

Is Self-Help Serving Its Purpose?

Part two of a two part series



About the author

The author of this report is SDI's Industry Analyst Ollie O'Donoghue. Ollie is dedicated to providing insightful and practical research to the service desk industry. Ollie's work with a wide range of service teams around the world provides him with ITSM expertise across a variety of business sectors.

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Introduction

For several years, self-help has played an integral role in the support structure of the modern service desk. Despite this, the value that this technology offer is not yet fully recognised. There are common industry challenges associated with self-help that severely impact upon the value that organisations can deliver; for example, the capabilities of an ITSM tool.

The motivations that drive an organisation to implement self-service and self-help technologies vary considerably. Nevertheless, understanding common ground between them is vital to understanding both the industry's perception of these tools and how they gauge return on investment. Part one of this two-part report focused on self-service, and will be used as a point of comparison throughout this report.

This report aims to analyse the motivations of self-help the organisations that implement, understand the challenges this has presented, and what benefits they achieved at the end. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the perceptions of the organisations that are yet to undertake an implementation of self-help, and analyse the challenges that are inhibiting their progress.

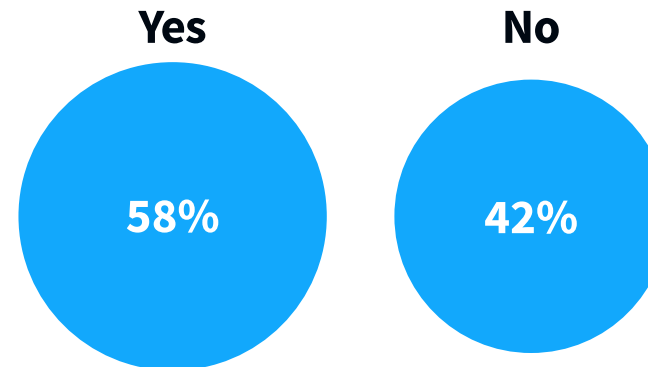
The research survey was circulated to over 25,000 service desk professionals, providing a sample that is reflective of the diverse makeup of the industry. Where possible, the results of this research will be compared and trended against the findings of previous research conducted in 2013.

Who is using self-help?

Offering customers self-help resources – most commonly knowledge articles or automated toolsets – can reduce workloads while boosting customer experience. While in the past self-help offerings have been limited in the enterprise IT space, evidence suggests that it will become a crucial element of a modern and well-rounded support structure. Indeed, the SDI biannual benchmarking report highlights the incremental growth of self-help resource adoption in the industry over the past 10 years.

The first step to understanding the impact of self-help on the service desk industry is by identifying the amount of organisations that offer self-help services at the present time

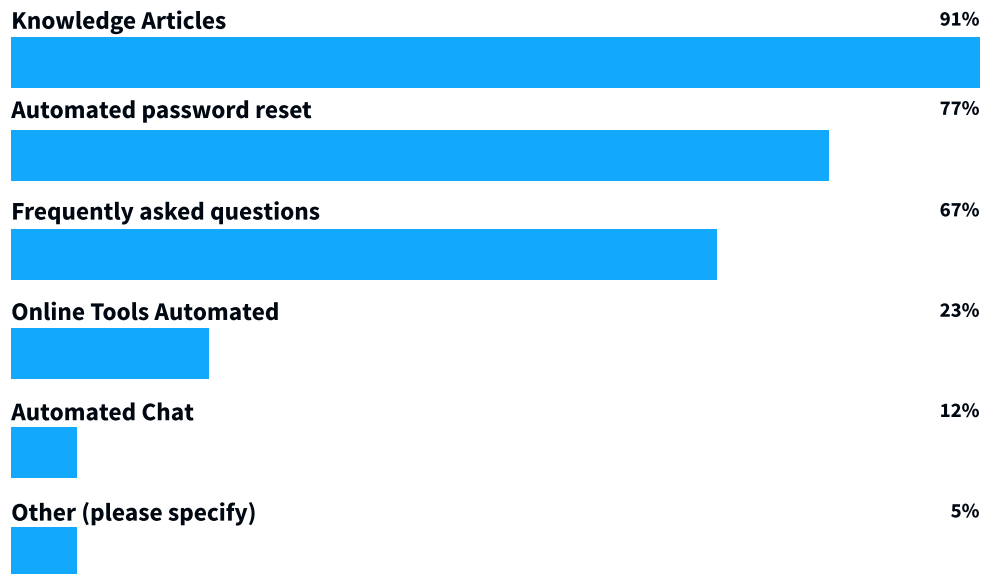
Do you currently offer your customers self-help?



