

Delivering Customer Value Through Managed Services

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As a managed service provider, you know that opportunities abound. Companies continue to increase their adoption of cloud technology, outsourcing technology needs and giving MSPs more business.

But those business opportunities have drawn competitors in the MSP market. A host of [small service providers scramble for their share](#) of the market, even as [large providers throw their weight around](#), seeming to own the room.

This contested and turbulent space requires innovation, differentiation, and service excellence. Those companies that seek service providers like you want to know that their data is safe, that you are serving their customers well, and that you, among the other MSPs, are helping their business to grow the most.

As you survey the landscape of your existing customers and services, you already see some of the challenges:

- Connecting to and updating customer systems
- Enabling customer visibility and therefore trust in you as a provider
- Connecting your own systems to preserve data quality
- Onboarding new customers quickly

Integrating systems is not the ultimate goal, but to meet your goals of delivering customer value, those integrations are absolutely essential. MSPs are discovering that they can connect systems in exciting, innovative ways that help them differentiate from the competition and deliver new value to customers.

Use this document to learn of several ways that service providers like you deliver value for customers through an integration solution, along with examples of service providers who are delivering that value. You will find that you can adopt some of these strategies. Or the stories may inspire you to create your own unique solutions through integrations.

1. Let Customers Retain Control over Data



ITSM Directors like to stay in control of their data. Before handing over their data to a service provider, they have questions about where the data is going, whether they will retain access and the ability to act on their data, and whether they can trust a service provider to keep their data secure.

With a complete integration solution, however, you can deliver ITSM services to your customers while assuring them that they have access to control when and where the data gets sent. And they can turn off the data-transfer faucet any time they want.

Every time we go through a customer onboarding, they always ask . . . “How is data controlled?” . . . And the conversation usually wraps up as soon as I’d let them know that, hey, we’re going to install the Perspectium application. It’s going to be administered within your instance. Your admins have complete control to stop any data flow that they they would like at any given time. . . . Not only do they have the access because that data is being pushed from their instance and not pulled, they retain the control. They can filter down as they feel.

- Matt Miller, VP of Service Delivery, Virteva

Problem: Signing on with an integration provider means that the customer may have less certainty over the security and control of their data.

Solution: Give customers control over their data in a native application, letting them direct the flow of data where and when they want.

2. Enable Transparency and Customer Visibility



When a company signs on with a service provider, the IT team at that company wants to know that their customers are being taken care of.

What if you could give your customer a window into how you are treating their customers? Can you give them a view the way your phone app monitors your living-room temperature, or the way your security camera lets you observe your property?

By integrating your ITSM instance with your customers' instances, you give them visibility into what's going on with their incidents, along with the ability to comment on them or make adjustments to them.

When those monitoring events come into our system and they cut an incident, we can then transfer that ticket over to the customer system. And they'll have visibility into what's happening in their environment in their own ticketing solution, and then make comments or assign things back to us, or we can assign things to them.

- Paul Liesse, Supervisor of Managed Service Application, CDW

Problem: The MSP wants to preserve the trust of the customer, who has handed over data and processes to the MSP.

Solution: Integrate systems so that the customer has real-time visibility, enabling the customer to see current status, act on current data, and create reports.

3. Solve Incidents Quickly to Avert Escalation



Level one service desk personnel can handle frequent service requests and can help customers with basic issues that they face. But if they cannot provide a solution, the incident escalates to level two. When a service desk escalates many incidents, costs increase and customer satisfaction decreases.

One way that integration can prevent escalation of incidents is through real-time updates of knowledge articles. If level one personnel (or better yet, level zero—customer self-help) have the information they need to resolve an incident, value for everyone rises.

When an outage occurs at a company that has hired Virteva, a service provider, level two or level three personnel at the client company can write a brief knowledge article that syncs with Virteva's instance so that level one personnel at the Virteva service desk have the knowledge they need to address incoming calls.

By us getting that data to our analysts in near real-time, that was less manual effort they needed to go around to escalate to a level two or level three resource.

