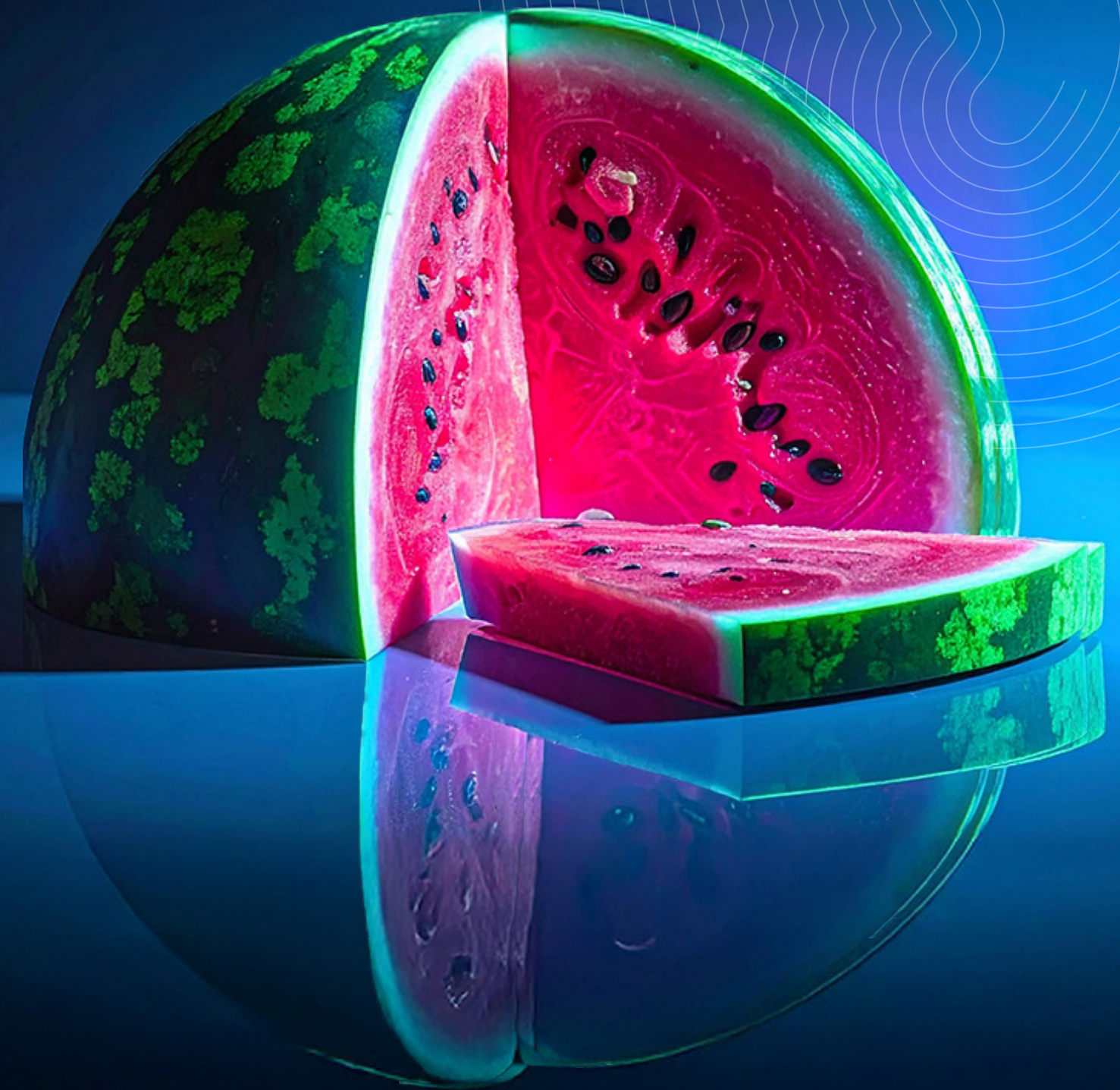




EBOOK

The Watermelon Effect: How To Fix a Technology Challenge Masquerading As a People Problem



For enterprise IT service desks all over the world, the Watermelon Effect is a well-known frustration. SLAs show green. Reports look healthy. But user sentiment tells a different story.

Underneath the surface, inconsistencies, delays, and reactive support spoil the user experience. Traditionally, this has been blamed on people and culture. But in the modern and increasingly complex IT environment, the true reason is more intricate.

