingly critical as organisations realise that a support portal's effectiveness is directly tied to user engagement.

> In the past there have been so many times where we've been tasked to build a service management solution for customers and while we succeeded in meeting the functional requirements, the roll-out got rejected by the customer. Every time it had to do with poor user experience as a result of the ITSM tools used to build the solution. Being able to brand and customise the user experience is not only critical for modern organisations, it's also a prerequisite for user acceptance and adoption. No one wants to eat soup with a dirty fork."

Tommy Nordahl

While your support portal's primary function is to help users resolve issues, its success hinges on the user's willingness to use it. The portal must be welcoming, intuitive, and familiar to ensure users feel confident and comfortable accessing the support they need.

The emotional aspect of this is often overlooked, but it's important to remember that many users turn to support portals during moments of stress — whether they're dealing with a broken laptop, access to critical systems being blocked, or needing urgent legal advice to close a deal.

The last thing they need is an unfamiliar interface that adds to their stress. Instead, when users are greeted by a portal that mirrors the look and feel of the tools they already use in their daily work, they're more likely to engage with it without hesitation.

> Standard service desks are suitable for IT teams because they're familiar with technology, they have a lot of tools and they can adjust. When the wider organisation wants to introduce a tool into their company, this tool should have the look and feel of the company. Nobody wants to use someone else's UI."

Roland Bürk

Branding and beyond

At its core, customising the UI of support portals is about aligning the system with the company's branding and ways of working. This goes far beyond just applying a logo and choosing brand colours.

For a portal to feel like home, every element, from fonts and input field styles to the corner rounding of buttons, must align with the company's visual identity. The goal is to make employees feel comfortable visually and emotionally as they navigate a system they can trust to solve their problems.

A well-branded portal helps create a sense of familiarity, reducing stress, and allowing employees to focus on getting the help they need rather than figuring out how to use a tool they aren't accustomed to.

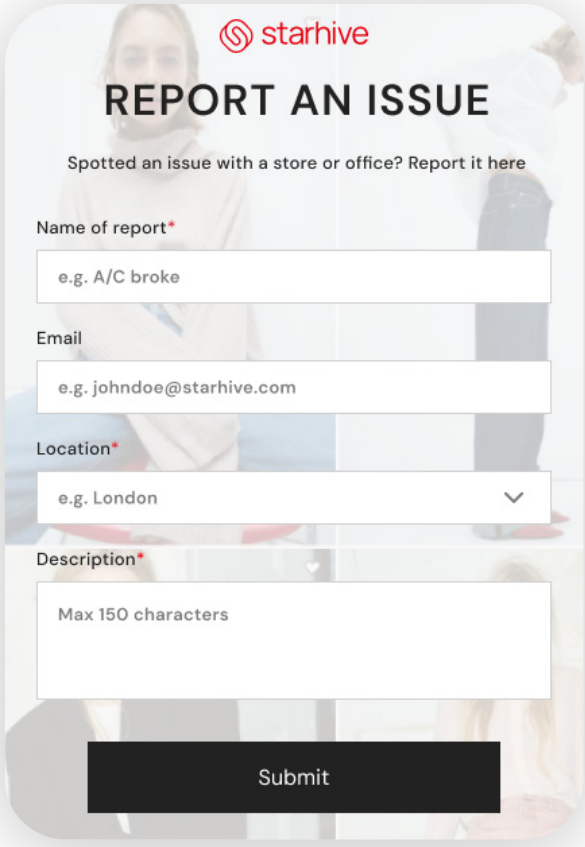
Intuitive design

When creating an intuitive portal, the definition of “intuitive” can vary widely depending on the specific company and its employee base. However, key strategies can make a portal more user-friendly.

For example, using internal naming conventions rather than vendor-specific terms helps employees feel more at ease with the system. Additionally, mirroring the layout of other widely used software tools within the organisation can enhance the portal’s usability.

Unfortunately, many large ITSM/ESM vendors rely on a one-size-fits-all approach, offering limited UI customisation options that often fail to meet businesses’ specific needs.

As a result, more organisations are choosing to either build their own custom solutions or face an uphill battle when it comes to user adoption. This trend is especially prevalent among companies with a strong brand identity that see customisation as key to achieving a seamless user experience.



When the vendor’s platform fails, businesses build their own service management tools to maintain a consistent brand experience and improve adoption rates. But this is time consuming and expensive.

With Starhive, businesses can just custom-build the portal UI and connect it to Starhive. Saving them a huge amount of time and effort as they don’t need to build an entire service management tool from scratch.

