Deloitte.

Next-gen customer support for B2B high tech: An ace up your sleeve

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INTRODUCTION

In the past 12–24 months, the world changed. The global macroeconomic conditions changed. The technology landscape changed. And customer expectations changed. The customer support organization needs to change, too. Customer support needs to move from being focused on break-fix issue resolution to helping companies earn revenue, save costs, and delight customers.

Based on our extensive work with customer support teams for technology companies focused on enterprise software products, high-performing customer support organizations[1] are expanding their purview across three key value drivers and dedicating resources and efforts into building capabilities toward:

Earning revenue
From packaged service and support offerings that maximize revenue potential to influencing product development based on customer feedback and providing proactive services based on predictive needs of the customer that increase loyalty and lead to expansion, customer support is playing an active role in revenue generation.

Saving costs
Support is finding innovative ways using latest technologies such as Generative AI, in-product and service-focused digital capabilities, analytics, and deflection mechanisms, to increase speed of handling cases and scale support provided while saving on costs.

Delighting customers[2]
Support touchpoints are viewed as critical moments that matter and provide technology companies with unique opportunities to deliver personalized, intuitive customer experiences while collecting insights to better understand customers' needs and enhance future experiences with the company, ranging from product development/ enhancement to sales outreach.

While all eyes are on AI, specifically Generative AI, as a panacea to achieving the goals of customer support organizations, there are foundational decisions that support leaders need to make that go beyond technology. The right choices today have the potential to transform the support function into an ace up the sleeve of business-to-business (B2B) technology companies—a key offering differentiator and a competitive advantage, just as critical as the go-to-market and product teams in driving efficient growth and value for organizations.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

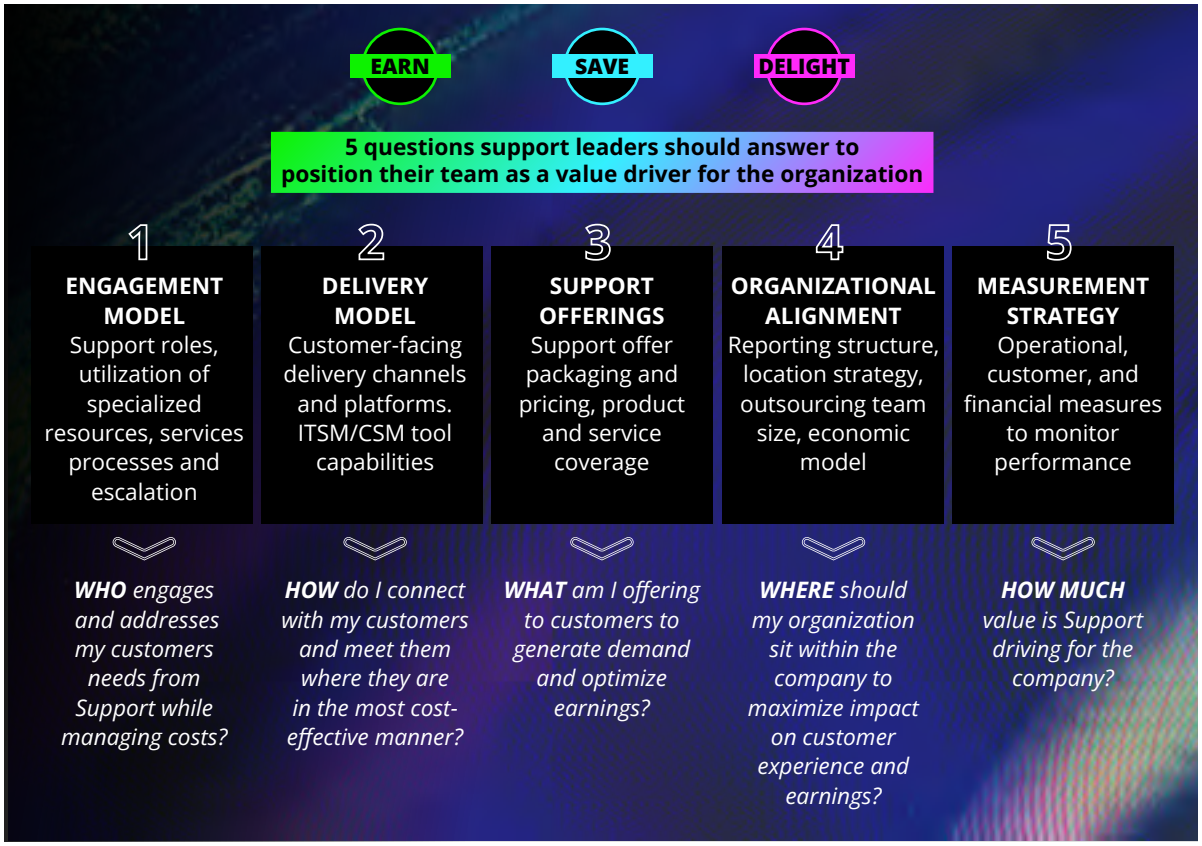
To understand how high-performing support teams differentiate themselves from the rest, Deloitte conducted a two part study to determine how tech support leaders are evolving their organizations. First, we collected qualitative insights through detailed interviews, and then we leveraged a survey to get a broader set of perspectives to validate and quantify our findings. Given the rapidly evolving space and technological advancements such as Generative AI, we then added insights from real-time conversations with subject-matter experts and our clients.

We interviewed 20 support leaders from B2B high-tech companies to understand how they view support's role in driving value for the company and what they believe sets apart the best support organizations. All participants were senior directors or higher in their company's support organization, overseeing a region or the overall support function. They all worked in software and services for companies with global headcounts greater than 2,000. Ninety percent of participants were working for companies that generate revenues greater than $1 billion.

Interview findings were used to inform a survey focused on customer support practices where we received responses from 160 B2B technology support leaders. Nearly 40% of leaders surveyed work for companies that generate revenues greater than $1 billion, and more than half are employed by companies with global headcounts greater than 1,000. As for industry footprint, companies spanned software and services (41%), hardware and semiconductors (41%), and media and telecommunications (18%).