Legacy systems, poor incident triage and knowledge management, fragmented tooling, and rigid workflows make it almost impossible to align metrics with outcomes at scale. And ultimately, inefficient processes, together with outdated technology, result in a breakdown in performance and level of service.

AI, automation, and modern platforms offer the only route forward to bridge this gap. These technologies enable IT teams to scale intelligent support without sacrificing quality or user experience.



The result? A human-centric IT approach that addresses these core issues, aligns IT performance with broader business objectives, and enhances the user experience.



This ebook will explore

- The changing nature of the Watermelon Effect in modern enterprises
- The steps to take to embed technology as an enabler of a more efficient, outcome-driven culture
- Where targeted investment in advanced technologies can transform service excellence

Cutting Open the Changing Nature of the Watermelon Effect

Many enterprises still approach the Watermelon Effect through a culture-first lens. But what was once seen solely as a people problem is now a complex mix of cultural and technological issues.

The Root Causes of the Watermelon Effect in Modern Enterprises

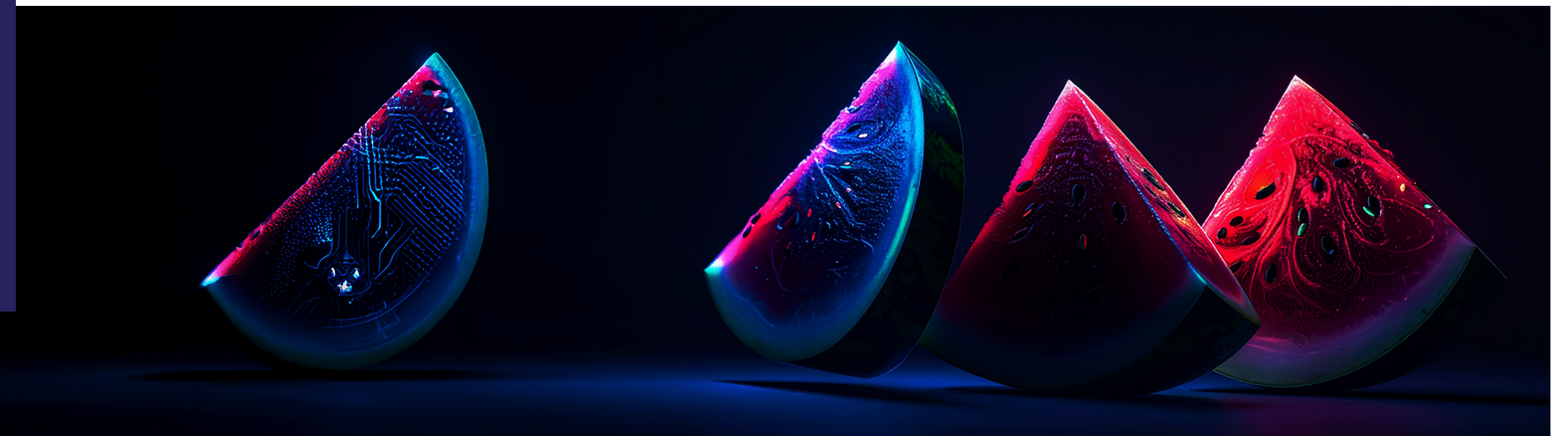
- 1 Siloed tools that don't work at scale
- 2 Fragmented knowledge bases that create inconsistent experiences
- 3 Rigid workflows that foster reactivity
- 4 A narrow metrics-focused outlook that prioritizes SLA compliance over real resolution

Together, these issues prevent service desks from aligning internal performance with external outcomes. They also overburden teams with low-value tasks, leaving users frustrated and support staff overwhelmed.

It's easy to see why, historically, this has been seen as a cultural challenge. Culture drives behavior, and behavior drives results. It rewires behaviors around ownership, accountability, collaboration, empathy, and results.

In modern enterprises, however, culture is unquestionably shaped by the technology IT service desk teams rely on. Legacy technology that isn't fit-for-purpose creates friction, prevents end-to-end visibility that leads to isolated fixes and repeat incidents, and increases agent workload and frustration. Teams, often operating with limited resources, end up chasing SLA targets rather than solving problems effectively. And inefficient workflows force them to prioritize rigid processes over meaningful outcomes.

This makes it nearly impossible for agents and service desks as a whole to effectively resolve IT issues – let alone at scale.



