

4me's one-stop self-service portal redefines enterprise service, boosting ITSM and employee productivity

Recent EMA research, "ESM: the (R)evolution of ITSM" explored the sometimes-profound effect enterprise service management can have on the relationship between IT teams and the business. Given a wide choice of positive responses, fully 28% of IT and business leaders credited ESM as having a transformative impact. Not one respondent was negative. The use of ITSM people, practices, and platforms in support of non-IT functions makes good business sense and has the potential to produce spectacular business results. The lynchpin of those returns is the deceptively simple notion of employee self-service: specifically, a single, unified portal or point of contact for an employee to seek assistance, answers, or actions regardless of the department(s) involved. EMA had a good discussion about 4me's self-service across ITSM, ESM, and SIAM with the Head of Global IT Operations for a global retail company that has roughly 40,000 employees working at over 2,500 locations in more than 30 countries. This paper presents EMA research findings punctuated by the practical, firsthand experience of that IT practitioner with 4me's unified point of self-service for employees.

EMA research consistently shows ITSM growing as a center of service excellence and process innovation over the past 10 years. Budget growth is keeping pace as almost all ITSM teams experience increased influence in their organizations. The fact that ESM has the power to effectively transform the relationship between IT and the business is a piece of good news that points to the need for that transformation. When ITSM groups begin to think seriously about offering self-service, that thinking immediately aligns them with the needs of their users. Done well, self-service will always expand across departments and functions. Typically, IT funds the initiative with chargeback on the rise.

4me client: IT as an internal system got a bad rep—lots of moaning and complaining. So we decided to reimagine ourselves, starting with transparency. Thirty-five countries were each using different tools, but few of them talked to each other. Getting good data wasn't working. It took hours to get reports together, so we decided to focus on new technology for ITSM and the support desk.

Originally, we didn't even think of self-service beyond a tool that the specialists could use—the guys behind the scenes handling the calls. Something to keep people from calling the service desk, keep emails away, and just working in the same way as usual, just a little better. But actually, the more we looked at 4me, the more we saw the ability to do not just IT service desk, but a lot more. We then started looking seriously at shift left to try and move as much data to the end user so they could help solve their own problems.

Then we started thinking, “Oh, wouldn’t it be great if we could just have a single help page for not just IT, but for everyone in the company—for facilities, maybe for operations teams and marketing, for HR and payroll?” IT was the place to kick it off within our company because we have a lot more interaction with the business than any other group. And also, we have the team size to get the funding, whereas HR or facilities are very lean. They have the team size to just do their jobs. So they look to us to see if we can put in a tool to help them.

Humans are not big fans of change at work. Self-service is no exception. EMA research shows that ITSM teams implementing self-service should expect resistance. That obstacle is a compelling reason to make certain the information is accurate and useful, offered in a way that is easy to use and intuitive to learn. ITSM teams should begin with IT self-service, making certain that the vehicle is in rock-solid shape before venturing out into enterprise offerings for HR, facilities, and other non-IT areas. Expect the pushback and anticipate growing demand. Both are certain. EMA research is clear that self-service, when delivered through a single unified portal or point of entry, will predictably become the first choice of support options for employees when given the choice. Instant gratification is a universal crowd-pleaser.

4me client: Originally, we were always going to start with IT in the back of our minds, because the other countries and departments (like HR) used our old system. We’d have to move it all, which was part of the reason we looked for a global system. We took a “one size fits all” big bang approach in February 2019. We turned one system off and turned the other one on and immediately got the usual uproar of, “I can’t believe you turned off email! Why do I have to do anything but send an email?”

After a while, we suddenly saw a massive change in culture. Users began to see their data coming up whenever they wanted to see it. Their tickets were solved faster. And their incidents and requests were being dealt with quicker and better because they filled in the piece of information we needed.

We’re completely transparent. We use 4me to let the end user see exactly where their problems are, who’s dealing with it, exactly what they’re doing with it, and making sure everyone has a single place to come to. That really hit home with other departments inside the company. Then we started getting requests from the business saying, “Can we do this for payroll?” And luckily we’d already been thinking about this.

Success breeds success. When employees are given the ability to go to one place for all of their needs and they get what they need when they go there, they will willingly and regularly return. Having a unified portal into all of the services a company can provide relieves the employee from having to figure out the inner workings of their employer just to do their jobs. Is moving an office location a matter for IT, HR, security, facilities, or maybe all of them? Employee satisfaction and productivity both improve when the employee can make things happen without having to first know what group is responsible for what.

4me client: We deal with food and beverages so it’s not just IT problems, but maybe the price is wrong for a product on a poster, or maybe they have a new campaign that’s missing an asset, or maybe they have to raise a request to fix a problem with the crisp supplier. So what we did was we moved all of that onto 4me. Because everyone was so used to using it for IT they knew exactly how to use the system and we said, “Look, just go here. Instead of clicking on the IT icon, click on facilities, or on operations, or payroll, and you’ll get exactly what you need.”