Our survey exposed key areas that support leaders can independently influence to drive value across the enterprise: engagement model, delivery model, support offerings, organizational alignment, and measurement strategy. We found that interviewed leaders are using these areas as levers and answering five essential questions to deliver on the three value drivers of earning revenue, saving costs, and delighting customers.

Insights from the interviews and survey helped us identify the trade-offs support leaders are navigating as they evaluate options related to the five questions depicted in the below graphic.



SUPPORT'S ROLE IN DRIVING VALUE

ENGAGEMENT MODEL: WHO ENGAGES AND ADDRESSES MY CUSTOMERS' NEEDS FROM SUPPORT WHILE MANAGING COSTS?

Most support organizations have an engagement model that clearly establishes how support interacts with customers, how specialized agents are leveraged, and how service requests get escalated. However, are all engagement models made equal? How do engagement models help create "high-performing" teams?

Our study showcased that support leaders are required to do a level of introspection to determine what model the support organization can perform successfully. While there is no "best model" for a support organization, there are five considerations a support leader should evaluate to design a model that meets the needs of its customers and company:

1. Main goal of the support organization
2. Skills and strengths of my current team
3. Volume, complexity, and breadth of cases my team is seeing
4. Teams supporting my organization, including where I have influence
5. Skill levels of end users and extent of self-service options/communities available

While there are many nuances to engagement models, all permutations fall within three primary archetypes, and support leaders should balance between trade-offs before selecting a model for their organization. The typical engagement archetypes are:

- **Standard tiered model—**A model where the case is initially handled by a front-line team, who will escalate and pass ownership to more senior team members if they are unable to resolve a case.
- **Direct-to-specialist model—**A model where the case ownership is routed to someone who specializes in the product or issue that the customer is facing.
- **Swarming model—**A model where the case is owned by one team member throughout its life cycle, but other team members collaborate with the owner to solve the case.

Our study highlighted trade-offs among these options that impact the three value drivers of support: earning revenue, saving costs, and delighting customers. An organization needs to determine which value driver is of highest priority to identify which model archetype is best for them based on their priorities, the complexity of the solution provided, and the expertise of their customer base.

When we look at the standard tiered model, the trade-offs become apparent. Low-cost agents are the first interaction point with customers and work to triage and solve cases based on scripts and playbooks, favoring cost-saving initiatives for a company. For organizations with a large proportion of basic support questions that tier 1 support can handle, this model can be effective. Based on industry standards, having a first contact resolution rate of 85% or more with tier 1 support is ideal to not compromise on the customer experience while managing costs. For companies with a large proportion of complex support cases or one with highly sophisticated users, the model could result in poor customer experience as customers may get frustrated when forced to go through an escalation process before getting to true experts for complex issues. In a tiered model, outsourcing is also typically leveraged with the first line of support that handles most incoming requests being outsourced but higher levels such as second tier and beyond being internal employees. Outsourcing may provide a lower cost model to service cases. The incentives of outsource agreements typically encourage quick closure of cases, which could mean accuracy of resolution and customer experience may not be prioritized by outsourced support agents. If a company becomes known to have a poor support experience, customers may begin to look at other vendors or negotiate support contracts down, which could potentially negatively impact any revenue growth the support organization can drive.

With a direct-to-specialist approach, the inverse is true. All cases, no matter their complexity, are serviced by a highly knowledgeable specialist, which could result in a high cost basis. However, the agent likely has the knowledge to solve the case without escalation, providing a resolution to the customer's issues quickly and, in turn, helping to drive a positive customer experience for the company. This positive experience can also be monetized by positioning a high-performing specialist model as a value-added service, allowing a company to earn revenue via paid support since many customers are willing to pay for a positively differentiated experience. This is especially true if the solution is complex, typically has an educated user base, and thus has a large proportion of complex support requests that would require expert resources for resolution.

In our third option, case swarming, the trade-off is still between saving costs and delighting customers. A swarming model can drive a better customer experience through limiting handoffs and providing a single point of contact for the entire support case, but the trade-off is that the agent must continue to own the case even when the case is too complex for their skills. This often leads to more resources working on each case than desired.

In certain instances, swarming is used as a second or later line of defense in the standard tiered model to optimize specialist time; however, the customer experience delivered is more in line with the standard tiered model as the swarm team just replaces the highly specialized support agent.

While outsourcing is not utilized in this model typically, outsourced workforce can be used as the first line of defense or as the coordinating point of contact to drive the support case to closure.

Irrespective of the engagement model archetype chosen, our study showed us that two primary features stood out as enablers of creating an ecosystem of high performance and value creation: (1) processes and systems that drove engagement based on customer segments, and (2) a relentless focus on expedited and speedy resolution of customer issues.

Organizations that differentiated engagement based on customer segments—such as product usage proficiency and vertical organization, among others—delivered tailored experiences based on specific customer needs and had distinct advantages for value creation for the overall organization.

High performing departments are

1.4x more likely

to have customized support processes for

first-time customers

High performing departments are

1.2x more likely

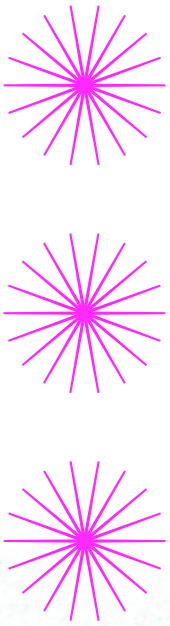
to have customized support processes for

large volume purchasers

High-performing support organizations have multiple segment-specific support offerings in place and processes implemented, such as faster escalation for handling tickets for first-time and large-volume purchasers, which enables them to activate the second differentiator of speedy resolutions. Agents in high-performing organizations are also quicker to respond and escalate—they are 1.7 times more likely to guarantee first response to a support ticket in four hours or less, especially when the customer is buying premium support.