- Matt Miller, Virteva

Problem: Crises and other unexpected events require prompt communication for the service desk to support users.

Solution: Real-time knowledge integration empowers personnel to inform and support concerned users.

4. Use Real-Time Transfer for Personnel Visibility



A live view of customers and business processes gives companies actionable information. IT Directors and C-level Executives, eager to keep their teams agile, do not want a view of their companies from last week or even yesterday. They want to know what is happening right now.

If a major disruptive event occurs, service desk personnel need to know details and an explanation immediately to communicate with and assist those whose service has been disrupted.

The result: [real-time data transfer and reporting, with minimal latency, is a highly desirable service](#). Such functions give service providers a chance to deliver extra value to customers.

We found that actually we needed [knowledge sharing] faster than once a day. . . . So if a knowledge article is updated by their team, we're pushing that over to Virteva's instance immediately so that our analysts that are using those articles have that most recent content to provide support.

- Matt Miller, Virteva

It seems like anytime anyone comes to you with a reporting requirement, they precede it with "real-time" reporting. . . . The idea of getting the data out of ServiceNow, into our reporting warehouse somewhat seamlessly . . . that really was a marked improvement step and really helped with the messaging around reporting and near real-time reporting.

- Jeff Lowenthal, Enterprise Architect, Accenture

Problem: Acting on information older than current information hurts customer service and prompts uninformed executive decisions.

Solution: Real-time integration gives companies, including their service desks, the visibility and agility to offer the best service possible.

5. Enable Better Reporting



A good ITSM application will offer reports within the tool. Even so, businesses often need to run reports more advanced than what the application offers.

Or they need to combine the data that the ITSM tool has access to with data elsewhere, such as in a data warehouse.

With their integration solution, Virteva offers its customers [enhanced, scalable reporting](#).

We're running our SLA data, our metric data, our ticket data. We're running that all to a SQL database to do advanced reporting and analytics on that data, so we can do further trending for all of our customers that we have integrated, as well as all the additional ticket information that's in our instance. So that to me was a huge win for us to be able to bring that data down in a more real-time fashion and a more scalable fashion.

- Matt Miller, Virteva

Problem: Limited reporting and reporting on obsolete data precludes IT leaders' real-time visibility into their company and their customers.

Solution: Real-time integration means not only real-time visibility but also making use of enhanced reporting tools.

6. Reduce Maintenance and Its Costs



Automation reduces the need for human intervention. And without integration—one form of automation—service providers task employees with work that systems should be performing by themselves.

A team of employees at Accenture was managing access for 300,000 users, with new hires needing to be provisioned constantly. After implementing an integration solution, Accenture [freed up massive resources](#).

It's been huge. . . . We had an entire team of people pretty much constantly working on managing access to engagement data. And this [integration solution] has just taken that away for us. We don't have to deal with this nearly as much there. . . . It just works.

- Jonathan Livingston, Application Architect, Accenture

Problem: High maintenance and the labor of repetitive tasks are expensive.

Solution: Through integration, automate predictable, scheduled, or rule-based tasks, freeing up resources.

7. Cut Labor Costs



Entering data into or querying data in multiple systems is an inefficient, swivel-chair approach that requires unnecessary work.

But even many custom integrations require more labor than necessary, often requiring ongoing developer maintenance for a solution that is supposed to be “automated”. For example, integration via web services often requires development on each new endpoint of the integration.

More labor means higher costs that, ultimately, the consumer incurs through expensive swivel-chair or custom integrations.

A better, more automated approach is to integrate via an application native to the ITSM solution. A native application combined with a common data model makes implementation simple, drastically reducing hours of data entry, custom development, and maintenance labor.

Before implementing such an integration solution, CDW customers often needed to do development work on their end to complete integration projects with CDW—[at a price tag of \\$50,000](#), in one case. “That’s just not great when you’re trying to provide a solution to someone and they get a bill like that,” says Paul Liesse, Supervisor of Managed Service Application.