If someone wants to change their pay slip address or email, get married and change their name, report a broken faucet, request a laptop, it's all in one place. They know exactly how to do it. They just go to the webpage, follow the steps, raise a ticket, maybe phone someone, and bang it's done. So we absolutely make use of the webpage.

And that really turned the tide. We immediately started seeing more requests. Employees were able to see all of their requests for all of the different departments, where they were, how long it was going to take to get it fixed or answered. If it was coming from a third party, they could see that. When it was resolved, they'd see all the notes. All the information was there. And that was—phew!—it actually sold itself within the company. The end users are absolutely requesting this from us now. “How can we get this quicker?” from other departments.

We have users from 20 countries on this portal and every one of them can just go to the same webpage for whatever they need to do. They can see it in their language. We don't have to worry about different kinds of setups for each country.

ESM initiatives are usually driven by ongoing digital transformation and the drive to cut costs and inefficiencies. The unified self-service portal approach checks all the boxes. It is arguably one of the most rewarding ITSM undertakings possible in terms of ROI.

4me client: Just from an IT point of view, we went from a 35% first call fix rate up to a 65% first call fix rate and we put all that very much down to 4me. Because the users could put all the data we needed down at once, not 2 or 3 different conversations.

The reporting side of things—geez—live reporting across the whole of the world for incident and service management just changed everything for all directors. We can go to the CEO, CIO, and directors and they'll ask how many major incidents there were across the world. That's turned an 8-hour job into quite literally we give them a dashboard and a url and they can see for themselves anytime.

And actually, that means that with the cost of 4me not being huge, it means we could take that cost and turn it into a real return on investment. From a business point of view, that was quite difficult to do with just a service management tool. ITSM service desk—that's something you need and you kind of have to pay for it, but it doesn't really return anything. Whereas right now, with 4me, we're seeing time returning big time. Time to do a job, time required not to have to do a job. They're returning lower training costs because we can put all the information and every answer for every single IT problem or HR problem or operations in one place.

And with 4me, it doesn't cost anything extra to add support domains.

The unified self-service portal soon becomes part of the organizational culture. Many enterprises brand their portals with the corporate look and feel as well as a name and personality that turns it into a trusted virtual coworker. This element of cultural adoption and efficiency was clearly demonstrated in 4me's client response to the turbo-pivot time of COVID-19.

4me client: When COVID started, we needed to track and trace employees. Which ones just came back from Texas or vacation, which ones maybe had to self-isolate. Who's sick...Everybody already knew about 4me from IT and HR and operations, so now we just put COVID on there. All they have to do is click COVID and all the latest information and resources come up. All of the Q and As from the company's point of view about safety and where can I get my PPE and hand sanitizer, etc. It was almost intuitive.

We only had to put one message out to the whole of the company: go to the 4me help page. You can come here and look for anything. Suddenly, in the first few days, we had almost 5,000 hits, which I think is pretty big just for questions. Everybody has their own management group and you could see that everyone was just talking with each other saying, “Okay, we need help with this.” It’s all on 4me, so everyone just went there. It gave us a clear and easy way to do daily charting, who is sick, see what part of the business is being impacted. The teams in many of the countries had some control of some things, but headquarters had overall control in one place where needed.

EMA PERSPECTIVE

The unified portal—a single point of entry into an organization’s support and services resources—is perhaps the single most effective step an enterprise can take to positively impact employee satisfaction and productivity. In doing so, support specialists are freed to do more interesting and innovative work. The resultant increase in employee productivity directly affects the bottom line, while increased time for innovation has the potential to deliver long-lasting effects and strategic advances.

A major caveat to this win/win scenario is that information must be kept fresh, accurate, and relevant to the needs and interests of the intended users. AI and ML can certainly help in this regard, but there is no substitute for policies and procedures that regularly care for the knowledge resources.

There are many reasons for organizations to consider 4me. The company was named an EMA Vendor to Watch a few months back, and 4me’s distinctive coupling of ITSM, ESM, and SIAM in one solution set led the list of those reasons. Within that broad and deep range of capabilities are strong bonus points to be considered, such as the unified self-service portal. The ability to easily offer multiple service domain specializations within the same 4me license makes it a cost-effective choice as well.

An intangible point is the company itself. The 4me client featured in this paper said, “They really understand what you’re trying to do. They don’t shy away from it. Their first answer is never ‘It’s going to cost you this much to do it’ but ‘How can we help?’ That’s really quite difficult to get across in a brochure. You have to work with them to understand that.”

“This isn’t just a tool you buy. It’s a change in the way of working that is supported by a company that will help you. They have never breached an SLA. They have a drive and passion to get the best for their customers. They have that level of respect for the people who use their product.”

About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that specializes in going “beyond the surface” to provide deep insight across the full spectrum of IT 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 its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or follow EMA on [Twitter](#).

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