Regardless of support process, tickets are most often escalated for three reasons: a high-value customer, a high number of interactions without resolution, or a product-based escalation. The difference is that low-performing support organizations report escalating tickets after a high number of interactions 2.2 times more often than high-performing support organizations. In other words, high-performing support organizations get to a resolution quicker with a lower volume of customer interactions. A high number of interactions for support organizations not only increases the cost to serve per customer but carries a hidden cost of poor customer experience. While there are many ways to solve for this, the primary starting point is how a customer support function organizes itself.

The latest technologies such as Generative AI are also enabling support organizations to reduce the time taken to resolve issues. Generative AI can be used by support organizations to upskill and train support agents to shrink the learning and response times that tier 1 agents need to address requests, thereby increasing the value for the standard tiered model. Generative AI can also provide conversation prompts or serve knowledge articles based on the service notes of other agents who might have encountered and solved similar issues for similar deployments of the product to tier 1 or outsourced agents, improving their productivity and amplifying the impact of highly skilled resources.



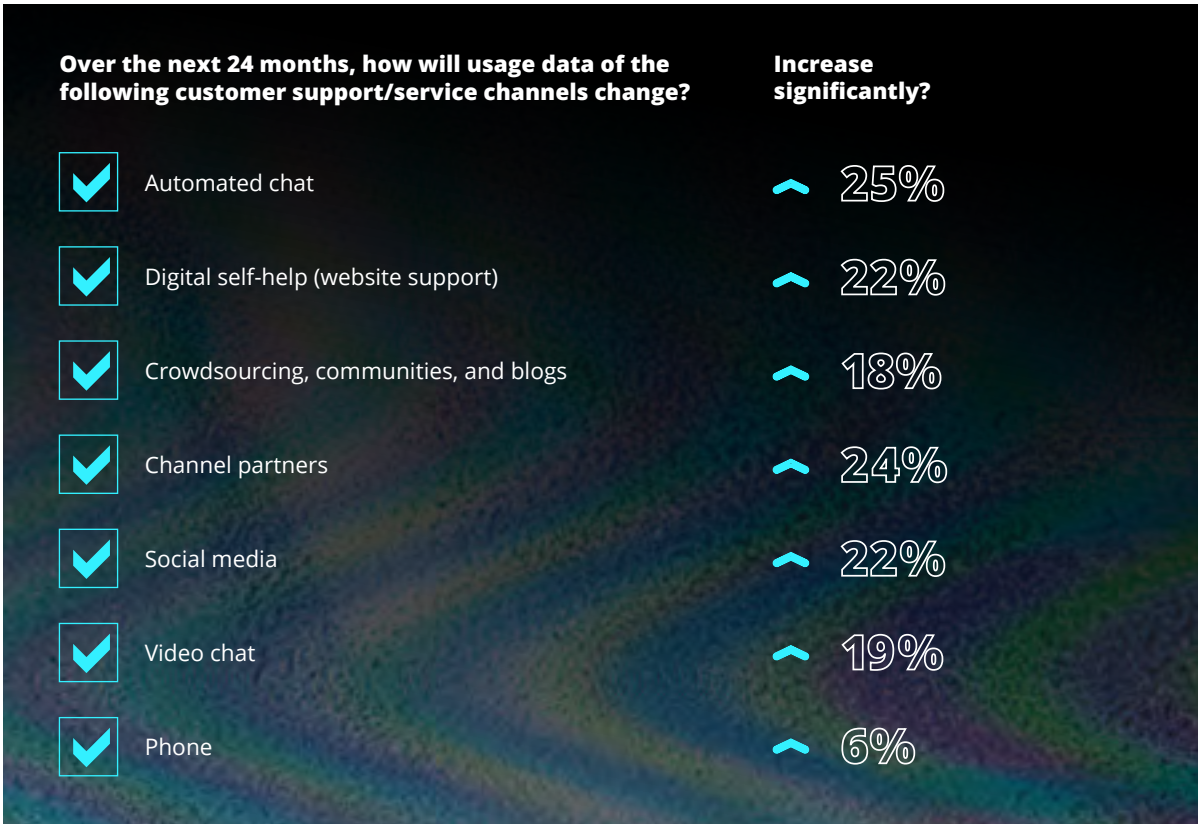
DELIVERY MODEL: HOW DO I CONNECT WITH MY CUSTOMERS AND MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE IN THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER?

Once organizations have determined the engagement model, the next big decision to make is the delivery model. A delivery model clearly establishes all the channels to engage with the customer, including customization based on the customer segment, product portfolio, and journey moments. The end goal of a delivery model is to meet the customer where they are to deliver highly personalized experiences, while using technology to optimize delivery and scale as an organization.

Our study indicates that all companies use some combination of human and technology-based processes and tools to deliver support across a continuum. However, as technology has evolved, support organizations have had to keep up with new tools to meet customer needs and expectations. A support organization has choices on how to deliver and conduct support along the continuum, which can be broadly categorized as the following:

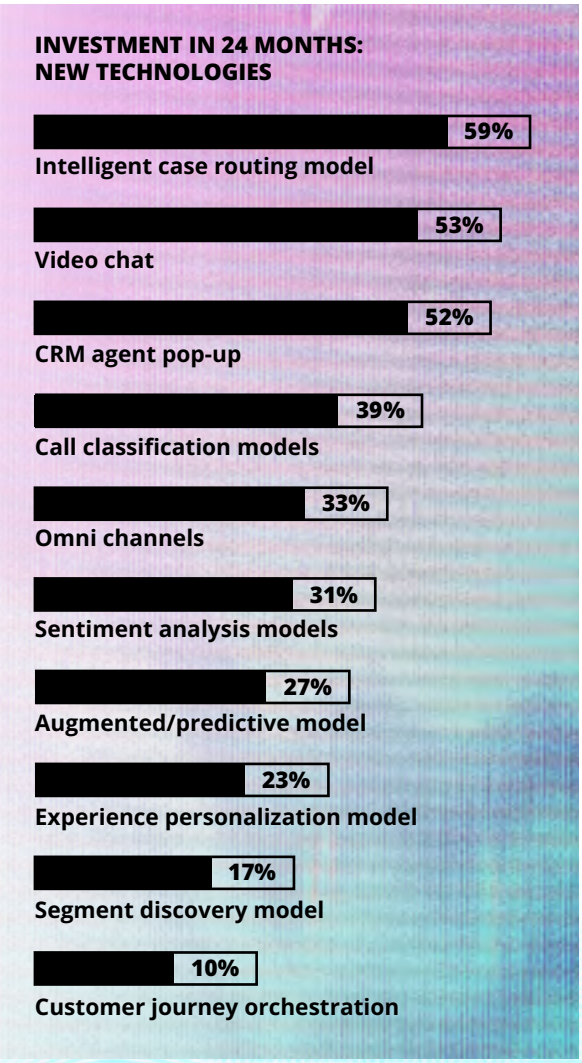
- **Human-first—**A model where support delivery relies on a human to be the primary driver of engagement and case resolution.
- **Technology-first—**A model that is driven primarily by technology—automation, AI, customer journey orchestration—to engage users and resolve issues, where humans are brought in once the limits of tech capabilities have been reached.
- **Human-delivered; technology-enabled—**A model that augments the human touch with technology to provide information to support engagement and case resolution using tools such as AI, customer data, and insights.

It will not come as a surprise to anyone that the days of email addresses and phone numbers as the primary means for support communication are well behind us and digital channels have taken over. However, this is not to say digital is the only way. Companies are most successful when they are "right-channeling", leveraging the most cost effective and efficient channel for their customer.[3]



Our study further showcased that 70% of support leaders are prioritizing digital-first support in the near term to drive improved case deflection while also effectively managing their case load by triaging low-complexity, low-priority cases. To support this shift toward digital models, support leaders are looking to invest in new technologies ranging from omnichannel support for customers to integrated automation and Generative AI.

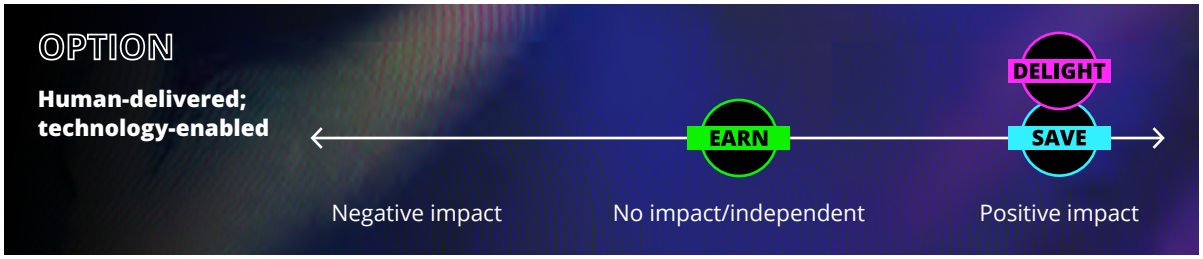
Support leaders are also making new investments, with 12 out of 20 support leaders focusing on in-product support, which is enabled with diagnostic telemetry to help their teams monitor, predict, and recommend corrective actions to prevent support cases from occurring in the first place. It is apparent that large-scale shifts are happening to enable digital interactions. This highlights the benefits of the different models, which allows companies to earn revenue, save costs, and delight customers.



A human-first model is prevalent for organizations that are catering to customers seeking personalized, high-touch experiences. This model delights customers as agents can answer customer questions and potentially provide solutions or alleviate concerns immediately, without the need for the customer to dig through knowledge databases. However, even in a human-first model, technologies such as workflow tools, Customer 360, and CRM are used to enable the support agent.

The main challenge with this model is that it is expensive to deliver, is not easily scalable across an entire customer base, and can be prone to human error making it ideal only in specific circumstances such as catering to priority customers or a base that demands higher-order customer experience.

Companies that are all in on digital-first methodologies are forcing a shift in customer support delivery, where customers need to go through digital self-service models before they can engage with a human. Customers who are accustomed to direct human engagement or who have complex product usage patterns may get frustrated with either a portal, IVR, or chatbot, where the information needs to be entered in a specific manner, the responses are unhelpful, or the interaction becomes a navigation exercise to get to a support agent who can help with a complex, unique situation. This could hurt the customer experience for some situations, yet most customers welcome this digital approach as it allows them to get support where they need it, when they need it, for the most common support requests. The technology-first approach is easily scalable to the entire customer base with minimal expenditure and may also result in some operational improvements, allowing a support agent to see more cases. While the impact on the customer experience is positive due to faster resolution of common support requests, it can also result in a poor experience for unique cases.



The most common delivery model in our study was a tiered, human-delivered, technology-enabled approach where upon known, simple issues are managed by self-service or digital tools, while complex, unique cases were routed to support agents or swarms. However, while the human touch was critical in driving a positive customer experience, agents were supported by multiple tools to guide the experience and resolve issues.

With the maturity of Generative AI for enterprises, this guided experience can go further, such as development of custom onboarding content for customers, AI-generated knowledge articles based on data mined from customer support case notes, or conversation prompts beyond next-best actions based on past customer interaction data. Generative AI also can be used to reduce the manual effort required by support agents for routine activities such as transcribing customer conversations, creating post-meeting action items, and automating the tagging of cases.

One upcoming trend in both technology-first and technology-enabled models is the rise of in-product support and support portals that are designed to promote deflection by providing customers with relevant knowledge or community articles during the intake process. These portals are also helping support teams proactively reach out to companies that may run into an issue once something is discovered, providing a solution to an issue before an incident even occurs.

With leaps in the capabilities of Generative AI, there is an opportunity to cater content and chatbot conversations to customers in a way that matches the personal interactions customers expect when engaging with a human agent. Leveraging a chatbot trained against a knowledge database is a great way to scale the reach of support teams and drive case deflection, but it still requires expert support engineers to solve "new" issues as they arise. Generative AI is already proving to be a force multiplier for support teams and will likely evolve to enable support organizations to better delight customers and save costs.

