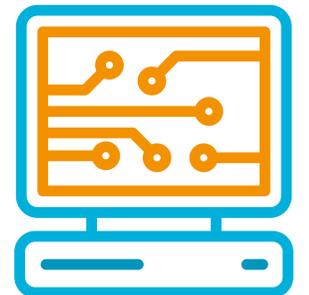
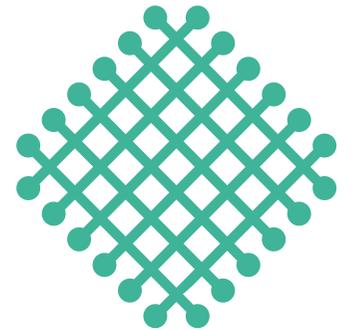
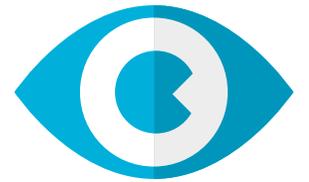
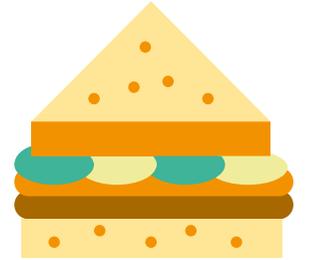
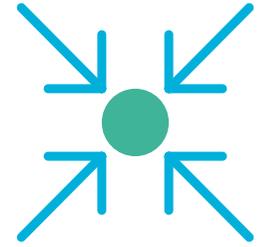


# 5 quick wins for multi-vendor service desks



# 5 quick wins for multi-vendor service desks

Welcome to our eBook on creating a faster and more winning method of managing IT support, in a multi-vendor environment.

We have written this guide to help you decide how best to approach resolve some of the many complexities that come with managing an IT service, which heavily rely on the support of suppliers and out sourced services.

At Service-Flow, we work with IT teams every day who have benefited from the advice in this guide.

So because we love what we do, and we love to see other people succeed at IT, we have shared our top 5 secrets to how IT can:

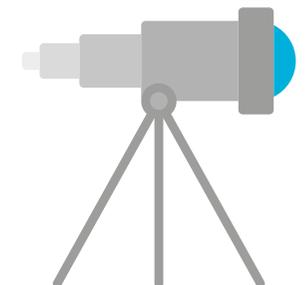
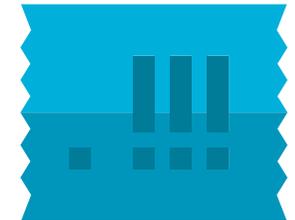
- **Reduce waste**
- **Increase simplicity**
- **Accelerate continual improvement**

## How to use this eBook

Each chapter is short and gets straight to the point. It tells you why this method is important and then how you go about starting work on it and delivering results.

The important thing to remember is that every IT team is different and will experience different challenges. So not all of the methods in this book will work for you. However, the team at Service-Flow have seen inside such a wide range of IT teams, to confidently know that at least one of these methods will help you improve.

Of course if you ever feel like you need some extra help, you can find our contact details on the back page. We will be happy to talk through your IT challenges and see how we can help.



# 1. Focus on the first point of contact

Focusing on what happens to your tickets when they start life in your service desk, is vital to speeding up everything that happens in IT. Let's look at some methods for simplifying your first line and lightening the load on your supplier escalations.

## Why it's important?

When it comes to get things done the quickly and efficiently, first time fixes are your best friend. This is especially true when it comes to large and complex systems of suppliers that tickets are often passed to after they hit your first line.

Reducing the amount of times your tickets have to stop and start on their journey to resolution, is the ultimate secret ingredient to reducing the complexity and waste we see slowing down IT departments every day.

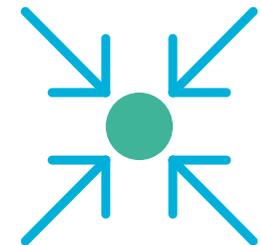
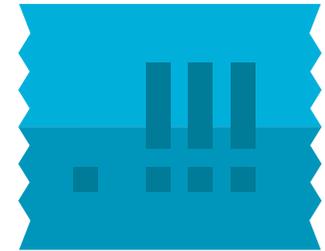
Investing in first time fixes and what then happens to tickets at first point of contact - whether it be through the service desk or self-service - will have a direct result on delivering a faster and simpler IT service all round.

## How do you do it?

Faster fix rates come from two places; better empowered and equipped first line staff and greater levels of automation.

Starting with the people side of things, you want to focus in on your first line and see what knowledge, tools and enablement they could benefit from. The less time the first line are spending on chasing up suppliers, the more time they can spend on fixing! To do this, take a good look at most commonly used routes of supplier escalations and decide what tools you can put in place to either reduce the complexity of, or automate that escalation process.

