

Reset the Limits of IT with Agentic AI and AgentOps

The race to adopt AI is well underway. But for most enterprises, the race to realize its value is only just beginning.

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Introduction

The introduction of generative AI (GenAI) sparked rapid investment in AI initiatives. Organizations are placing big bets on AI, aggressively approving funding out of concern that standing still poses the greater risk. But now, boards are starting to question whether AI investments are delivering the promised returns, including improving efficiency, unlocking innovation, and driving revenue growth. At the same time, many organizations are realizing that the process to deliver value from AI is longer than they anticipated and it requires them to do more than just automate existing workflows.

The CIO's dilemma

According to PwC,¹ more than half of enterprises report no meaningful gain from AI. The spend is real, yet the results—and the business case—are not.

It's up to the CIO to close that gap. But the timing isn't great. While the demand for proof of returns grows, so, too, does the cost of AI. The advanced models that are capable of doing meaningful work are expensive, and vendors are pricing their capabilities to match, leaving the CIOs tasked with improving outcomes facing a much bigger price tag for their investment.

Most CIOs respond in one of two ways: increase the budget or encourage more unbridled building. Both responses make the problem worse.

Paying more for the same AI approach used in the previous year erodes returns even further. And without an ROI discipline in place, teams often default to the most expensive models, driving costs higher without a corresponding increase in value.

Adding more agents leads to agent sprawl—not value. Applying agentic AI to an existing process simply runs a flawed process faster. And increasing the speed of low-value work does not deliver a real business outcome.

Agent sprawl introduces another risk. According to industry estimates, the average

enterprise has already created more than 5,000 agents. But most of these agents don't reach production and are ungoverned, introducing risks including data corruption, security vulnerabilities, and unauthorized exposure of confidential information.

This is the trap many CIOs can't seem to escape. Organizations have made the investments, but they are not seeing results. And pulling the obvious levers either increases cost or increases risk. As a result, AI has not reduced the need for IT—it has amplified it.

The most savvy CIOs know that in order to finally see value from AI investments, they must free up capacity in IT and implement systematic governance. By doing so, IT can redesign processes instead of automating broken ones, prioritize projects based on cost and business impact, and close security and privacy gaps.

“AI has not reduced the need for IT—it has amplified it.”

¹ “PwC's AI performance study: Want ROI from AI?”, Joe Atkinson, Agnes Koops, and Matt Wood, PwC, April 13, 2026.

IT in a bind

When it comes to achieving measurable outcomes, the problem is not only AI—it's the reactive and siloed IT operating model running underneath it. Something breaks and IT responds, and the measure of success is response time. IT also works in silos, with separate teams working in separate tools against separate data. Humans stitch the views together, which only works when change occurs slowly enough to keep up by hand.

But enterprises are becoming increasingly complex. AI-driven development ships more often. Agent sprawl adds a new layer of autonomous actors that make changes of their own. And the surface area IT needs to watch is growing faster than any team can cover.

The volume of tickets is not the real problem. Neither is the service desk. The real problem is the silos that exist between the teams designed to prevent failure, problem and change management, and the live operational data that informs them. Change is the leading cause of incidents, yet change and problem management typically operate separately

from the monitoring that reveals what is actually happening. And when IT cannot connect a change to the incidents it triggers, teams are left with no choice but to react.

This is the bind IT finds itself in. The cost of these silos falls on the engineers who should be redesigning how IT operates and supporting the business. Instead, these engineers spend their time stuck in reactive response loops, unable to focus on turning AI investments into results within IT and across the enterprise.

According to Gartner®, by 2028, over 50% of I&O organizations will operate a service operations environment, compared with less than 10% in 2025.² That's why we believe that to get out of the bind and free up their most valuable resources, organizations must stop spending more on AI and tuning their existing reactive, fragmented approach. Instead, they must invest in a better model that brings operations and service disciplines together in one data foundation.

² Gartner, *Innovation Insight: Create a Service Operations Capability to Reduce Disruption*, Mark Cleary, 30 July 2025.

Fix the underlying process first

AI doesn't fix broken processes; it accelerates them. And that's true in IT and across the business. Inefficient or ineffective processes will still produce poor outcomes—only faster. This helps to explain why much of the current AI spend has delivered so little value.