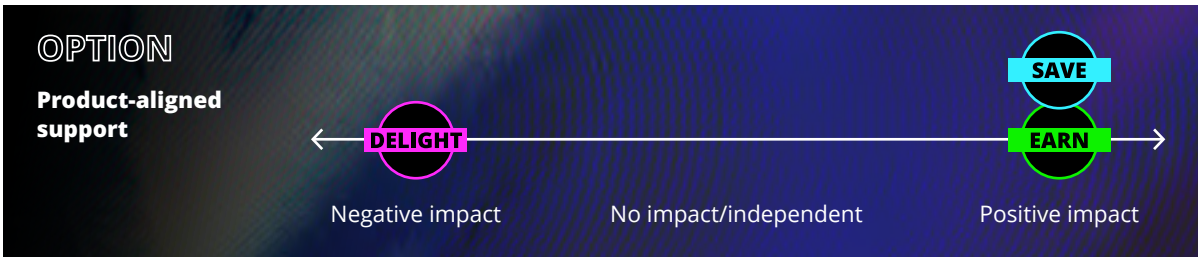
SUPPORT OFFERINGS: WHAT AM I OFFERING TO THE CUSTOMERS TO GENERATE DEMAND AND OPTIMIZE EARNINGS?

Support offerings focus on how services are packaged, priced, and sold to customers based on the tier, product, and service coverage. Most support organizations (71%) offer a combination of free and paid customer support services; however, we found that decisions around product coverage and packaging have greater impact on earning revenue, saving costs, and delighting customers than price alone. The leading options for product coverage and packaging for support organizations are:

- **Unified support offerings—**Support is bundled across multiple products to provide enterprisewide coverage through a single plan.
- **Product-aligned support offerings—**Support coverage is sold to the customer by product, allowing for differing levels of support across products.

When it comes to structuring offerings for product coverage, 50% of companies in our study offered unified support plans across product offerings and 40% offered support segmented by product. The remaining 10% of companies had various models unique to their situations like support segmented via deployment type (cloud vs. on-premises) or by customer size (as determined by employee headcount). While the study didn't identify a leading product coverage strategy, it did provide context around the nuances of selecting the best approach for the specific company. Decisions around product coverage can have a different impact on the earn, save, and delight value drivers.

Companies that offered unified support plans did so to simplify purchasing for large customers with diverse IT environments. This model was designed to make it easy for customers to make a purchasing decision, ultimately increasing support's earning potential as customers bought a level of support across all products that was commensurate with the most important system supported by the product that they acquired. This model also provides another benefit when it comes to delighting customers by helping to ensure they don't confuse their support level of one product versus another and that the experience is consistent across all products.



Organizations that offered product-specific support often had complex portfolios and found that this coverage model provided their customers with purchasing flexibility. The flexibility to have premium support for one product and not all allowed customers to make a decision that fit their risk management profile for each of the systems they purchased. This model allows for support organizations to capture the customer's willingness to pay across all their products, matching the spend with the support offered. Product coverage can also have an impact on cost. For companies with a complex portfolio, offering product-specific coverage optimized internal delivery roles and resources by product expertise. Lastly, product coverage's effect on customer experience can be negative—as they leverage support, they may expect one level of service but get another based on what t hey paid. This confusion can be detrimental if not properly managed.

Nearly half of companies in our study packaged support with add-on services such as product trainings, dedicated TAM, telemetry-driven diagnostics, and issue alerts. Add-on services are a great way to create additional value for a customer, but the distinctive value of add-ons as compared to the overall support service must be clear to customers, just as how the distinctive value of each support tier to a customer for them to upgrade their support package. If the add-on value is not clear or resembles something already offered in a support package, the uptake of add-ons will be limited. Companies found that when the value for add-on services was clear, more customers purchased premium plans, which enhanced the stickiness of those relationships.

Our study showed that half of companies interviewed bundled support services with customer success offerings, a packaging approach most prevalent in software-as-a-service (SaaS) firms. Bundling with customer success enabled companies to create close alignment across service teams to orchestrate customer outcomes and enable seamless sales cycles.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for structuring the most optimized support offering, there are two factors that leaders should consider when designing offerings that simplify support purchase decisions:

1. **Product portfolio:** The complexity of a company's product portfolio should influence decisions around coverage models. Leaders should consider both the customer's preference (e.g., simplicity, flexibility) as well as the company's ability to provide coverage in a cost-effective manner. For companies with a simplified portfolio, a unified model makes sense. However, a company with a complex portfolio might find a combination of unified and product-specific coverage to be most effective.
2. **Customer purchasing patterns:** A key source of insight for informing bundling and add-ons, customer purchasing patterns are most effective in monetizing support offerings. For example, if a company has a low attach rate for support services it might signal an opportunity to include add-ons that increase the customer's perceived value of support services. Retention or renewal rates could also signal an opportunity to offer service bundles.

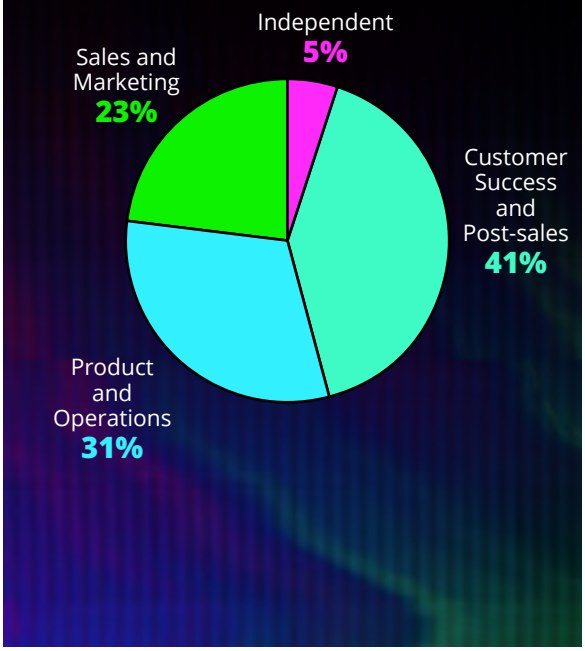
ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT: WHERE SHOULD MY ORGANIZATION SIT WITHIN THE COMPANY TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND EARNINGS?

