

Cost, Complexity, Change



Finding the Real ROI of Operational Support

Abstract

Operational support functions are no longer mere cost centers; they are strategic enablers of organizational agility, navigating complexity, and driving enterprise-wide transformation. In an environment defined by constant change, increasing interdependencies, and digital disruption, support functions such as Information Technology (IT), Human Resources (HR), finance, and service operations serve as critical anchors of stability and performance. However, conventional measurement models, centered on cost-per-ticket, headcount, or transactional efficiency, fail to capture their broader value. This whitepaper introduces a modernized Return on Investment (ROI) framework for operational support, shifting the focus to impact indicators such as change velocity, workforce productivity, complexity absorption, and risk mitigation, revealing the hidden, strategic contribution of support in driving sustainable enterprise outcomes.

2 Rethinking Traditional Support Metrics

Traditional support metrics, such as **cost-per-ticket**, **Service Level Agreement (SLA) compliance**, and **resolution times**, focus on static, process-driven environments. They emphasize transactional efficiency, resource use, and service continuity. However, in transformation-driven companies, these metrics are insufficient. They fail to capture how support operations impact larger business goals,

such as **agility**, **change adoption**, **user productivity**, or **risk reduction**.

According to Bain & Company (2024), **88%** of business transformations do not meet their original goals. This shows that traditional support metrics do not effectively capture the strategic contributions necessary for successful transformations.^[1]

Drawbacks of Conventional Metrics:

- 1 **Efficiency Without Business Impact:** Focuses on measuring output but fails to demonstrate how support drives transformation or enables meaningful change.
- 2 **Misaligned with Enterprise Agility:** Support metrics remain disconnected from organizational goals around adaptability, speed, and innovation.
- 3 **Overlooking Transformation Complexity:** Neglects the critical role of support in stabilizing operations during organizational or process shifts.
- 4 **Ignoring Strategic Risk Mitigation:** Fails to capture how support helps reduce disruption, close compliance gaps, and manage execution risks.
- 5 **Trapped in the Legacy Cost-Center View:** Positions are supported as a cost burden rather than being recognized as a function that creates measurable business value.

Why Rethinking Is Critical in Change

Scenarios: During transformation efforts, such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) rollouts, mergers and acquisitions, or digital migration, support teams play a central role in execution. Their ability to **handle operational changes**, **allow quick adjustments**, and **keep the business running smoothly** directly affects the success of these programs. However, these essential contributions are often overlooked. Traditional performance metrics do not capture their strategic impact.

What Needs to Change: To capture the actual return on investment of operational support, organizations must go beyond activity-based metrics and adopt outcome-driven measurement. Metrics should show business agility, user support, and readiness for change. Support functions are crucial to **stabilizing operations**, **accelerating adoption**, and **mitigating transformation challenges**. Traditional KPIs often overlook these contributions, even though they are essential for delivering **enterprise-wide strategic value** during times of change.

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The Hidden Drivers of Support ROI

The metrics commonly used to evaluate support often overlook the real enablers of effective transformation. Support teams do more than resolve tickets; they are crucial in helping users adapt, enabling them to use new strategies, and building a strong culture. These critical factors help **maintain continuity, lower risks, and speed up outcomes**, making them vital for achieving a return on

investment in transformation.

According to a 2023 report by IDC, **89%** of organizations that undergo digital transformation initiatives report a measurable increase in operational resilience, underscoring the importance of adaptive support functions in ensuring continuity and stability during change.^[2]

01

Change Absorption Capacity:

What It Is: Absorbs operational shocks from enterprise-wide transformation and change.

Why It Matters: Maintains business continuity through periods of disruption and change.

02

User Enablement & Productivity:

What It Is: Supports users navigating new systems, tools, and workflows.

Why It Matters: Enhances productivity and accelerates adoption during major transformations.

03

Embedded Risk Mitigation:

What It Is: Flags and addresses emerging risks within change execution early.

Why It Matters: Reduces delays, compliance breaches, and transformation execution risks.

04

Intelligence Feedback Loops:

What It Is: Captures user insights through ongoing support issue patterns.

Why It Matters: Enables continuous improvements that optimize transformation outcomes.

05

Speed-to-Resolution During Change:

What It Is: Resolves transformation-specific issues quickly to protect operations.

Why It Matters: Minimizes user disruption and maintains delivery momentum.

06

Cultural Resilience & Confidence Building:

What It Is: Provides emotional and technical support during organizational uncertainty.

Why It Matters: Builds trust and resilience for ongoing enterprise adaptability.

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A New Framework for Support ROI

Why a New Framework Is Needed:

Traditional ROI models assess support in limited terms, such as **ticket resolution speed, cost per contact, or headcount efficiency**. While useful for day-to-day operations, these metrics fall short during large-scale enterprise transformation. In such contexts, support plays a strategic role by **accelerating user adoption, mitigating operational and compliance risks, and enhancing organizational adaptability**. These broader value contributions are

critical to transformation success, yet they are often overlooked or inadequately captured in conventional ROI assessments.

According to WalkMe’s 2024 State of Digital Adoption Report, businesses lose an average of **\$1.14 million** per week due to poor digital tool adoption, and **38%** of digital transformation initiatives fail primarily because employees do not effectively utilize new technologies.^[3]

Strategic Building Blocks of the New Framework

➔ **Operational Continuity:** Minimizes disruptions and stabilizes operations during change, as measured by **uptime, issue volume, and continuity metrics**.

➔ **Adoption Acceleration:** Speeds onboarding and tool mastery linked to **time-to-productivity, engagement, and training effectiveness**.

➔ **Risk Containment & Compliance:** Identifies risks early through support touchpoints, **preventing compliance breaches, delays, and transformation-related cost escalations**.