Advanced platforms and technologies, on the other hand, make it exponentially easier to enable the behaviors of successful IT service desks. They empower agents and augment their skills, acting as the springboard for cultural change. Agentic AI and automation, in particular, are emerging as **powerful weapons for service teams to provide self-directed, proactive, and contextual support.**



Agentic AI refers to autonomous, goal-oriented systems that can plan, decide, and act with minimal human input. In IT service desks, it equips intelligent agents to handle complex tasks end-to-end, like diagnosing issues, triggering resolutions, and escalating when needed.



Here's what that looks like practically:



Faster resolution of common tickets such as password resets, software installations, and access requests, reducing ticket volumes and wait times



Context-aware triage and routing, ensuring the right issues reach the right teams, improving first-touch resolution rates



Intelligent, real-time knowledge surfacing to assist agents, reducing the need to search manually and enabling more accurate responses



Proactive issue detection and remediation, identifying potential system outages or errors before users are impacted



Augmented human support, allowing agents to focus on complex, high-value tasks while the AI handles repetitive or procedural ones



Industry Use Cases of Agentic AI in IT Service Desks

In **telecommunications**, AI agents can identify network degradation trends across specific regions and dispatch self-healing protocols or alerts to engineering teams before service impacts escalate.

Meanwhile, in **healthcare**, agents can assist staff by intelligently triaging support requests based on patient impact, and auto-routing them to the right specialist, dramatically improving time-to-resolution.

The Four Steps to Resolve the Watermelon Effect

Turning smart technologies into a strategic enabler requires technological and cultural transformation. Here are four steps, to overcome the Watermelon Effect.

Step 1

Treat Knowledge Management and User Experience Like a Product

Weak knowledge bases, poor interfaces, and inaccessible systems impede fast issue resolution and user satisfaction.

UX usability – driven by efficient, easy-to-use systems – is a top contributor of overall IT experience: **35% of users pinpointed it as a defining factor.**

Actions to Take

- ☐ Centralize your knowledge base in an intuitive platform that integrates with service desk tools
- ☐ Assign clear ownership of knowledge content with regular review cycles
- ☐ Use analytics to identify high-traffic topics and prioritize updates
- ☐ Integrate AI-powered suggestions into workflows to surface relevant information during triage

Seamless Knowledge Management in Action

A leading global e-commerce marketplace had customer service teams that were burdened with fragmented workflows, outdated support tools, and limited access to centralized knowledge resources. Integrating intelligent automation and AI-powered technologies, Sutherland streamlined processes and developed contextual support content including dynamic setup guides, troubleshooting, and FAQs, delivered through an adaptive knowledge base.

The Impact

11%
Uplift in
CX Scores

31%
Improvement in
Customer Effort Scores



Step 2



Prioritize Tool, Process, and Automation Integration

Fragmented tools and unclear procedures cause inefficiencies and delays.

Enterprises that don't leverage AI, for instance, struggle with slower resolution times: **the average MTTR exceeds 30 hours – compared to under 15 hours for those that do use the technology.**

Actions to Take

- ☐ Audit and consolidate ITSM tools, connecting systems via APIs or middleware
- ☐ Standardize core processes with ITIL-aligned practices while allowing flexibility
- ☐ Automate high-volume, repetitive tasks like password resets for quick wins
- ☐ Use low/no-code platforms and Human-in-the-Loop controls for scalable, safe automation

Unified Autonomous ITSM Processes in Action

A global leader in stored energy systems battled with disparate ticketing tools across different regions. To establish a single unified system that provided comprehensive visibility, Sutherland automated the client's ITSM processes, using AI-driven chatbots to streamline workflows and resolutions across a wide range of IT use cases.

The Impact

64%

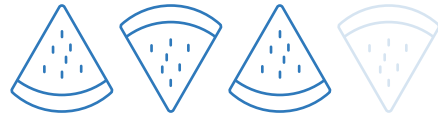
Immediate Automatic
Ticket Resolution

55%

Reduction in
IT Ticket MTTR



Step 3



Shift From a Reactive, Metrics Focus Towards Proactivity

Preventive action is key to reducing escalations and improving service quality.

The quality of IT support continues to serve as the top driver of IT experience, with **47% of users saying it's the most influential factor** in a good or bad experience.