See this example for H&M

Tips for customising your UI

1

Maximise customisation within your current ITSM/ESM platform

If you're already using an ITSM/ESM platform, explore its full range of customisation options. Many vendors offer more flexibility than users initially realise, including branding, layout tweaks, and user experience optimisations.

Also, it's always worth checking to see if your platform allows API connections to integrate a custom front-end for an improved user experience like Starhive does.

2

Evaluate helpdesk and portal adoption

A support portal is only effective if employees use it. Low adoption rates can indicate that the UI feels unfamiliar, unhelpful, or unintuitive.

Conduct internal surveys or gather feedback to understand pain points. If adoption is significantly below expectations, it may be time to reassess your platform's suitability.

3

Use internal naming and familiar UI elements

To make portals more intuitive, align them with internal terminology and design standards. Instead of using vendor-specific jargon, use labels and descriptions that match what employees are familiar with.

If your organisation uses specific design elements in other internal software, replicate those in the ITSM portal to create a seamless experience.

4

Consider a more customisable ITSM/ESM solution

On the other hand, if your current platform limits branding and UI customisation and negatively affects user engagement, consider switching to a more flexible solution.

For example, Starhive offers deep UI customisation options, including branding, layout adjustments, and even connecting a custom front-end while still using the vendor's back-end services.

Summary

- Increased demand for fully branded and customisable UIs.
- User experience is key to adoption.
- One-size-fits-all ITSM portals aren't working.
- Branding goes beyond colours.
- Customisation impacts business-wide adoption.
- Workarounds and API integrations may help.
- Organisations should prioritise UI flexibility when selecting ITSM platforms.

Trend 5

Cloud proliferation

Impacting ITSM practices

The rapid shift to cloud-based software and the growing adoption of SaaS tools fundamentally reshape how IT teams manage their software ecosystems. This trend has sparked a divide among system administrators. Some lament the loss of direct control over software environments, while others embrace the reduced burden of maintaining niche, on-premise tools, allowing them to focus on higher-impact initiatives.

> Cloud proliferation is forcing ITSM to become more agile, automated, and service-oriented. Companies failing to adapt will struggle with visibility, governance, and incident resolution in a cloud-first world."

Tommy Nordahl

Regardless of which side of the debate you fall on, one reality is undeniable: IT teams once had firm control over the software used within an organisation, but today, the landscape is more fragmented than ever.

Shadow IT, where employees procure and use unapproved software outside IT's oversight, has become a significant risk, leading to security, compliance, and support challenges.

To control this software sprawl, IT teams need to ensure visibility into cloud-based services, which now form a critical part of business operations. This includes understanding key dependencies, ownership of different tools, access rights, vendor SLAs, and the impact of potential service disruptions.

Without a structured approach to managing cloud-based applications, organisations may face operational inefficiencies, security gaps and an inability to provide effective support.

> "You can't control what someone is entering in a private ChatGPT account, so the main step is to have all the possibilities in your tools so no one will need to go somewhere else. One of the most important things is to have a state-of-the-art tool stack."

Eva Rehn

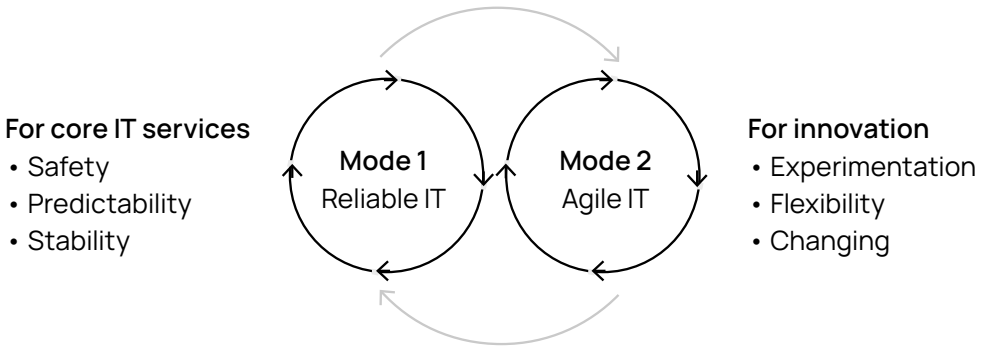
Tips for taking control of your cloud software stack

1 Adopt a bimodal IT strategy for balance

Completely locking down software procurement may seem the safest route, but excessive restrictions often drive employees toward unapproved tools or spreadsheets. A more effective approach is Gartner's bimodal IT strategy, which divides IT into two categories:

- Reliable IT: Focused on stability, security and predictability — this governs your organisation's core IT functions and mission-critical systems.
- Agile IT: Encourages innovation and experimentation, allowing employees to test new tools that could improve workflows. Once these tools prove their value and become business-critical, they can transition into the Reliable IT mode.

