Keeping Up with the Trends: How Optimized Help Desks Can Create Competitive Advantage

Traditional corporate technology help desks are a thing of the past. In A&M's experience, highly manual and reactive legacy models fail to meet the real-time, evolving needs that are critical to modern business success.

Many businesses fail to realize that technology is no longer a back-office function. It is a strategic enabler and value creator, especially for help desks. Every millisecond of latency in access requests and data flow can influence customer satisfaction and desired enterprise outcomes.

Outsourcing help desks can reduce costs and enhance efficiency, but it could also pose barriers to technology enablement and expose companies to security risks. Insourcing, as an alternative, offers an opportunity to transform this traditionally reactive function into a strategic, AI-powered command center that is intelligent, anticipatory, and aligned with the pace, precision, and regulatory rigor of business operations.

Leveraging AI in help desks allows companies to reimagine the function and optimize how support is delivered. Three key considerations can turn the support function into a center for value creation and realize a competitive advantage:

- Right sourcing help desks

- Capturing the benefits of AI and technology

- Exploring the "art of the possible"

Beyond Outsourcing and Insourcing: The Case for Right Sourcing

The same logic that drove firms like General Motors, Santander, and Bouygues Telecom to reclaim core IT functions now applies to companies seeking to sustain a competitive advantage. Outsourcing is no longer a monolithic solution; although it may work well for certain functions and businesses, it is not always the best answer. And the same goes for insourcing.

Instead of outsourcing or insourcing, companies need to focus on right sourcing.

The right-sourcing model replaces purely outsourced help desk services with a curated mix that insources high-value, high-risk functions and employs cloud or managed services for commoditized workloads.

Both outsourcing and insourcing provide advantages and challenges that make them suitable for certain scenarios. For example, the Tier 3 help desk function, which handles the most complex issues, may require the expertise that insourcing provides. However, costs can be minimized by outsourcing Tier 1 help desk functions that receive large quantities of high-volume, routine requests.

In a nutshell:

1. **Outsourcing:** Boosts cost efficiency and enables scaling but provides less control and security. It also doesn't require industry knowledge as a "must-have."

2. **Insourcing:** May provide more control and security at a higher cost level and less scale. It ensures industry knowledge and a unified IT structure, providing greater control of governance and execution.

3. **Right sourcing:** Going above and beyond these two approaches, right sourcing considers the best that both have to offer. It provides a customized solution, unique to each business, that leverages AI technology to deliver measurable impact in five dimensions:

    •   **Speed:** Minimizing latency and disruption through real-time observability, predictive routing, and proactive monitoring

    •   **Control:** Reducing vendor dependency by internally owning Tier 1–3 help desks and escalation chains

    •   **Resilience:** Ensuring business continuity and preventing data loss through highly available, verified recovery, and automated failover capabilities, switching to a standby system if necessary

    •   **Compliance:** Satisfying regulatory mandates regarding data via immutable logs, zero-trust access, and AI-driven evidence capture

    •   **Experience:** Delivering high-grade responsiveness and context by implementing an AI concierge for Tier 0 (self-service) issues and routing to humans only when necessary

The right-sourcing model integrates AI-first self-service with human-in-the-loop expertise, delivering a platform that predicts and prevents issues, optimizes operational efficiency, and strengthens governance while maintaining response levels.

But what are the primary benefits of right sourcing for organizations that need highly responsive help desk support? First, it provides a high-performance infrastructure that automates failover and analytics to ensure uninterrupted operations. Right sourcing also enables a "follow-the-sun" model which can support global clients and embed cybersecurity to mitigate threats near real-time. Crucially, AI-enabled right sourcing allows organizations to gain or sustain their competitive advantage and deliver business continuity in a resilient, highly available framework.

Capturing the Benefits of AI and Technology

Within a right-sourcing model, insourcing the help desk is not just about control; it's about capability. An AI-enabled help desk accelerates resolution, reduces downtime, enhances cybersecurity, and embeds regulatory compliance into day-to-day operations. As a result, AI can transform the help desk from a cost center into a strategic differentiator, reflecting the precision, resilience, and human judgment required to run a streamlined business.

