29 Questions to Ask Before You Invest in a SaaS ITSM Solution

For Service & Support Teams That Demand More.

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The advantages of SaaS — Software as a Service — in IT Service Management are many. SaaS removes many of technical barriers that have frustrated both end users and IT departments alike, reducing cost, speeding up implementation and increasing overall ROI.

But differences between SaaS offerings can be massive, and have a huge impact on all three factors. Before you jump into the SaaS fracas, consider asking these 27 key questions of any IT Service Management vendor to ensure that your chosen SaaS solution is set to deliver the greatest possible value.

SOFTWARE

How many versions have been released on their SaaS platform?

- For a key system, you absolutely need a proven product.
- Most software vendors are not used to SaaS development technologies, so it takes a couple of versions to get it right.

How long have their paying customers been using this SaaS product in action?

- It should be years, not months.
- You don't want to take a risk because it will be very visible to your customers if the service is down.

Deployment?

- How long does a typical implementation take?
- Do they have a professional services team or CSM team to support implementation?
- Is implementation included in the cost of the service?
- Can I import the data from my old solution?

Maintenance?

- How much effort is involved to make config changes?
- Will I need help from IT or Software Engineers?

Scalability?

- Does this product have both what I need today, and the immediate future?
- Can it help reduce cost or workload?
- Can I consider this solution for other service teams at my company?
- Can it be used for internal and external support?

Integrations?

- Can this product integrate with my other critical business software?
- Are integrations easy to setup, or do they need a developer?

HIDDEN COSTS

Are there separate upgrade costs?

How often does the vendor release new versions?

Are there additional modules you would have to pay extra for?

Is it a single platform, or do they have multiple editions with different features?

SECURITY

What security certifications does their data centre hold and were they independently assessed?

- Ask about SaS70, SOC, ISO270001 and PCI compliance.

- Certified data centres have physical security measures, fire management and earthquake assessments, as well as formal security incident and disaster recovery procedures.

Where is your data held?

- Does it meet Safe Harbor Data requirements?

- Can they provide more than one data center location?

Does the provider carry out independent security reviews, vulnerability testing and penetration testing?

SATISFACTION

Is the performance of the application consistent, even during peak times?

- The vendor should spell out exact expectations for maintenance, support and availability.

Do they conduct customer satisfaction surveys?

How do their customers rate them on review sites?

COMPANY

How many fee paying (not free) customers already use their SaaS offering in production?

- The delivery of your services cannot be risked on under-proven software.

- The number of paying customers is a good indicator of the quality of service.

What is the customer retention rate over the past 3 years and what is the average customer tenure?

How many references do they have in your industry?

- Important if your industry uses the application in unique ways that might stress a standard implementation in another industry.

What is the company's track record?

- You don't want to find out that the reason the solution was so cheap was because they were a "fair weather start up" — and now you have to re-invest in another product.

- Traditional on-premise software vendors may need to raise their game to retain customers. Established SaaS vendors will already have proven they're up to the task.

- The SaaS model means that the profits are lower initially. This means vendors need to achieve a critical mass before they can become profitable. Investments in support may be sacrificed in the early days to keep costs down until if/when they make it.

How does the company's quality of service rate?

- Ask references about their experiences and the quality of service.

- Call in randomly into their support to see how helpful they are.

TRAINING

How much training is required?

How is training delivered?

DATA

What happens if the vendor folds?

Will you be able to get a copy of your data?

How often and what types of backups are taken?

- Modern SaaS implementations have many customers and huge amounts of data, making 'high availability' more viable for business continuity strategy than redundant sites. Nevertheless, off-site backups are important as a last resort in the event
of something catastrophic such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster.

PLATFORM

Who is their hosting partner?

Is their platform really 'high availability?'

- Explore all the reasons why the service may be unavailable, including unexpected faults as well as planned upgrades.

- A high availability platform should keep running or at least be up again within minutes if a fault occurs.

- The vendor should be able to add customers and expand the system without bringing it down. Explore their expansion process.

- With Tier 1 hosting, high availability is more valuable than redundant sites. This is because of the significant measures they employ at each of their massive
data centers.

What is the published uptime for the service?

- 99.5% is an acceptable level. High premiums paid for anything higher.

- This should meet or exceed your internal uptime requirements.

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As a leading provider of customer service optimization software and solutions for demanding B2B service teams, Vivantio combines the comprehensive power of enterprise-level software with the flexibility of a modern cloud-based solution. The result is an intuitive, flexible, and scalable unified service management platform that empowers businesses to achieve unparalleled service excellence.

Our platform scales to meet the complex business needs of large, multi-site organizations, to optimize workflows across several departments including IT, operations, and customer service. Vivantio is a trusted partner offering cost-effective solutions through flexible licensing.