Gartner's biomodal approach to IT



2 Map business services and dependencies

Understanding software dependencies is crucial, whether you use a Configuration Management Database (CMDB) or a more lightweight service mapping solution.

This helps IT teams track business services, anticipate the impact of changes, assign responsibility for issue resolution and improve overall service reliability.

Platforms like Starhive offer visual dependency mapping, making this process more intuitive — showing the relationships between assets clearly.

3 Reduce the need for shadow IT by proactively providing key services

As Eva suggests, a prime example here is AI tools. Employees who create their own ChatGPT accounts may unknowingly share sensitive information.

However, by offering a company-provided AI tool IT can ensure the data remains secure while enabling innovation.

4 Empower employees with approved no-code solutions

Tech-savvy employees will inevitably find ways to solve their challenges with new software, so why not provide a controlled environment for them to do so?

Platforms such as Starhive, allow employees to build custom solutions within a secure framework. This gives them flexibility while ensuring IT controls compliance and governance.

Summary

- Cloud and SaaS adoption is changing IT's role and teams have less control over software management as more tools move to the cloud.
- Shadow IT is a growing risk, and employees adopt tools independently, which leads to security, compliance, and support challenges.
- IT needs visibility into cloud software usage, so understanding dependencies, ownership, access rights and vendor SLAs is crucial for effective service management.
- Balancing control and flexibility is key as too many restrictions drive shadow IT, while too much freedom creates security risks.
- Gartner's bimodal approach can help — dividing IT into 'Reliable IT' (stable, core functions) and 'Agile IT' (experimental, innovative solutions) ensures control and flexibility.
- Service mapping is essential. IT teams need a clear picture of business services and their software dependencies, whether that's through a CMDB or a simple dependency map.
- Proactive service offerings reduce risk and discourages employees from using unapproved alternatives.
- No-code platforms can offer a controlled alternative. Allowing employees to build solutions within a secure, IT-managed platform (like Starhive) reduces shadow IT risks while promoting innovation.

Trend 6

User experience and XLAs

Another growing focus area

IT teams are shifting from simply delivering services to ensuring users have a great experience while using them. This user-centric approach fosters better relationships between IT and employees, making users more likely to seek IT support proactively rather than waiting until a problem escalates. For external users, positive service experiences can lead to greater brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

One of the biggest signs of this trend is the rise of Experience Level Agreements (XLAs). Unlike traditional Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which focus on measurable performance metrics like response times and system uptime, XLAs prioritise the quality of the user's overall experience.

An organisation could technically meet all SLAs. But, if users still find the system frustrating or unhelpful, there's a disconnect. This is where XLAs help expose and address experience gaps.

Beyond improving IT services, XLAs also provide IT leaders with tangible proof of the value their teams bring to the business. Instead of just keeping systems running, IT can showcase how their work positively impacts employees and customers.

Examples of XLAs in practice

Helpdesk support

A standard CSAT (Customer Satisfaction) survey might tell you that 50 users were unsatisfied, but it lacks context. An XLA shifts the focus to something that more resembles...

> "90% of employees who report IT issues and complete a CSAT survey rate their experience as satisfied or higher."

This subtle change ensures satisfaction is measured relative to the total number of users.

CRM usability

A traditional SLA might require 99% uptime for a company's CRM system, ensuring it's technically available. However, an XLA would measure user satisfaction using the CRM, aiming for say 85% or higher satisfaction based on periodic user surveys.