In A&M's experience, AI-enabled help desks provide:

•   **AI-supported self-service:** Resolves up to 65% of standard requests, increases deflection rate, and reduces mean time to resolution

•   **Predictive analytics:** Anticipates spikes, predicts failures, and optimizes staffing

•   **Workflow and ticket automation:** Reduces response time by up to 40% and improves service level agreement compliance

•   **AI-driven support:** Resolves repetitive queries by up to 70% and allows for escalation of critical issues with material context to boost efficiency

When implemented properly, a technology-enabled, right-sourced model can deliver measurable gains, such as:

- **Operational efficiency:** Up to 40% faster response time

- **First-contact resolution:** Up to 20-point improvement

- **Mean time to resolution:** Critical priority within zero to four hours and high priority within one to eight hours

- **Customer satisfaction:** Greater than 90% customer satisfaction at maturity

- **Cost efficiency:** Savings of up to $25 per ticket

While the ROI of right sourcing the help desk with AI deployment can be quantifiable and attractive, its true value lies in how it adapts to the unique needs of the enterprise—a crucial step toward success. Here are two key questions to ask leaders who are considering optimizing their help desks:

- What security concerns, such as data residency or a shift to data center models, should be addressed when adopting AI?

- When does it make more sense to insource or outsource, and how does AI influence that decision for different industries?

In this model, AI and automation encourage scale, human expertise ensures trust, and the firm gains a proactive command center that moves at the speed of the enterprise. In other words, it's anticipatory, secure, and fully aligned with the firm's strategic goals.

The AI-enabled right-sourcing model also provides:

- **Privileged access management:** This allows just-in-time elevation, ticket-linked approvals, and session recording.

- **Continuous detection and response for security:** Through continuous monitoring, alerting, and correlation, it improves endpoint detection and response, extends detection and response, and integrates security information and event management.

- **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA):** Security is also enhanced by enforcing MFA and identity controls across all systems.

- **Audit-ready logging:** The system generates immutable and role-based regulatory retention standards, such as those required by the UK's strict General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws.

- **Disaster recovery and business continuity:** "Colocating"[1] AI-enabled help desks provides geographic redundancy, ensuring the continued operation of order and execution management systems during localized outages.[2] This model also allows for simulated outages and ISO 22301 alignment, preparing the business for unforeseen disruptions.

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1. Colocating (or colocation) refers to placing systems, teams, or infrastructure in multiple geographically separate locations to improve resilience, availability, and disaster recovery by reducing dependency on any single site.

2. The Role of Colocation in Disaster Recovery Plans | Secure Your Data

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## Exploring the "Art of the Possible"

An optimized help desk operates as a living system, not a queue. Analysts begin each day with validated systems and pre-checked data feeds. AI-guided self-service portals resolve most requests instantly, while intelligent automation routes high-priority issues to specialized engineers within seconds.

Cybersecurity, compliance, and audit readiness are embedded by design. Every access request is validated via zero-trust authentication, every action is logged for audit, and every endpoint is continuously monitored for anomalies. Human support is reserved for complex, high-touch moments, ensuring fast, empathetic, and context-aware service. In short, a "good" help desk is one that moves at the speed of the enterprise: anticipatory, secure, data-driven, and human-centered.

Below are some typical industry targets to reduce response time for help desk requests. They indicate recovery time targets that an enterprise should ideally aim for, although optimal times may be less aggressive depending on the situation of the business.

Recovery Target

Incident Class	Recovery Priority	Recovery Time Objective (RTO)	Recovery Point Objective (RPO)	Comments
Critical system outage	P1	30 mins	<5 mins	Business continuity required
Systemic error	P2	1 hour	15 mins	Must prevent high impact due to system outages
Connectivity issue	P2	2 hours	30 mins	Critical to restoring remote access
Reporting/data error	P3	4 hours	1 hour	Prevents regulatory reporting impact
Knowledge base update	P4	24 hours	N/A	Supports long-term efficiency