➔ **Productivity Amplification:** Drives efficiency through fast, personalized issue resolution, improving employee satisfaction, task speed, and **overall user satisfaction**.

➔ **Insight-Driven Optimization:** Transforms support data into actionable insights, driving **continuous improvements** across systems and processes.

➔ **Cultural Resilience & Confidence:** Supports emotional well-being and trust, as measured through **confidence scores, sentiment analysis, and engagement surveys**.

From Cost Center to Strategic Enabler: This framework repositions support as a strategic asset rather than a reactive cost center. By capturing both **quantitative metrics (e.g., uptime, resolution time, productivity)** and **qualitative insights (e.g., user sentiment, confidence, engagement)**, it highlights the broader value support delivers during transformation. Organizations can justify investments in high-impact models, such as **embedded support teams, proactive enablement squads, and real-time feedback loops**, by demonstrating their value through tangible outcomes. These capabilities enhance continuity, accelerate adoption, mitigate risk, and foster cultural resilience, transforming support into a **key enabler of enterprise-wide transformation success**.

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Shifting Metrics From Activity to Impact

As enterprises undergo digital and operational transformation, the way we measure the value of support must evolve. Traditional metrics, such as **SLA compliance, ticket volume, or average resolution time, focus narrowly on transactional efficiency.** While necessary for daily operations, they fail to capture the broader contribution of support to

strategic outcomes. A modern measurement approach shifts focus **from activity-based outputs to impact-driven results,** emphasizing **user enablement, operational continuity, risk mitigation, and cultural resilience** as key indicators of transformation value.

Legacy Activity-Based Metric	Limitations	Impact-Oriented Metric	Strategic Contribution
Ticket Volume	Focuses on quantity, not quality or outcome	Time-to-Productivity	Measures the speed of user enablement and adoption.
Resolution Time	Optimizes speed over solution depth	Frictionless Resolution Rate	Reflects efficiency, personalization, and minimal disruption.
Cost per Contact	Prioritizes cost-cutting over value creation	Continuity During Change Index	Captures the support role in minimizing disruption during transformation.
Headcount Efficiency	Ignores effectiveness or user sentiment	Employee Satisfaction	Gauges workforce enablement and satisfaction through support.
Service Level Agreement (SLA) Compliance	Doesn't reflect impact or experience quality	Sentiment Index / Confidence Score	Tracks user trust, cultural stability, and support confidence.
First Contact Resolution (FCR)	Measures resolution speed, not systemic improvement	Risk Mitigation Rate	Evaluates how support prevents broader operational or compliance risks.
Generic Customer Satisfaction Score. CSAT	One-dimensional view of user experience	Insights-to-Action Conversion Rate	Demonstrates how support insights fuel optimization and innovation.

6

Embedding ROI Thinking into Support

To position support as a strategic function, organizations must **embed ROI thinking across support layers**. This means aligning daily support actions with enterprise outcomes, using data to demonstrate impact, and enabling leadership to assess contribution to transformation success. Embedding this mindset ensures support evolves from a reactive service to a **proactive value-driving**

function.

Leading companies spend an average of **9.3%** of their support budget on measuring and evaluating support performance, according to the Marketing Analytics Survey 2025, and see a **3.4** times higher ROI than those without regulated support control.^[4]

Key elements of embedding ROI thinking include:

- 01 **Outcome-Aligned KPIs:** Shift from **volume metrics to KPIs** reflecting adoption, productivity, and business risk reduction impact.
- 02 **Support Journey Mapping:** Map support touchpoints where interventions directly influence transformation success and operational continuity.
- 03 **Data-Driven Feedback Loops:** Leverage support analytics and sentiment to drive improvements aligned with **enterprise outcomes**.
- 04 **Proactive Enablement Programs:** Deploy embedded support and contextual training to **reduce the reactive load and improve readiness**.
- 05 **Value Storytelling:** Communicate the strategic impact of support using **measurable outcomes and qualitative success narratives** of transformation.
- 06 **Cross-Functional Integration:** Connect support insights to product, compliance, and change teams for **enterprise-wide optimization**.

By embedding ROI thinking into support, enterprises ensure that every support interaction is not just a resolution but a **catalyst for user confidence, operational resilience, and sustainable transformation outcomes**. By embedding ROI thinking into support functions, organizations transform each interaction into a driver of measurable value, boosting **user confidence, enhancing operational resilience, and contributing to sustainable, enterprise-wide transformation outcomes** that align directly with strategic business objectives.



7 Conclusion

In today's transformation-driven enterprises, support must evolve from a transactional service layer into a strategic enabler of business value. This whitepaper outlines a comprehensive framework for embedding ROI thinking across the support ecosystem, shifting from **activity-based operations to outcome-aligned performance**. Organizations must move beyond traditional metrics, such as SLA and ticket volume, and instead measure support's contribution to enterprise-wide outcomes, including **user adoption, productivity amplification, operational resilience, and risk mitigation**.

Embedding ROI thinking requires strategic integration, leveraging embedded support models, contextual enablement, sentiment-driven feedback loops, and real-time analytics to deliver measurable value. It also calls for cross-functional collaboration, ensuring support insights inform product evolution, compliance readiness, and change enablement. Support, when positioned correctly, becomes a **proactive, insight-driven function, reducing friction, accelerating time-to-value, and driving continuous improvement**.

As enterprises navigate increasingly complex and dynamic environments, this shift from cost center to transformation catalyst is not optional—it is foundational. By embracing this mindset, organizations unlock **the full strategic potential of support as a lever for sustainable growth, agility, and enterprise excellence**.



To know more about this paper, contact hello@dnagrowth.com

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