The evolving role of the customer support organization, from break-fix issue resolution to delighting customers and earning revenue, has brought up the question of where a support organization should sit to able to maximize its impact on these new goals.

Our study showed that organization structure affected two main aspects of operating a support organization: alignment of priorities and collaboration dynamics within the organization. Support organizations most often reside in front-office or post-sales functions such as marketing, sales, or customer success, with fewer support organizations sitting in product or operations functions. Of those surveyed, only 5% were independent parts of the organization.

Of the functions to house the support department—post-sales, product and operations, and front office—there were differences across leadership reporting and titles, offerings and response times, and workforce composition.

Where surveyed support organizations reported residing within their organization



Support departments within Customer Success and Post-sales are:

- More likely to provide a first response within 5-24 hours (free support).
- More likely to proactively reach out to customers.
- More likely to have special processes for large-volume customers.

Support departments within Product and Operations are:

- More likely to have a leader report to a director or a manager.
- Less likely to update customers from within a product.
- More likely to prioritize digital self-help, video chat, and social media channels.
- Less likely to provide special processes that pay a fee.

Support departments within Sales and Marketing are:

- More likely to have a leader with the title of president.
- More likely to provide a response within 4 hours (paid).
- More likely to employ support specialists.
- More likely to provide special processes for first-time purchasers.

A previous study shared the importance of collaboration across post-sales teams[4], but the real question to ask is which structure will drive the most aligned priorities and collaboration? The answer is nuanced and specific to each company. Interview results shared anecdotal benefits and disadvantages, but performance and where support is aligned within the organization did not have a significant correlation.

What was highlighted in our data was that high-performing support departments reported an increased level of collaboration and influence with other functions such as marketing, operations, customer success, and sales. The groups that support functions most commonly collaborate with are:

- Front office, including marketing and sales.
- Product, including engineering and development.
- Post-sales, including customer success.

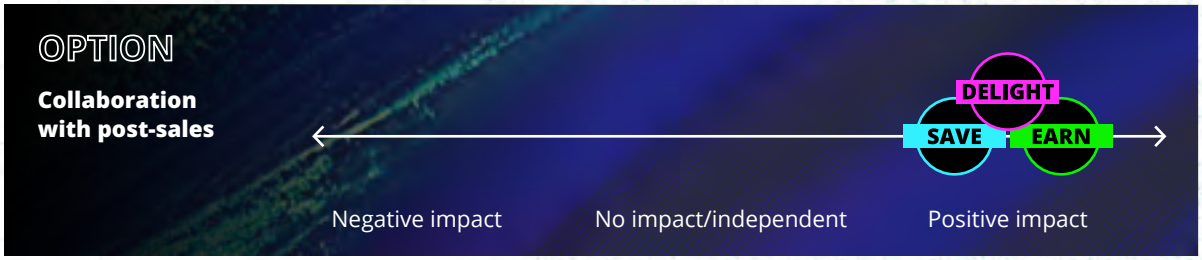
High performing departments are

2x more likely

to report **high collaboration** with **high influence** of other departments

Collaborating with specific front-office functions within a company can positively impact revenue and customer experience. For example, support organizations collaborating closely with sales can identify ways to help reduce sales friction, increase renewal rates, and provide customer insights to sales reps to drive customized sales pitches with higher likelihood of conversion and upsell. This might also involve support and success working together to deliver outcomes that increase customer stickiness and enable seamless sales cycles. Similarly, support can provide user feedback to marketing, such as where customers get the most value from a product or where they experience the greatest challenges. This knowledge can be used by marketing to shape campaigns to attract new or retain existing customers, helping them drive loyalty, improve lead generation, and increase marketing-attributed revenue.

Support functions that work closely with product teams to establish a feedback loop can delight customers. Insight from support can be used by the product team to improve features and functionality and ensure that enhancements are aligned with customer needs. This information shared between the two functions helps support become a stakeholder in the new product introduction process, sharing their inputs to help product supportability with newly released features or to proactively identify the need for product fixes and knowledge documentation. With the increased focus on AI, the case for support to be directly tied to product is further strengthened. The adoption and use of AI in customer support will require high-quality data from the product, such as usage, common challenge areas, etc., and tight integration with product will enable customer support to develop additional in-app support such as self-service, AI chatbots, and predictive knowledge articles to increase case deflection and self-service, making it a win-win for product and support.