Who is using self-help?

The majority of service and support organisations offer their customers self-help technologies. At 58%, the number of organisations offering self-help is considerable, although this is somewhat less than the amount of organisations offering self-service technologies, which enjoys an adoption rate of 74% in the industry.

What forms of self-help do you offer?



Self-help covers a broad spectrum of content and support tools, so it is vital to understand how the term manifests across different organisations. By far the most common forms of self-help are knowledge articles or a customer-facing knowledge base. Of the 58% of organisations that offer self-help, 91% offer it through knowledge articles.

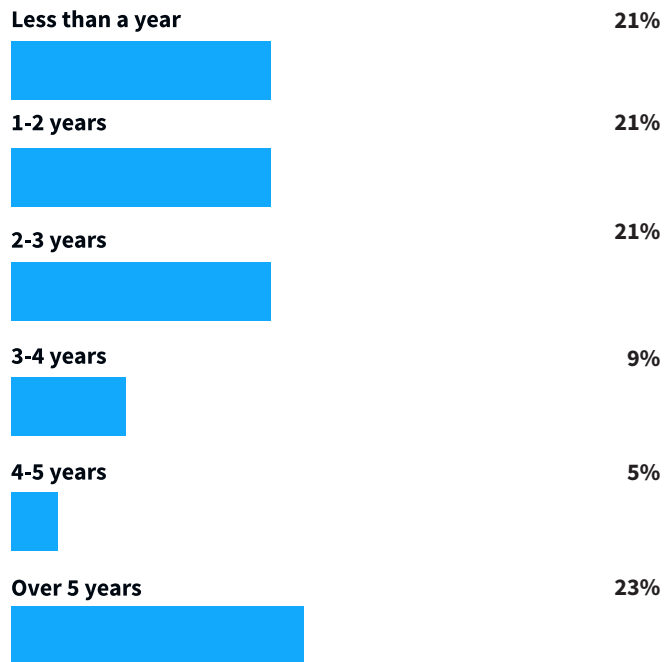
The second most common form, and undoubtedly the capability that offers both service desks and its customers the greatest potential to mitigate low-value repeat interactions, is an automated password tool. 77% of the respondents offer their end users some form of automated password administration support via self-help.

Frequently asked questions as part of a knowledge base are offered by 67% of the industry. The 'other' category captured other forms of self-help including more innovative channels such as e-learning and online video guides.

Notably, 12% of the cohort offer automated chat solutions despite its relative immaturity in the enterprise service and support sector. Currently, there are limited reports of organisations offering the next step in this technology such as Virtual Assistant and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Age of self-help

How long has your self-help offering been in place?

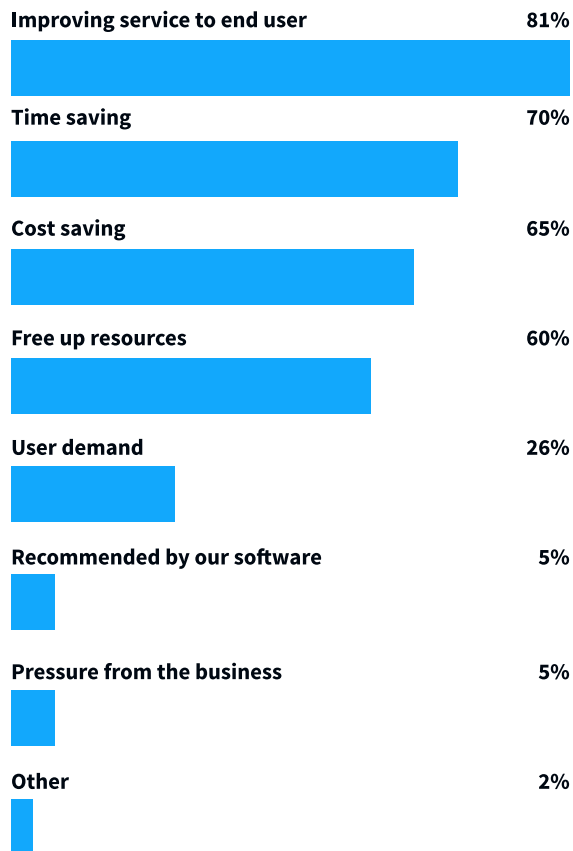


Significantly, over half of self-help offerings are at least two years old. Of these, 23% are older than five years. The age of self-help portals roughly matches that of self-service – covered in the companion report to this research - indicating that these capabilities were either set up at the same time or within a year of each other.