After implementing an integration solution via a native application, CDW now offers their customers integration solutions that require no extra coding by the customer.

It’s really nice to be able to go to the customer and say, we’ve got a solution. . . . The technical piece is super simple.

- Paul Liesse, CDW

Problem: Development labor and the labor of re-entering data by hand are expensive.

Solution: An integration solution with a native application eliminates the swivel chair’s dual entry and removes the development labor from upgrades and from new endpoint integrations.

8. Preserve the Performance of ITSM Apps



Whether transferring data to run reports, to keep another ITSM instance in sync, or to fulfill other needs, businesses face the challenge of integrating data without creating significant performance impacts on the production instance of the ITSM tool.

The rest of the organization cannot simply stop what they are doing so that IT can run reports.

With the right integration solution in place, a service provider can create reports or perform other data replications for customers without performance impacts to their ITSM instances.

That kind of integration solution dynamically detects changes in data. Rather than relying on a batch poll, it pushes only the data that has changed, enabling the best possible throughput and flexibility with the least impact to the publishing application. Businesses can easily replicate data to as many endpoints as desired with no impact on or change to the endpoints.

When we implemented ServiceNow, we used an open source tool . . . doing web services. And that worked okay for a little while. But those [ETL's put a lot of stress on ServiceNow](#) because of how the web services work. . . . We outgrew that after a little while.

- Paul Liesse, CDW

Problem: The performance of the ITSM tool lags when IT runs jobs that present demands on the tool.

Solution: An integration that pushes only the data that it has dynamically detected changes for preserves the performance of the ITSM tool.

9. Offer New Services



Having an integration solution in place opens the door for a wide range of integration endpoints, giving service providers the option of offering new features and solutions with minimal implementation and at minimal cost.

The return on investment makes [the offering of new service subscriptions](#) attractive for a service provider.

After Virteva was using Perspectium for some time to integrate with the ServiceNow instances of their customers, Virteva began implementing Salesforce integrations so that they could also offer customer support for their customer base.

It's just another endpoint that's now connecting back to the Perspectium message bus. So it doesn't have a material impact on my performance.

- Matt Miller, Virteva

Problem: Eager to differentiate in a competitive market, MSPs seek to offer new and unique services.

Solution: An existing integration solution lets companies add new integration endpoints quickly, speeding the rollout of new services.

10. Fast-track Customers' Time to Value



The sooner you can onboard a customer, the sooner that customer starts realizing the benefits that you deliver, hastening the return on their investment.

It used to be that managing the technical side of an integration took just as long or longer than communicating and deciding with customers about mapping fields to be replicated. And yes, you are still at the mercy of a customer's ability to get their initial set of data ready to load.

But with an integration solution, especially one that makes use of [a common data model](#) based on ITSM, the technical work is much simpler and quicker, allowing you to accelerate the onboarding of new customers.

Our customer onboarding previously took us anywhere from 8 to 12 weeks. Now, we've done them in as quick as 2 weeks and typically they take us about 4 weeks.

- Matt Miller, Virteva

That's always sort of a litmus test—how quickly can we get on board people. Well, you know, if you got all your data ready, we can do it in a couple of minutes or a couple of hours.

- Jeff Lowenthal, Accenture

Problem: You have value to deliver, and your customer wants that value. But technical hangups drag out onboarding, hurting the customer experience and reducing customer satisfaction.

Solution: An integration solution that accelerates customer onboarding helps the customer to start realizing that value faster, giving them the chance to brag on you—and bring in more business for you.

More Customer Value, More Customer Satisfaction



A reliable integration solution opens possibilities for delivering value in numerous ways.

Of course, enlisting new customers is just one way to grow your business. When you enrich the experiences of your current customers, they will thank you for those services—and may even spread the word about the awesome value you provide.

How Can You Take These Value-Delivery Steps?

We would love to hear about your context and share our ideas about how you can apply some of these methods to your own company, so that you can offer more value for your customers.

[Let's get in touch.](#)