You also want to start making a cultural shift away from the first line being seen as a dumping ground for easy or boring work. This can be achieved by improving the automation on your customer's side through self-service tools, especially if those tools can self-manage the communication to your suppliers, cutting out the need for first line to escalate manually. Again, the more work tickets can do for themselves, the more time your first line get to spend on the stuff that really matters.



### Pro Tip:

Don't be afraid to question where waste is created during any point of escalation. The answer maybe none, however you never know till you take a good look!

## 2. Go for lunch!

Getting to know your suppliers isn't always easy when you only talk via tickets. So what can you do to quickly build up the relationships you need to get a better level of vendor collaboration?

### Why is it important?

Well lunch is really important as it keeps you going during those long days in the office. But that isn't actually what we're here to talk about. What we really want you to do is find ways of spending more face-to-face time with the people and suppliers who make your IT world go round.

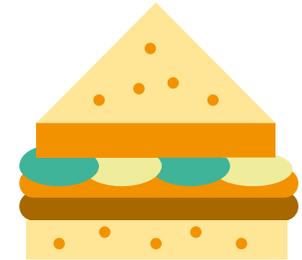
In most support environments there are normally supplier escalations that people dread to take. Your IT staff know that they are going to get difficult questions back from every ticket or worse, just no response at all. So what happens to these tickets? They slow right down, often to the point where the analyst in charge just gives up and pretends the ticket never happened.

### How do you do it?

Look at these sticky tickets. Who are your team fed up with contacting? Maybe it's that supplier that never replies to emails, or maybe it is the outsource team who insist on duplicating the trouble shooting steps you have already taken.

Find out who it is and pick up the phone. Two way communication is vital to getting difficult and complex team work done. People often say "If I only had another me, I would get so much more done". But in reality everyone is different, so you have to learn to work together.

Suppliers are often far more responsive to meeting up and chatting than you might think them to be. They will have their own customer relationship objectives to meet, so handing them an opportunity to fulfil that will be in their best interests. Communication and process problems are also often easier to solve than you think. However, if you don't create the time to explain the problems you are experiencing at a ticket escalation or integration level, nothing will ever happen. So organising the time to meet your supplier for lunch, coffee or catch up to explain where things are not working, the impact it has on our staff and the services your business provides. A good supplier will know how to solve your problems, they just need you tell them what they are.



### Pro tip:

Never order spaghetti on a first date.

## 3. Find and eliminate waste

We often worry about juggling projects and support calls across the various vendors we work with. We like to think we are great multi-taskers. However, the reality is as soon as we put something down to work on something else, we often forget to pick it back up again.

### Why is it important?

Wasted time and energy is the biggest productivity killer of them all. Not only does it delay work getting done but it can be frustrating and demotivating for everyone affected by it.

Most waste is created from a having a too much stopping and starting in your work, which is normally a result of overloading a certain resource or touch point. In IT teams who are supported by multiple vendors, we often see these 'stop-start' issues occurring in bottlenecks between the members of your team who are single points of contact for specific suppliers.

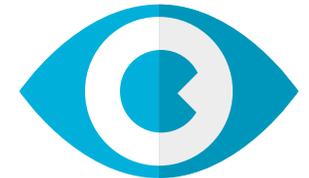
These bottlenecks appear when individuals who act as the main contact for an outsourced service or supplier end up with more tickets than they can handle. This creates backlog of tickets that have effectively been dropped till the person responsible can pick them up again. But as we know, it is much easier to drop something than pick it up.

### How do you do it?

Look for the bottlenecks. It could be a person or a process or system. Essentially it will be where ever you see working going and then stopping for a rest before moving on to a supplier, or coming back to the end customer after the supplier has done their bit.

Observe these areas for a while and work out if it is an issue with volume, complexity or just the general management of that function. Whether it is an automated process or a something more manual, find the person responsible for the success of that supplier interface (it could be you!) and workout what sort of additional support they need to make the work flow more continual.

This might mean providing more head count to physically handle the tickets coming back and forth, or something more fundamental like re-writing the escalation and integration processes. Whatever you find to be the solution, always focus on reducing the risk of allowing movement to stop.



### Pro-tip:

It is sometimes your most efficient and responsive staff who end up with the most to do. But these are the people who in turn try to juggle the most work. Find them and protect their time.

## 4. Build a safety net

It is inevitable that some tickets will fall through the gaps. This can happen for a wide range of reasons. Regardless of why it happens, how can we prepare ourselves to catch them as they fall?

### Why is it important?

Work that falls out of our day-to-day scope has essentially come to a stop and become waste. Waste is the single great killer of productivity, especially when it is waste you can't yet see.

When lost work impacts productivity it can affect customers in a number of ways. The most common manifestation of this impact is frustration through a lack of visibility. This can quickly generate complaints and lack of trust in IT, because if the service desk have lost sight of a ticket, then customer certainly has too.