Actions to Take

- ☐ Analyze ticket trends and apply ML-powered anomaly detection for early warnings
- ☐ Build automated alerts, self-healing workflows, and targeted knowledge articles
- ☐ Incorporate root cause analysis into regular reviews to address systemic problems
- ☐ Collect stakeholder feedback to define success metrics that reflect real service quality

AI-Powered Predictive Monitoring in Action

A leading global tech OEM lacked proactive visibility into workstation health across departments and locations. Sutherland developed an AI-powered predictive monitoring application, providing the IT service desk with comprehensive, real-time insights and facilitating remote diagnosis into the health and performance of PCs.

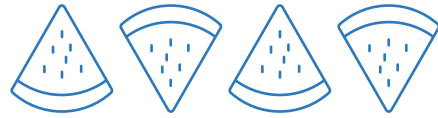
The Impact

70%
Decrease
in Downtime

20%
Increase
in FCR



Step 4



Close Communication Gaps and Optimize Processes

Internal and external communication breakdowns cause delays and dissatisfaction.

Employees in enterprises spend nearly four hours per month on average collaborating with IT – and the way IT communicates with end users has a significant impact on user sentiment. **Transparent and timely communication boosts happiness**, even if issues take longer to resolve.

Actions to Take

- ☐ Standardize communication protocols across channels: chat, email, ticketing systems, and more
- ☐ Provide users with automated updates and gather feedback post-resolution
- ☐ Maintain internal documentation processes and dashboards for agent awareness
- ☐ Use collaboration tools like shared channels to reduce silos across departments

Effective Communication in Action

True transformation will only begin with a human-centric IT approach where technological investment acts as a springboard for autonomous, proactive, and contextual support.

