



# EMA Research Findings on the Roles Automation and AI Play in the Reinvention of ITSM

*EMA recently investigated the inter-relationships between the global demands of digital transformation and advances in automation and AI as they converge on the widening discipline of ITSM. Although potentially game-changing, these advances are not free of challenge. Technological complexity, a functional grasp of capabilities, resource allocation, and simple resistance to change all exert drag on adoption. Yet, all of these factors act in combination to reshape ITSM in its role as a hub of digital transformation and its logical extension, Enterprise Service Management (ESM). Surveying 400 respondents globally (68% C-level, IT VP/Director/Manager) EMA set out to understand how AI/analytics and automation are understood and used in conjunction with ITSM.*

## AI/ANALYTICS

Market confusion complicates research that refers to artificial intelligence (AI). Vendors and practitioners alike often use the term “AI” to cross topics as diverse as virtual agents, bot-like automation, machine learning, and big data lakes. In response to the open-ended question, “When you think of AI, what comes to mind?” the top ten answers, in order, were:

1. Machine learning
2. Big data
3. AI bots
4. Integrated automation
5. Virtual agents
6. Business-specific performance analytics
7. Predictive analytics
8. AIOps
9. Behavioral analytics
10. Asset and cost optimization analytics

Machine learning, big data, and AI bots held mind share, but when it came to actual AI/analytic deployments, shared AIOps, incident response analytics, and governance-related analytics led.

When asked about the drivers for taking up critical analytics deployments, cost savings across and beyond IT led the charge, followed by operational and OpEx efficiencies. Regarding actual benefits achieved there was a similar pattern, with improved IT operational efficiencies and cost savings across IT coming in as the two benefits achieved. In third place, EMA saw improved IT-to-business alignment, while improved support for IoT moved up to fourth place.

The obstacles to AI/analytics deployments represented a mix of organizational and product-related issues. Product-related challenges, such as product complexity/cost and training the machine learning/AI capabilities, were matched by the organizational challenges of resistance to change and conflicts within IT. Not surprisingly, the top priorities for integration with AI/analytics capabilities were automation solutions and monitoring tools, followed by a close pack of asset, security, incident response, and cloud management solutions.

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## AUTOMATION

If AI/analytics are the brains of ITSM's advances, automation is the brawn. One provides insight and the other takes action. The power comes in their seamless combination. In fact, the combination of AI/analytics and automation correlated strongly with success in both arenas when compared with the respondents' average.

When asked to rate the priority of combining automation with AI/analytics, 85% rated it as an “extremely high” or “high” priority, with only 13% judging it as a second-tier priority.

Asked to name the top automation priorities, respondents chose:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. IT process automation/runbook      | 6. Cross-IT change management                                |
| 2. Automation in support of IoT       | 7. Service request management                                |
| 3. Workflow automation with social IT | 8. SecOps/security-related automation                        |
| 4. Incident resolution                | 9. Enterprise service management (ESM)                       |
| 5. Alert-driven notification          | 10. Configuration management and infrastructure provisioning |

Taking the next step, when asked about allowing AI/analytics insights to directly drive automated actions, respondents skewed toward more advanced levels of automation adoption, with almost half enabling most of the possible automated actions with options for human override.

The top benefits realized from automation investments paralleled those of AI/analytics, with cost savings across IT and improvements in IT operational efficiencies, end-user/customer satisfaction, and quality of delivered services as the leaders.

The list of obstacles to automation balance a range of issues that are related to technology (lack of integration with current tools), resources (cost/budgeting issues), culture and processes (resistance to change and conflict), and training/skillsets. Product costs and complexity span resource, technology, and organizational concerns. However, as with AI/analytics, respondents soundly endorse their investments as producing both quantifiable and organizational benefits to the business.

## THE POWER OF “BOTH”

EMA examined the responses of those who were *extremely successful* in both AI/analytics and automation. As a group, these respondents were more likely to:

- Show ITSM budget growth above 50%
- Have executive oversight with CIO-level involvement
- Support more service management processes and more strategic initiatives
- Have more ITSM-related technologies deployed
- Be more advanced in their level of automation
- Show more benefits from their AI/analytics adoptions
- Be more diverse in their use of AI bots
- Be more progressed in their ESM deployments

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This commonality suggests that ITSM is evolving as a whole, rather than in a piecemeal fashion, toward a more analytic/automated future. Many ITSM teams are using progressive adoption of AI/ analytics and automation technologies, with overall strongly positive outcomes:

- ✓ Fifty-five percent of respondents viewed ITSM as *substantially growing in importance*, 31% viewed ITSM as *somewhat growing in importance*, and 12% viewed it as *staying the same*. Only 2% saw ITSM as *declining in importance*.
- ✓ Putting budget behind opinion, most organizations report ITSM budget increases between 10% and as much as 75%, with the majority between 10% and 50%. Only a handful reported a decrease, and 10% staying the same.

Asked to offer their best advice for moving forward with AI/analytics initiatives resulted in a three-way tie for the top recommendation:

- Educate users ahead of time
- Evaluate technologies with due diligence based on your unique environment and needs
- Be prepared for changes in how your team works and understand how process-related initiatives impact the organization

## ENTERPRISE SERVICE MANAGEMENT (ESM): THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP FOR ITSM

EMA research clearly shows ESM at work from ITSM platforms and organizations. Utilizing the people, processes, and technologies already in place, almost all of the respondents are providing non-IT services to the enterprise. Most provide many such services, averaging four or more areas ranging from online training, facilities management, and human resources to data center utilities and physical security.

There are many common-sense benefits that accompany effective ESM initiatives, but EMA asked respondents to identify the impacts that are measurable. Increased budget for ITSM led the list, followed closely by improved customer satisfaction (CSAT) and improved employee satisfaction (ESAT) in a near third place.

One of the most compelling benefits of ESM is its potential to impact the organization across functions. When EMA asked, “To date, what has the impact of supporting ESM been on ITSM and IT in terms of IT’s relationship to the business?” the response was overwhelmingly positive. One-third viewed ESM’s impact as “transformational,” with 52% of IT executives making this choice.

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## EMA CONCLUSIONS

ITSM is a clear winner in this time of digital transformation. Automation, AI, and analytics are increasingly employed to cross-functional silos with workflows and intelligence that improve cost and operational efficiencies within and beyond IT. The more boundaries are crossed, the more critical the need for a centralized point of contact and control becomes. That point is ITSM.

ESM and IoT alike exploit ITSM technologies and advances in automation, AI, and analytics to redefine ITSM itself. All indications are that this process will be an ongoing work of continual reinvention and improvement. Success breeds expansion, and expansion breeds success.

Organizations that successfully employ automation reap immediate benefits that provoke an appetite for more applications of automation. Use breeds trust in the results and trust breeds use...and so the cycle goes. Meeting this growing demand, the ITSM organism—platform, processes, technologies, organization, and team—will need to remain proactively flexible in a state of constant reinvention.

## ABOUT IVANTI

“Automation, AI, and Analytics: Reinventing ITSM” was a vendor-neutral, independent research project conducted by EMA to determine the role advanced technologies are playing in shaping ITSM today and moving forward. Ivanti ([ivanti.com](http://ivanti.com)) was one of the sponsors who made this EMA research possible. In addition to its service management offering, Ivanti provides a full range of asset, security, and identity management, as well as endpoint and workspace management solutions, along with the Ivanti Cloud, enabling enterprises to realize the power of unified IT.

## About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help EMA's clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals, and IT vendors at [www.enterprisemanagement.com](http://www.enterprisemanagement.com) or [blog.enterprisemanagement.com](http://blog.enterprisemanagement.com). You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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