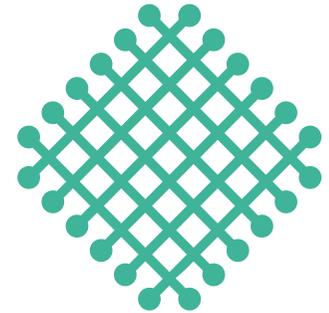
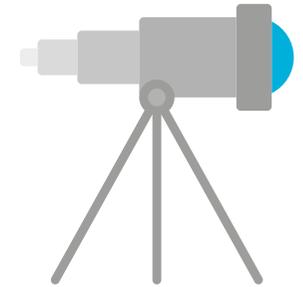
The other risk you are open to, is becoming the root cause of a business wide loss in productivity. Companies with a wide range of IT vendors, often suffer the same fate as any other businesses operating across complex supply chains. Within the many processes and workflows that exist, only one task has to bottleneck, delay or error in order to bring everything to a standstill. Finding the gaps that this work falls into, is an essential step to preventing these risks.

### How do you do it?

You can start to cover some of these gaps in your service desk by creating safety nets for your failing tickets. These safety nets can be as simple as a daily stand-up meeting to discuss difficult work, or as complex as a full service automation.

The first thing you must do is investigate where this is happening in your team and which suppliers present the most delays. Run some basic analyse on your past few months of tickets. Look for escalations that either sat dormant for too long, or were closed and re-opened a number of times. This will suggest a trend in behaviour, where your staff are unsure of a certain escalation process or, a supplier integration that is not performing as you need it to.

Once you have clear view of these tickets, look for what connects them all. Who do the tickets come from, how are they submitted, what systems are they related to and which escalation areas end up fixing them? This will tell you where you need to build your first set of safety nets.



### Pro-tip:

Build nets that help fix problems. Not ones that just support metrics and KPIs.

# 5. Automate, Automate and Automate

When it comes to speed, automation is every IT department's secret weapon. But if that is the case, why do so many of us forget to do it?

## Why is it important?

Automation is about removing the complexity and repetitiveness of your day to day work. Within the context of IT and specifically service desks that work with multiple vendors, automation should focus on simplifying the flow of tickets and support data between you and your various suppliers.

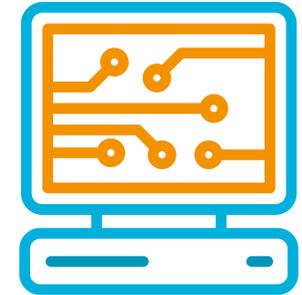
So automation can achieve two things for you. Firstly it does what we have described above, which is to simplify how you already do this, but the second thing is where you start to unlock the real business value of automation. Reducing the human attention your processes require creates more time for you to focus on the larger business problems, which do required a more sophisticated and human touch. This is particularly useful in an environment with a wide variety of vendors, as it gives you back the time to you want to focus on the more strategic factors of those supplier relationships.

## How to do it?

A lot of automation comes down to vision and tools. It also needs some quite challenging thinking around the 'what if we didn't do it like that anymore' mentality.

Naturally, automation can come up against a degree of resistance. This is because people tend to fear that high functioning technology will replace them. Why does a business need a first line service desk, when an automated self-service tool can do their job for them? So it is worth considering that your first challenge with automation will not be a technical one, but cultural. You overcome this issue by selling automation as the enabler to IT spending more time on the work they enjoy doing.

The technical challenge will come from knowing where to start. Automation can be done via a patchwork approach, but this tends to take a lot longer when it comes to creating any kind of business value. A more successful approach is to spend time looking at your systems as a whole and understanding where the manual repetition is occurring. In a multi-vendor environment you might find this comes in form of tasks such as generating daily reports on ticket logs or manual submitting a collection of tickets to single a vendor. These may not always be the simplest of functions to automate, however focusing on removing a time consuming and repetitive task from your team will give them time back to focus on the enjoyable work that creates real value for this business.



### Pro-tip:

When it comes to automation, think big but start small. Have a brave vision of what you want to create, but be prepared to come up against both people and process related challenges along the way.

This eBook was written by the team that run Service-Flow, a SaaS based solution for service integration.

We wrote this guide for you because we regularly work with IT teams to help them reduce waste on the service desk, in order making them a faster team.

The five tips in this guide are based on our most important learnings while carrying out our work. These are methods we use in our work every day to help simplify how IT teams do what they do.

Simplifying what you do is such a vital part of improving, as it help you to focus less on the boring and repetitive tasks of 'business as usual' IT, and focus more on the work you enjoy.

If you would like to learn more about our company and the software we make, please get in touch today. We love to talk about IT!



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Gartner, Cool Vendors in ITSM 2.0,  
Tapati Bandopadhyay, Chris Matchett, 19 April 2016

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## SERVICE-FLOW UNITED KINGDOM

Heron Tower  
110 Bishopsgate  
London  
EC2N 4AY

0207 961 0829  
flow@service-flow.com

## SERVICE-FLOW CORP.

Finland Head Office  
Huopalahdentie 24  
FI-00350 Helsinki, Finland

+358 10 325 4200  
flow@service-flow.com