The largest group of respondents implemented their self-help resources over five years ago, emphasising the fact that self-help resources are not necessarily new to the industry. However, organisations in this category are more likely to offer knowledge articles alone, with very few offering some of the more modern resources available. Conversely, organisations that have implemented resources within the last year are more likely to offer a broader range of resources. Perhaps reflecting the increased availability and efficacy of self-help solutions for enterprise IT.

Motivations for implementation

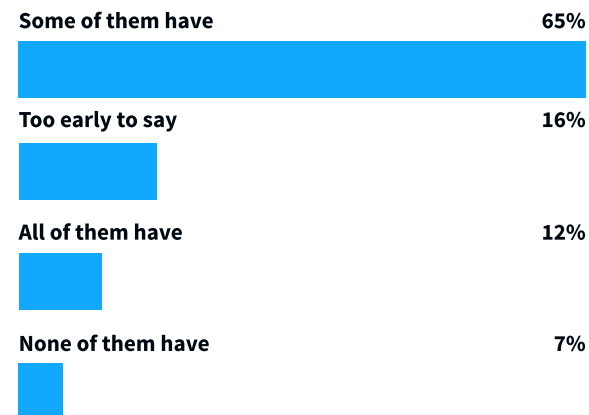
What were the primary motivations for implementing self-help?



Similarly to self-service, the most common motivation for implementing self-help is to improve service. Again, time-saving, cost-saving and maximising resource efficiency make up the next top three motivations, cementing the industries perception of self-help as offering similar benefits to self-service tools.

Demand from customers has been cited by 26% of respondents, potentially limiting the future success of the tools as the same obstacles that inhibited the success of self-service return for this toolset.

On the whole, have these motivations been achieved?

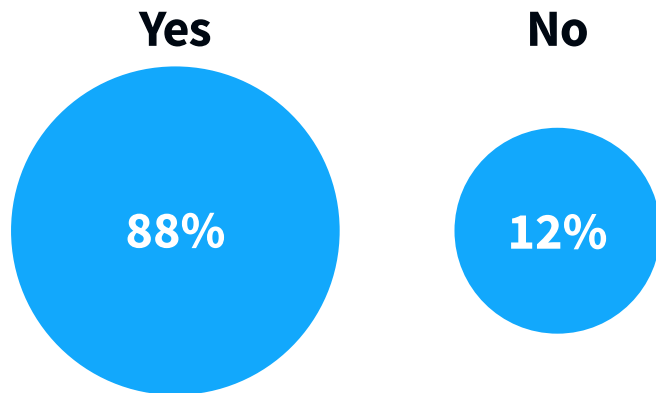


A somewhat less positive response for self-help when compared to self-service with 7% of respondents advising they had met none of their motivations. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents met some of their motivations with just 12% meeting all of them.

Encouragingly, the majority of respondents set out to improve customer experience. While these results show some of them were unable to meet this, and other motivations, the majority were able to realise at least one.

Motivations for implementation

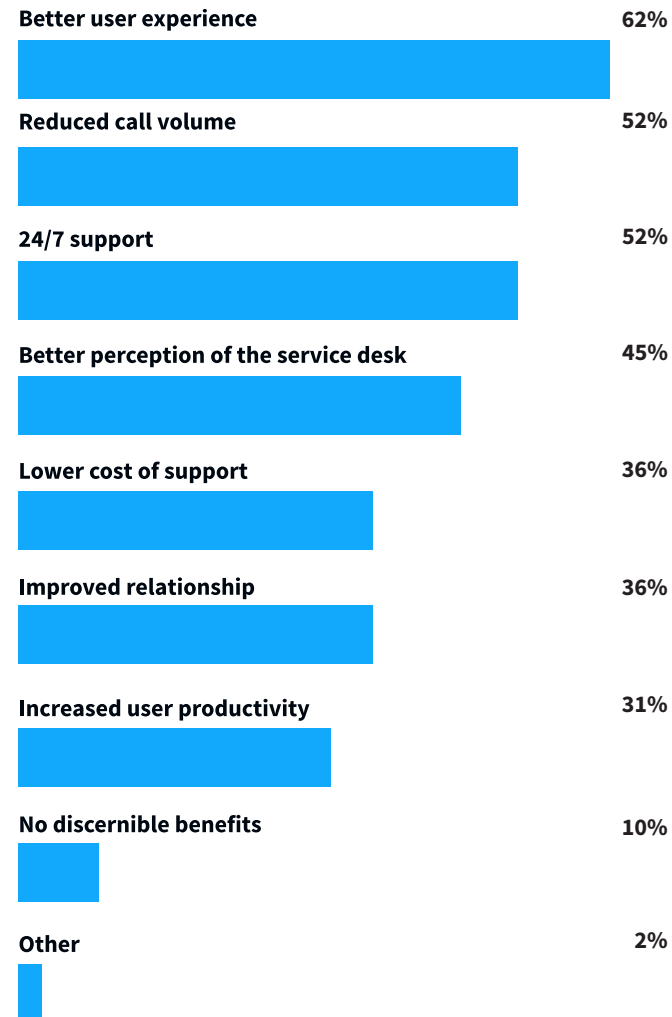
Do users still prefer to call you instead of using self help?