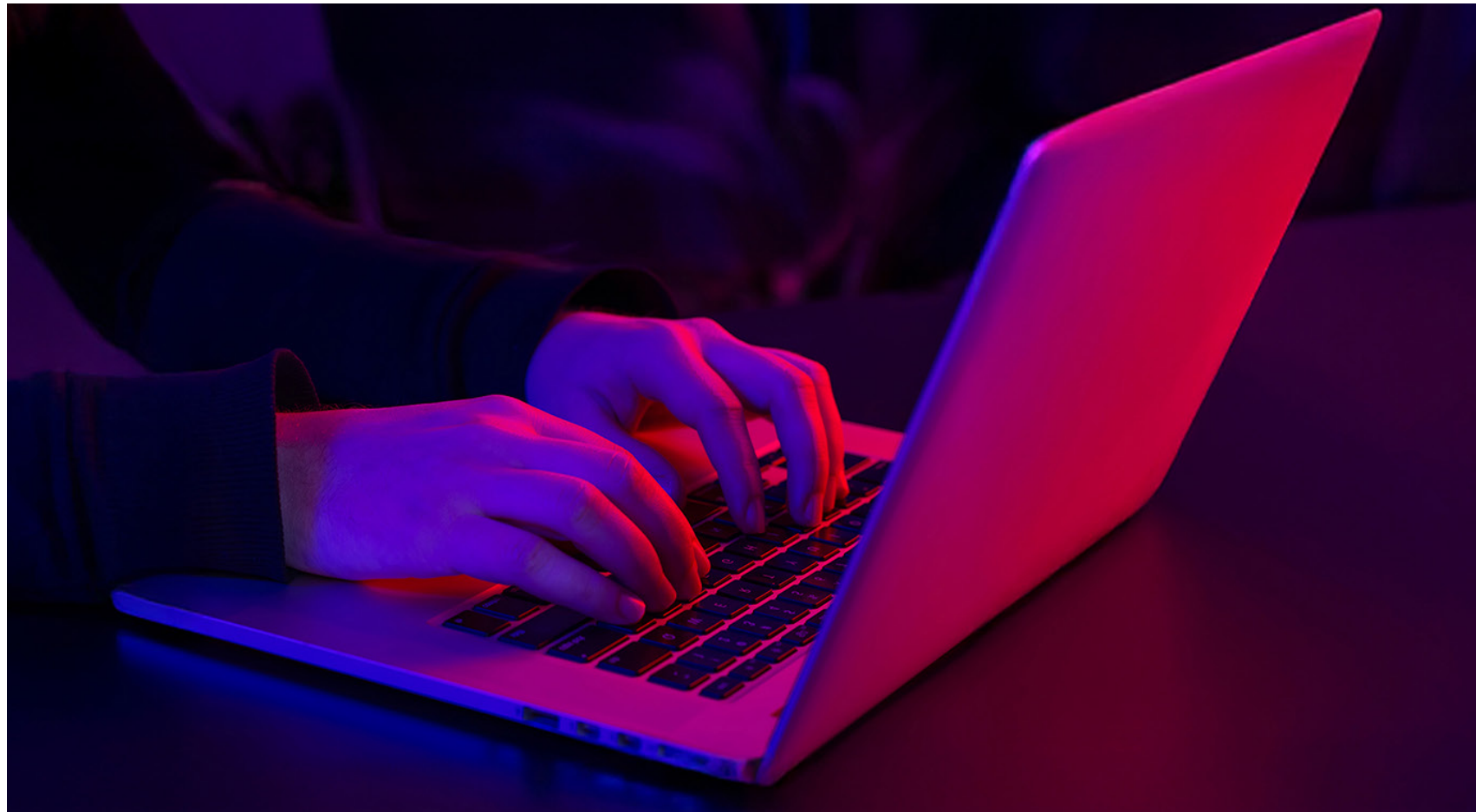


Delivering Digital Outcomes:

The Sutherland Difference

Through a mixture of advanced platforms and Sutherland's Support & Service Hub, we focus on partnering with and enabling enterprises to address core issues and build a modern IT service desk that thrives and consistently delivers.

Our suite of integrated IT service management solutions create a more efficient, outcome-driven service environment.



New, Efficient Tooling

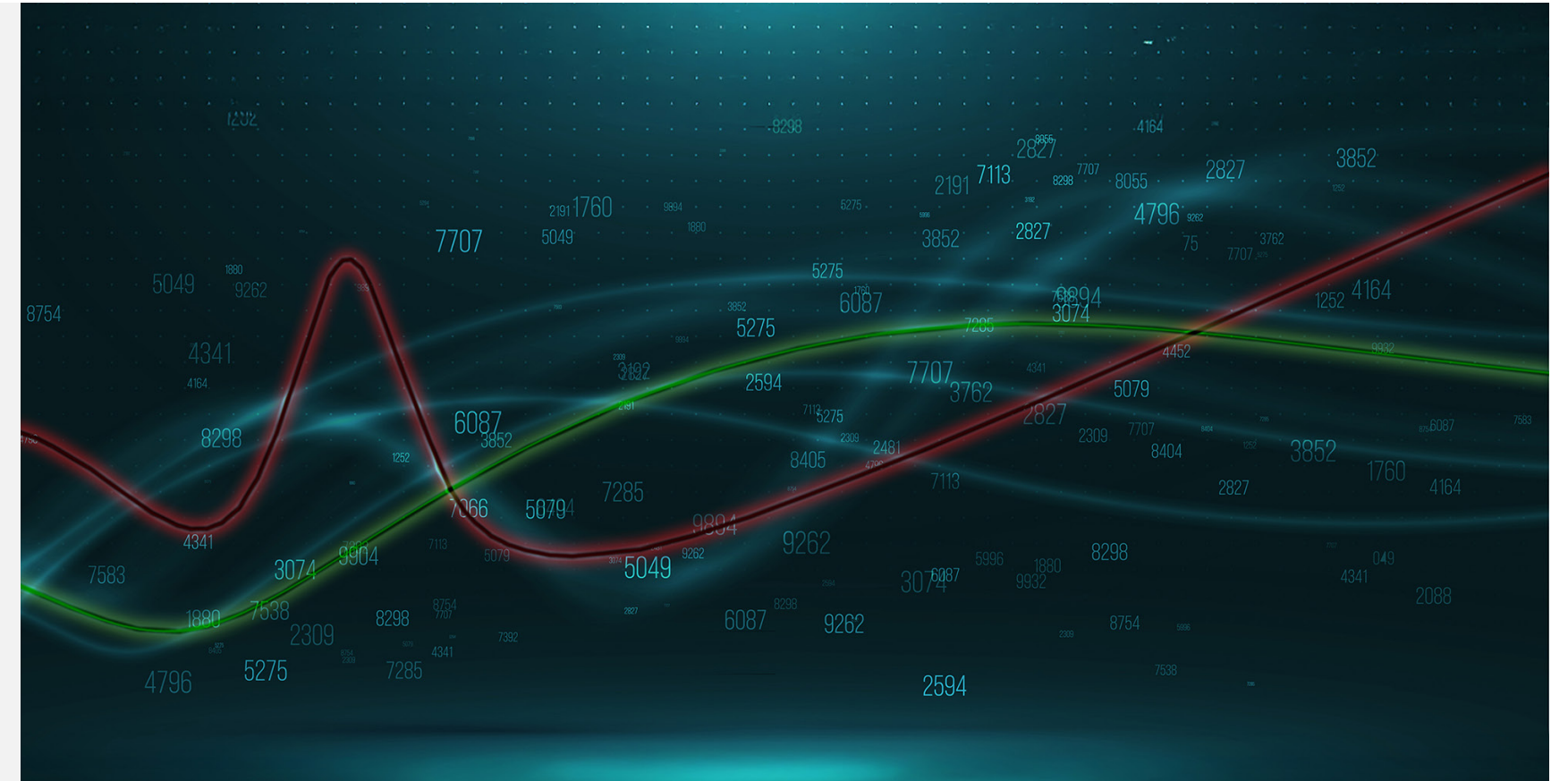
- **Servicenext:** Automating IT tasks and workflows through AI and RPA for reduced ticket volumes and speedier issue resolution
- **Robility®:** Optimizing repetitive IT workflows, handling both structured and unstructured data, to reduce ticket volumes and improve process efficiency