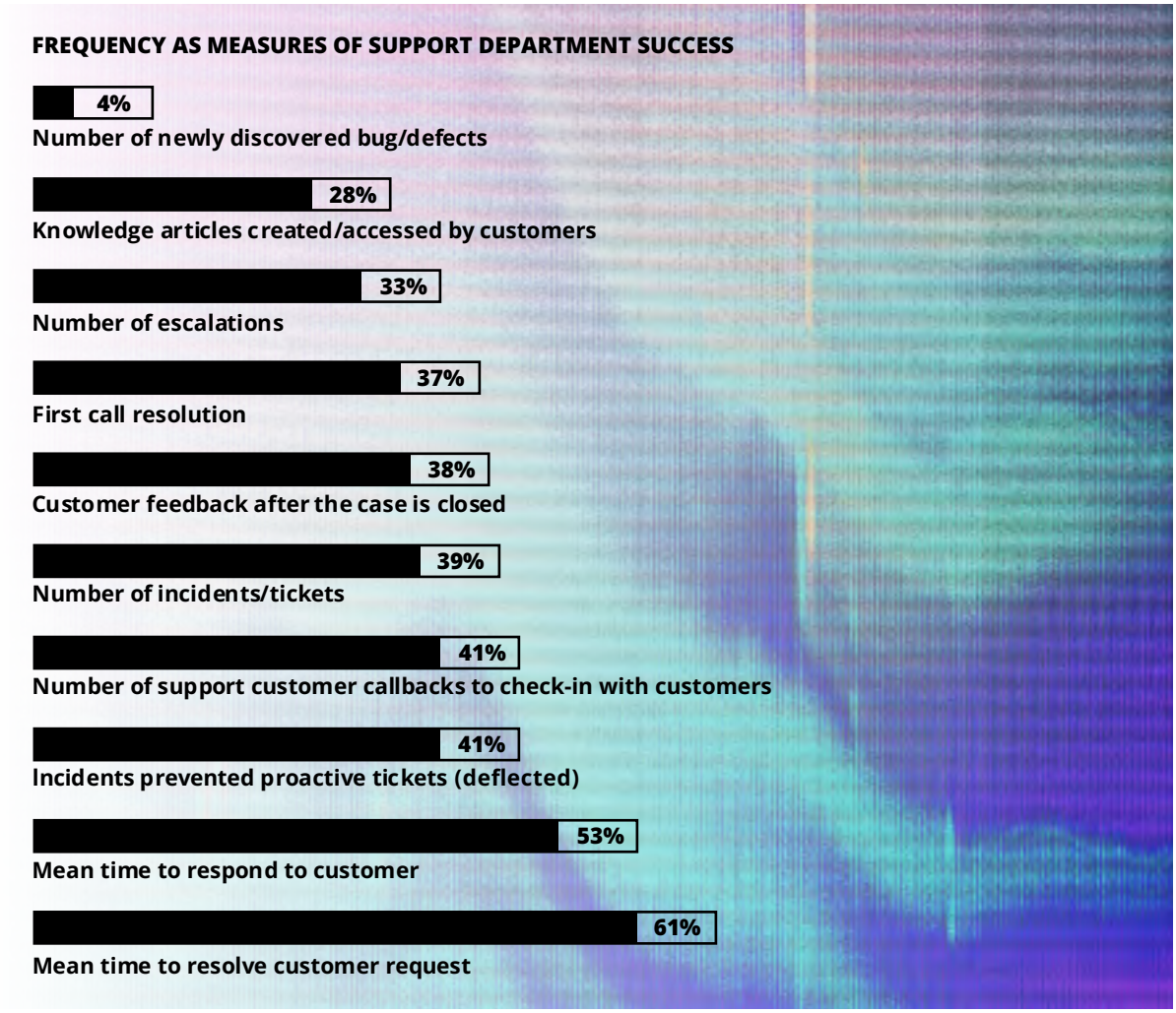
Close collaboration with customer success can positively impact all three value drivers. If support and success are aligned on their roles and communicate effectively, it could reduce duplicated efforts and increase overall efficiency in serving customers. The combination of support and success can take the tech company one step closer to driving customer outcomes that can help create a unified post-sales experience for the customer leading to higher retention and up-sell/cross-sell opportunities with existing customers.

No matter where in the organization the support team sits, customer support is going to be one of the first and most extensive users of AI. Customer support leaders need to define their AI strategy and prepare their organizations with the right skills, either in-house or in collaboration with product. Leveraging AI along with strategically facilitating cross-functional relationships and collaboration will be critical in how effectively and extensively the customer support team is able to deliver value. As a support leader, it is important to embody these traits of collaboration and partnership and develop relationships with peers in other departments. These actions help show support agents and engineers how they should be working to collaborate with their peers in sales, customer success, and other departments. Beyond leading by example, support leaders can also promote more collaboration across functions by:

- Defining roles and responsibilities in delivering customer outcomes.
- Unifying customer view and data-sharing across functions.
- Establishing agile operating models that allow dynamic teaming and engagement.
- Empowering cross-functional teams across the entire life cycle.
- Incentivizing alignment to promote cross-team collaboration.

MEASUREMENT STRATEGY: HOW MUCH VALUE IS SUPPORT DRIVING FOR THE COMPANY?

Traditionally, support organizations are data-driven and live by their operational metrics. Our study showed that the most frequently used measures of support department success are mean time to resolve customer request (61%), mean time to respond to customers (53%), incidents prevented/proactive tickets (deflection) (41%), and number of support callbacks to check in with customers (41%).



High-performing support departments favor measuring mean time to resolve and mean time to respond, while also identifying first-call resolution as a key success measure 2.6 times more often than low-performing departments. High-performing departments also incentivize their teams differently and are 1.3 times more likely to align support department performance bonuses to overall company success versus low-performing departments.

This was reinforced by our study, where support leaders spoke about the evolution of metrics. Support leaders are moving toward shifting their metrics to overall company metrics because those align to future priorities of being a key value contributor. To understand, articulate, and share the value driven by support, organizations are shifting from primarily operational key performance indicators (KPIs), such as resolution time, close rates, and escalations, to customer outcomes metrics, such as customer effort score, customer satisfaction, net promoter score (NPS), first-contact resolution, and net dollar retention (NDR).[5] Based on our work with leading support departments, teams are also combining operational and customer metrics into a balanced scorecard to deploy a more well-rounded approach to delivering and measuring customer impact.

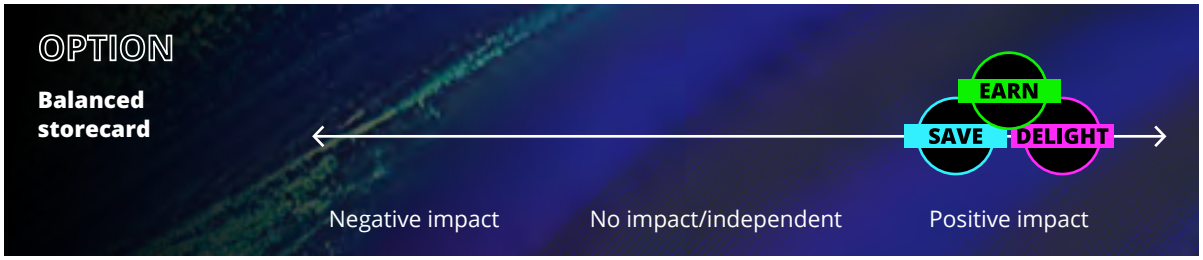
Additionally, an emerging trend in leading support organizations are metrics associated with product usability and intuitiveness. Effective support leaders are looking to highlight and measure the value they are providing in reducing product defects and developing more intuitive solutions for the customer.