In a similar ratio to the one seen for self-service, the majority of respondents have advised that their customers prefer to contact the service desk directly rather than using self-help. Winning customer loyalty to self-help is largely dependent on the access to materials that deliver the results customers expect. Quick fixes that can quickly build recognisable value for customers is key, whereas providing extensive troubleshooting procedures is likely to drive customers to contact the service desk directly.

Only 12% of organisations currently offer automated chat. Due to its relative immaturity, one could speculate that the use of automated chat will rise, which in could balance out the disproportion of this ratio over time.

What have been the major benefits of self-help?

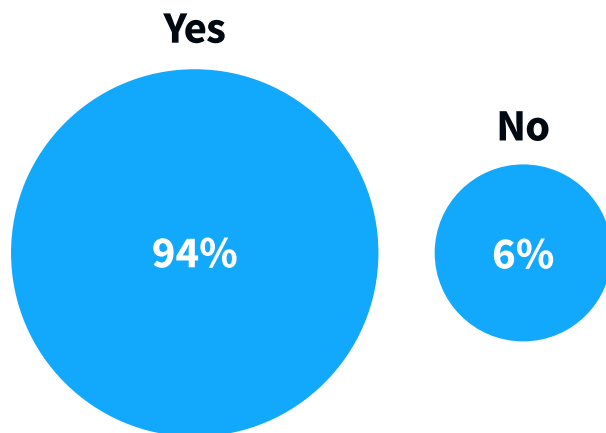


Motivations for implementation

Organisations that have implemented self-help have recognised some interesting benefits. In line with their motivations, many respondents were able to provide a better user experience, lower the cost of support and reduce call volumes. Significantly, one of the most common benefits, cited by 52% of respondents, was the ability to offer support resources around the clock, undoubtedly a contribution to the much broader benefit of improving customer experience.

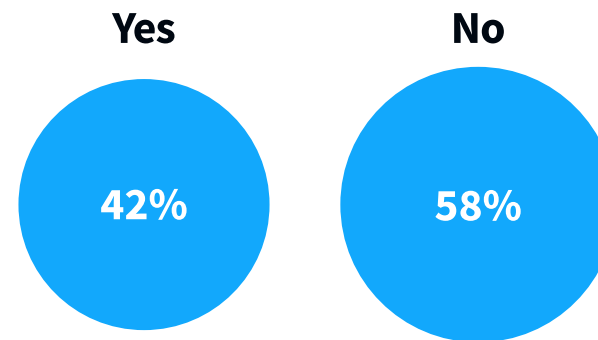
Continuing the theme of a slightly less optimistic approach to self-help when compared to self-service, 10% of respondents advised they had recognised no discernible benefit since implementation.

Do you want to implement self help?



Despite some clear challenges with encouraging customers to adopt self-help support resources, its future seems relatively secure. Of the 42% of organisations that do not offer self-help currently, 94% have ambitions to in the future. The advantages associated with self-help are clearly recognised by the industry, and with benefits such as improved user experience and reduced call volumes at the forefront, it's perhaps unsurprising to see such a large volume of the industry holding ambitions to offer self-help to their customers.