Global Service Support

- **SmartLeap SmartSolve:** Automating over 100 L1 and L2 IT solutions for improved agent performance and reduced handling time
- **Translate.AI®:** Supporting 90+ languages with cloud-based translation services for scaled global service delivery

Intelligent Knowledge Management

- **SmartLeap® HelpTree:** Simplifying knowledge creation with a no-code decision network and generative AI for accurate information retrieval
- **SmartBot:** Enabling proactive PC diagnostics and self-help/self-heal tools that integrate with CRM and knowledge bases to streamline troubleshooting
- **Sentinel AI®:** Protecting remote environments with a five-layer security framework, providing real-time monitoring and safeguarding sensitive data



Predictive Analytics

- **Envision:** Leveraging AI-powered predictive diagnostics and remote end-point monitoring and management to address issues before they impact users
- **CX360®:** Using AI to analyze interactions, unveil trends, predict outcomes, and automate quality audits for improved customer satisfaction and operational efficiency
- **Signals.AI:** Predicting incidents using historical data to prevent escalations and downtime and optimize ITSM processes

Future-Proofing Enterprises

Against The Watermelon Effect

The Watermelon Effect no longer needs to serve as a source of operational stress for enterprise IT service desks.

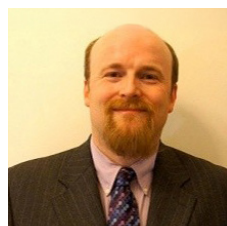
Rooted in outdated technology, siloed tools, rigid workflows, and fragmented knowledge, these challenges are often misattributed to culture alone. By investing in agentic AI, automation, and integrated, user-friendly platforms, enterprises can transition to proactive, intelligent support. This empowers teams, aligns metrics with outcomes, and creates a scalable, human-centric service experience.

Authors



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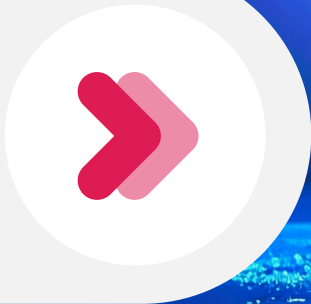
Kristian Booth

Sr. Director, Enterprise Technology Solutions



Sutherland stands as a strategic partner in this transformation journey. By shaping the right culture and deploying cutting-edge technology solutions, we help organizations bridge the gap between cultural ideals and practical execution.

Get in touch today to find out how to transform IT service desk excellence



Artificial Intelligence. Automation. Cloud Engineering. Advanced Analytics. For Enterprises, these are key factors of success. For us, they're our core expertise.

We work with global iconic brands. We bring them a unique value proposition through market-leading technologies and business process excellence. At the heart of it all is Digital Engineering – the foundation that powers rapid innovation and scalable business transformation.

We've created over 200 unique inventions under several patents across AI and other emerging technologies. Leveraging our advanced products and platforms, we drive digital transformation at scale, optimize critical business operations, reinvent experiences and pioneer new solutions, all provided through a seamless “as-a-service” model.

For each company, we provide new keys for their businesses, the people they work with, and the customers they serve. With proven strategies and agile execution, we don't just enable change – we engineer digital outcomes.