At the end of the day, support leaders need to choose the measurement strategy by which they want to measure success and evaluate the impact they have on setting or defining the culture of the organization. Support leaders commonly choose among:

- **Operational metrics—**Measures of speed and efficiency, including resolution time, close rates, and escalations.
- **Customer metrics—**Measures of customer experience, including customer effort score, customer satisfaction, NPS, first-contact resolution, and retention.
- **Balanced scorecard—**Measures of both operational and customer metrics.

When thinking about operational metrics, the trade-off that surfaces is between delighting customers and saving costs. Operational metrics, by their very nature, prioritize speed and efficiency, which translates to rapid case closure or case deflection via knowledge database articles for support organizations. This focus on speed may sacrifice customer experience as agents may inadvertently be curt with their communications or close cases without validating if the proposed solution worked. However, agents would be extremely efficient, taking more support cases on per day and likely reducing the cost to serve.

When thinking about customer metrics, the same trade-off appears with the inverse situation. Customer metrics emphasize the customer experience, meaning agents will be incentivized to be proactive and spend extra time with a case to ensure their recommendations have solved the case to the satisfaction of the client. This extra time and higher-touch service incurs a higher cost to serve as agents are not picking up as many cases at a time.



A balanced scorecard measurement strategy includes both operational metrics and customer metrics to measure performance. Given that sometimes operational metrics and customer metrics can be opposing indicators, this scorecard forces the support leader and organization to continuously assess the trade-offs of strategic and operational decisions within the organization. Depending on which metric is weighted higher for a given decision, the balanced scorecard can have a positive impact on earning revenue, saving costs, and delighting customers. The relative weightage attributed to these operations and customer levers can be used to fine-tune and tweak the behavior of the organization to allow alignment with overall enterprise priorities and goals. Afterall, what gets measured gets improved!

CONCLUSION: IDENTIFYING CHOICE POINTS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Before making decisions about which levers to adjust and how, leaders should start by identifying which value driver, or combination of value drivers, is a priority for their organization and aligned to the overall enterprise strategy now and in the future. With the three value drivers as your guide, where to start becomes clearer.

Below are the first actions support leaders can take as they identify and prioritize their strategic choices:

	EARN	SAVE	DELIGHT
ENGAGEMENT MODEL	Consider whether a **direct-to-specialist model** can be monetized as value-added service.	Consider whether a **standard tier model** or **outsourced model** aligns with your product offerings, customer needs, and primary goal of the support organization.	Evaluate the trade-offs of a **swarming** or **direct-to-specialist model** to solve customer issues in the most time-efficient manner.
DELIVERY MODEL	Identify opportunities to **upsell delivery models** that high-value customers desire, such as via phone or email.	Consider where in your support organization you can leverage **technology** to be a force multiplier for your team.	Evaluate when **technology** is a good fit and enables a positive customer experience vs. when the customer may get frustrated with technology.
SUPPORT OFFERINGS	Evaluate how your **product coverage and packaging** affects your customer' ability to make support purchase decisions.	Consider whether your **product coverage model** is optimized and most efficient based on your portfolio complexity.	Understand how your **packaging** is linked to the perceived or actual value your customer receives from support offerings.
ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT	Consider your relationship with **sales and marketing** and whether there are opportunities to share information that reduce sales friction or improve marketing effectiveness.	Determine whether there are opportunities to streamline responsibilities with **product and customer success** to drive efficiencies and reduce duplicated effort.	Identify opportunities to establish a feedback loop with **product** to inform enhancements and drive efficiencies in how you provide support for new features.
MEASUREMENT STRATEGY	Consider what your department is known for within the organization—cost center, revenue generator, or experience enhancer—and make choices **to measure what most aligns with how you want to be viewed within the organization.**		

Unsurprisingly, customer support leaders have a lot on their minds already and are trying to play a fine balancing act. They have multiple options and trade-offs to consider when answering the five essential questions to best enable their organizations to earn revenue, save costs, and delight customers. The future of customer support in B2B tech needs to be about the ecosystem, not just the product your company sells. Playing your cards right can help create a nimble, thriving organization that can drive the company's strategic priorities and position support as a leader in turbulent times as well as during periods of growth.

Once customer support becomes more than just a break-fix issue resolution-oriented cost center, it truly becomes an ace up the sleeve for tech leaders.

Are you ready to reinvent customer support as a strategic advantage for your company? Contact us to explore the art of the possible!

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Acknowledgments
The authors would like to thank Gopal Srinivasan, Aftab Khanna, Murat Ozturk, and Rohan Gupta for their contributions to this article.

ENDNOTES

1. For most support organizations, "high performance" means resolving or responding to a customer request in an expedited manner. Regardless of the metric used, we focused on those companies that outperform their internal expectations. The top 25% are the high-performing customer support departments that, by their own accord, are delivering excellent customer service.
2. Customer Experience stands out as a key value driver as companies who lead in customer experience are winning over customers and setting themselves apart as shown in our 2021 study, "Close the expectation gap with your B2B customers", by Tim Greulich, Gopal Srinivasan, and Deepak Sharma.
3. For more on "right-channeling" and other trends facing support and contact centers take a look at our latest contact center survey report at https://www.deloittedigital.com/us/en/offerings/customer-led-marketing/digital-customer/contact-center-survey.html
4. Gopal Srinivasan, Marybeth D'Souza, Deepak Sharma, Aftab Khana, Lindsey Cash and Anand Mohan, "Customer outcomes: The cornerstone of exponential growth" accessed July 24, 2023
5. Rohan Gupta, Gopal Srinivasan, and Marybeth D'Souza, "The Growth of NDR as a measure of Enterprise SaaS performance" accessed July 24, 2023

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