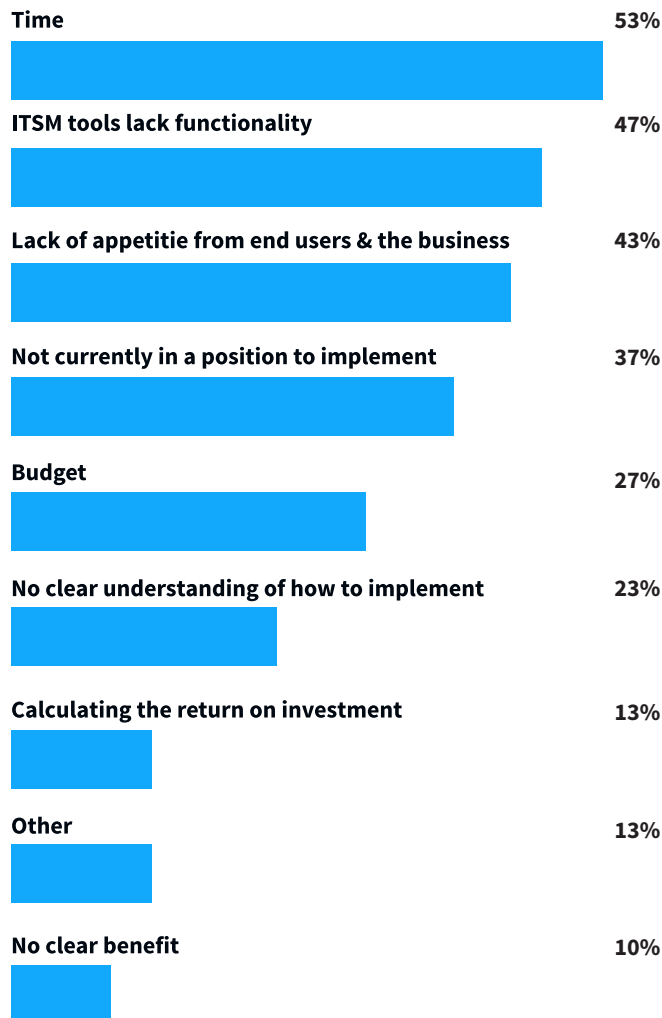
Is there a plan to implement self-help?



Significantly, for the majority of organisations seeking to implement self-help, it is merely an ambition. Only 42% of respondents have formulated a plan to implement self-help in their organisation. Getting self-help right first time is key to ensuring customers have faith in the technology along with its user value and derived benefits; and will continue to use them as more self-help functionality is rolled out. Organisations that seek to implement resources without a clear plan may struggle to recognise the full benefits in the future.

Motivations for implementation

What are the biggest obstacles to implementing self-help in your organisation?



Similarly to the top obstacle noted when reviewing self-service, time features as one of the biggest obstacles service desks face when considering the implementation of self-help technologies. Challenges with the functionality of current ITSM toolsets is cited as an obstacle by 47% of respondents followed closely by a lack of appetite from the business.

As with self-service many of the obstacles faced by practitioners could be remedied through an effective vendor partnership. Obstacles such as lack of functionality with current systems and limited understanding of how to implement such technologies featured in both the self-service and self-help segments. This trend, coupled with the clear demand to implement both technology suites, indicates that even with the right tools and expertise, there is still plenty of room for more development.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, the potential value that self-help can offer enterprise IT is well known. The respondents to this research cited an array of valuable benefits, with many citing multiple benefits. Correspondingly, not only is a significant portion of the industry now offering these resources to customers, but a resounding majority of those that are not have ambitions to do so in the future.

Nevertheless, the barriers and obstacles these organisations will need to overcome to realise the benefits of self-help can be significant. User adoption and preference sits at the forefront of these challenges and, tellingly, many organisations struggle to encourage self-help adoption as their customers prefer to contact the service desk directly. This, and the many other potential barriers to success are undoubtedly the cause of so many organisations struggling to meet all, if any, of the outcomes they set out to achieve.

As industry trends change and new generations enter the enterprise IT user base the demand for self-help and self-service capabilities will undoubtedly increase. It is therefore essential that organisations continue to implement these resources to meet the expectations of the new workforce and continue to drive service improvements.

About Ivanti

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For more information please visit www.ivanti.co.uk

About SDI

The SDI company mission is to inspire service desks to be brilliant. To achieve this mission SDI has developed a set of goals by which it aims to inspire service desks to:

Embrace:

To raise the quality of service delivery by valuing best practice

Engage:

To create an inspiring and engaging customer experience

Invest:

To empower their teams to be inspired, take action and be better

Shine:

To demonstrate and deliver exceptional business value

SDI sets the globally recognised best practice service desk standards that provide clear and measurable benchmarks for service desk operations and professionals. The standards are designed to encourage service desks to embrace and value best practice in order to raise the quality of service delivery.

For more information about SDI please visit

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