

HOW TO CHOOSE ITSM TOOLS



[IT Service Management \(ITSM\)](#) is vital in the day-to-day operations of virtually every business. Originally, the main function of an ITSM tool was to manage the [service desk](#) and handle requests, services, and incidents. Nowadays, ITSM solutions streamline processes throughout the IT department, with many solutions expanding to increasing the efficiency of business operations as a whole. Just like your company's needs, available ITSM services are evolving and changing at a rapid pace.

When looking to adopt a new ITSM tool, take the following steps to ensure your choice is made with complete confidence.

Understand your ITSM needs

The first thing to nail down when beginning the search for a new ITSM provider is what is required to keep your organization running smoothly. With many ITSM tools on the market, where do you start? The primary consideration is what both service delivery and [IT support](#) look like for your business. Ask yourself, "What processes are singular to our operations?"

Start by breaking down daily requirements, recognizing consistent pain points, and identifying processes that could be automated to increase efficiency and improve the user experience. Some areas of needs to consider are:

- [Workflow automations](#)
- Logging of actions and communications

- Reporting
- Notifications
- Incident management
- [Service requests](#)
- [Asset management](#)
- [Security](#)

Many ITSM providers are also entering into the world of [Enterprise Service Management \(ESM\)](#), which applies the strategies of ITSM to other areas of the business, such as HR or production. Take time to consider if this is something that could benefit your organization, now or in the future.

Seek staff feedback

Before you cement your list of required features, seek the opinions of the people who will be using it. Definitely include your IT staff in this process, but also consider creating [a focus group](#) of select employees from other departments. Since they will be the end users of the tool, they are likely to have valuable insights. Send a survey to users asking what works well in your current ITSM system—and what could be improved. Find out what features they might desire in an ideal world. Including employees not only collects useful input from the very people who will use and benefit from the new ITSM system, it also makes them feel valued and [engaged](#).

In fact, once you have narrowed down your choices for a potential ITSM tool, circle back and allow your group to review the choices and engage with any user demos the provider might have. Once again, they may catch something you and your team have missed. You want to be sure that your new service is user friendly in order to avoid spending money on a tool that users find a way to circumvent out of frustration or a steep learning curve.

Distinguish wants from needs

Choosing a new ITSM tool provides the opportunity to completely redesign what your IT processes look like. Once you have an idea of the needs of your organization and its end users, it's time to prioritize. Before shopping around, it is important to differentiate between what is necessary for the base level of functioning and what features would be great to have, but not essential.

Devise a system that helps you to give weight to certain tasks so you can adequately “grade” a potential tool for how effective it will be within your organization. To do this, you can apply numerical ratings to each task or find a different valuation system that works for you. Don't forget to also anticipate future needs based on the goals and projected growth of the organization.

For example, some solutions utilize what is called a skills matrix when assigning staff to certain requests. IT team members are indexed based on their skill set so that specific types of tasks are targeted to the individual best suited to the job. For some larger teams, this could be an essential feature that saves time, for others it might just be a bonus. The same could be said for HR functionality or other ESM tasks. It is up to you and your team to determine what features would ultimately streamline operations.

Once your list is made, necessary requirements should not be compromised in favor of any bells and whistles. Stay focused and do not fall prey to sales tactics if the features they are peddling do not address your basic needs.

Anticipate integrations

Consideration must be given to how the new ITSM tool will integrate with corporate systems, both now and in the future. If you utilize cloud services, your new tool will need to be able to integrate with a third-party provider as well as be equipped to handle the extra security needed for [cloud computing](#). Research the potential tool's available pre-built integrations. A successful tool must integrate with the network and any software that the organization relies on to run smoothly such as event management platforms, data management systems, etc.

Consider the provider—not just the tool

An ITSM tool's functions and integrations are certainly paramount, but they aren't the only facets to consider. When shopping, you must consider the company you're buying, not just the tool or system. When you adopt a new ITSM tool, you are building a long-term relationship with the provider (vendor). Your contact with them does not end after point-of-sale, so you want to make sure they can go the distance.

Understand the service the vendor provides

Look into their customer service record. Learn exactly how they offer support. Ask for references from existing customers and seek out online reviews. Pay attention to how company representatives, from sales to the service desk, speak to you and about their company. If anything seems off during the sales process, it could signify greater issues once the checks are signed.

Be sure you can answer questions such as:

- How do they assist with changes, both anticipated and unanticipated?
- How poised are they to evolve with the market?
- Does the company offer new ideas and innovations or do they simply optimize your existing processes?

Think about vendor longevity

It is also vital to research the viability of a provider and consider their longevity potential. This is true of both fresh start-ups and longstanding industry players. If a company goes out of business, at best you would be left with an unsupported tool, at worst: no tool at all.

Set your budget

Make sure to map out a concrete budget before you begin your search. When considering a new tool, calculate the [total cost](#) of adoption over the course of 5 years, anticipating potential scenarios that could incur extra costs such as maintenance and potential upgrades.

Look into the specific capabilities offered. Be sure that the features you need are included in the cost plan you are considering. For example, some platforms offer basic reporting functions, but in order to obtain the kind of detail you are looking for, you might need to upgrade or even hire a consultant. Be aware of any extra charges for integrations or customizations—are you prepared for these costs?

BMC for ITSM solutions

Whatever ITSM tool you choose will be integrated into the fabric of your business. If you go into your search with a clear head about what your organization truly needs, you are more likely to find the solution that ultimately enhances your operations.

For more information on IT service management, browse [BMC Blogs Service Management](#), with hundreds of articles on best practices, guidance, and how-to's. Ready for the only end-to-end ITSM and ITOM platform for your company? Explore [BMC Helix](#).