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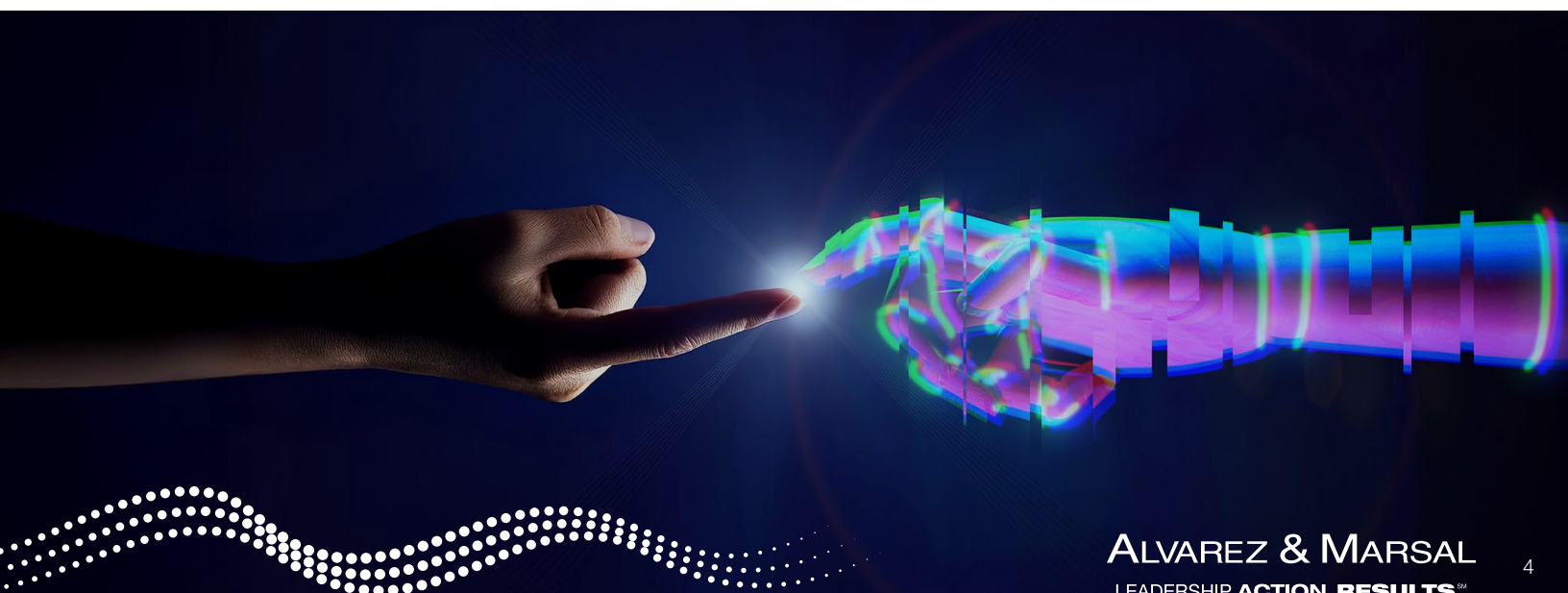
Give Your Help Desk a Competitive Advantage Upgrade

A right-sourced, AI-enabled help desk delivers value to businesses, customers, and investors alike. Automation drives efficiency; people build trust. Insourced models develop analysts with deep system knowledge and enterprise context, enabling greater empathy, speed, and accountability. AI augments human agents with predictive diagnostics and user history, accelerating resolution and elevating overall experience.

The result is a high-touch, low-latency support model where human agency complements AI automation, delivering reliability even for the most critical enterprise operations.

A&M's Approach to Help Desk Right-Sourcing and Modernization

A&M's Digital and Technology Services group, situated within the Corporate Performance Improvement practice, has the experience and tools needed to help businesses with right sourcing and modernizing human-led, AI-enabled help desks. With a wealth of digital and technology expertise, our team can help build the plan and bring tangible value to a range of client situations.

We partner with each of our clients to create innovative, custom-tailored help desk solutions. Our approach and the value drivers will vary depending on the organization's maturity in its help desk right-sourcing journey.

Contact us today to learn how to effectively leverage outsourcing to deliver your desired business outcomes.

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