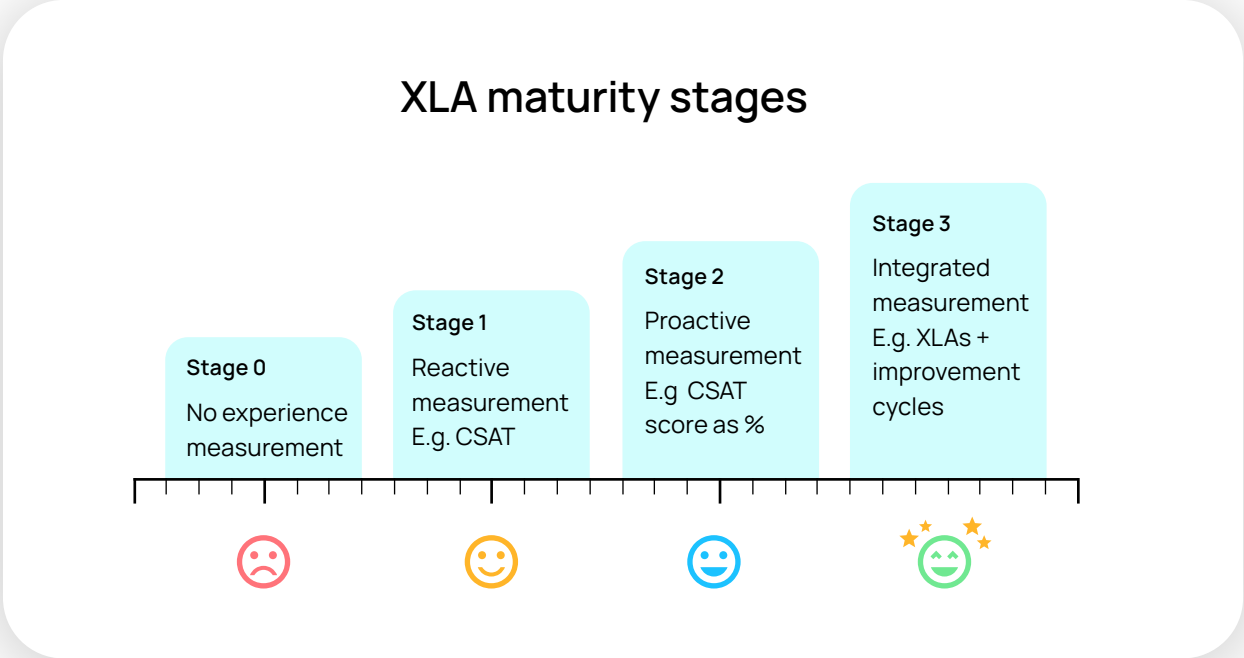
This approach helps identify if the system is providing value or whether improvements need to be made, even if it's technically functioning.

> "I think this is an important trend, but not every organisation has the maturity for XLAs today. However, if you're training your AI model for the service desk, you need to ensure it delivers a great experience, so XLAs will become more critical in the future."

Eva Rehn

Tips for implementing XLAs

XLAs are still a relatively new concept, and not every organisation is ready to implement them right away. That's why our experts recommend the following steps to get started. They've also created the diagram below as a visual reference point for how you might consider your approach.



1 Build a strong foundation for measuring IT performance

If your organisation lacks basic reporting and satisfaction metrics, focus on improving those first. If you're in Stage 0 or even Stage 1, it's wise to start there.

2 Identify one key service where user experience matters most

If you're already satisfied at Stage 1, choose an area where IT works closely with stakeholders (like the helpdesk, for example), a critical software tool, or a commonly used internal portal.

3

Define experience-based metrics

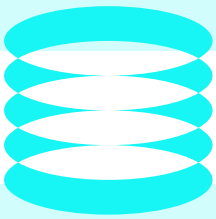
Consider using AI or analytics tools to analyse existing SLAs and suggest XLAs that align with real user challenges.

4

Regularly collect and analyse feedback

XLAs work best with continuous feedback loops, ensuring IT can adapt services based on real user experiences.

Summary



- IT is shifting from service delivery to user experience. A better experience fosters stronger relationships with employees and customers.
- XLAs go beyond SLAs — instead of just tracking technical performance (e.g. uptime), XLAs measure how users actually feel about IT services.
- XLAs expose hidden service issues. Even if SLAs are met, poor user experiences can indicate deeper problems that need addressing.
- Better XLAs help IT prove its value.
- XLAs require IT maturity and organisations need strong measurement foundations before implementing XLAs effectively.
- AI will make XLAs more important. As AI-driven service desks become more common, measuring experience will be crucial to ensure quality service.

Ready to take these insights forward to future-proof your ITSM?

We appreciate that IT teams won't have time to do everything in this guide but we hope you've been left with some inspiration and ideas to try and experiment within some of the trends that interest you.

We look forward to seeing how our industry will evolve over the year to come and explore all innovations that await us, especially with AI.

If you want to learn more about these topics or a flexible, modern ITSM platform, you can book a meeting with us or HiQ.

starhive

Starhive is a flexible and customisable service and asset management solution built for IT teams and beyond.

Get in touch

HiQ

HiQ empowers organizations to thrive in the digital age. We specialize in ITSM, Project Portfolio Management, and Cloud Evolution in Germany and beyond.

Get in touch