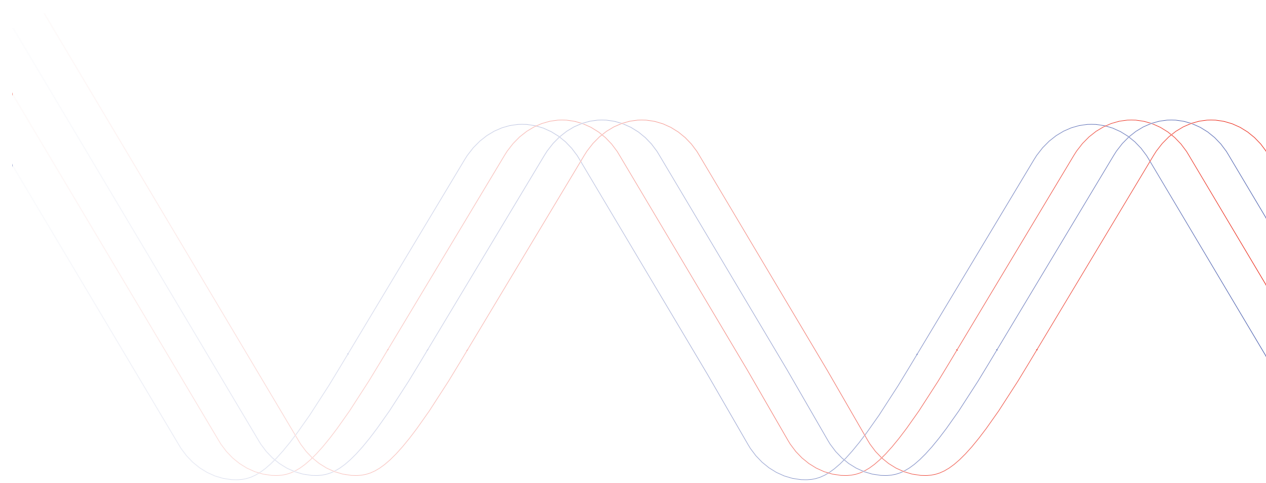
To realize a return on AI investments, organizations must fix the underlying processes first. Savvy CIOs will start with IT so they can free up the resources most skilled at technology process redesign. IT is also under their direct control, making it the lowest-friction place to prove the model and demonstrate results. Once complete, these experts can carry the discipline, best practices, and lessons learned to the rest of the business, where even greater AI value awaits.

The model needed to reset the economics of IT has a clear on-ramp of three stages:

Automate service

Operate as ServiceOps

Prevent, don't respond



Three stages of IT operations optimization



Start with automating the service desk

Most organizations begin with the service desk. But instead of commoditizing it, they glamorize it. For years, the instinct has been to make service management more elaborate: more portals, more workflows, more HR, more facilities, and more finance requests routed through the same queue. This adds surface area, not value.

The high-volume, deterministic work of handling routine requests is one of the easiest IT processes to automate and the quickest way to show value. By using AI to automate the response and resolution of requests—and to assist people on the service

desk with resolving more complex requests—organizations can free up resources who are currently executing predictable steps by hand and create capacity to focus on higher-value work.

**Faster resolutions.
Smarter teams..**

[Learn how AI agents turn every incident into operational intelligence.](#)



Stop the break/fix cycle with ServiceOps

When it comes to resolving incidents, speed still matters. Detection used to be the most difficult part of the incident response process, but today, that's no longer the case because observability quickly alerts teams to issues. The real, costly, unresolved work is analyzing the situation, assembling the right people quickly, and resolving the incident at the root cause.

Root cause analysis (RCA) should take nearly as long as the fix itself. But oftentimes, teams rush this part of the process, which means they never truly resolve the case. As a result, the incident resurfaces, prompting an expensive swarm of people and additional downtime.

Accelerate incident resolution and scale response capabilities with AI+human collaboration.

[Learn more about AI incident response in action.](#)



Solving this never-ending loop with AI requires both strong problem management and RCA. Done well, it combines service management with operational monitoring instead of running them separately. Instead of simply processing requests faster, this approach removes potentially recurring failures. The result reduces the impacts of downtime and recurring outages, including lost revenue, and delivers a greater impact than automating the service desk.

Double the impact with prevention

Processing incidents faster doesn't eliminate the work—or the cost. But stopping incidents before they happen does. That's why the prevention stage is so crucial. It's also the only stage that cuts hard infrastructure spending by consolidating duplicative observability tools, reclaiming the excess capacity provisioned as a failure buffer, and reducing the costs of storing and processing observability data.

While incident response stops existing failures from recurring, **prevention stops new failures before they happen.** And the payoff is worth more than twice as much as service desk optimization.³

³ Avoided business impact is sized by a consistent convention throughout this paper: total outage cost is modeled at roughly seven times direct resolution cost, since lost revenue and slowed operations typically dwarf the direct cost of fixing. Counted conservatively, incident response removes about one recurring outage a year at that full cost, while prevention removes several net-new ones per year, which is most of why prevention is worth multiples of the service desk.

Defining three kinds of value

Fixing IT operations with AI benefits organizations in multiple ways, making it essential for CIOs to identify the different types of value. The three primary benefits of IT operational improvement are:

Productivity gains

Eliminating manual work to free up resources and reclaim time.

Risk reduction

Preventing outages that impact the business.

Cost savings

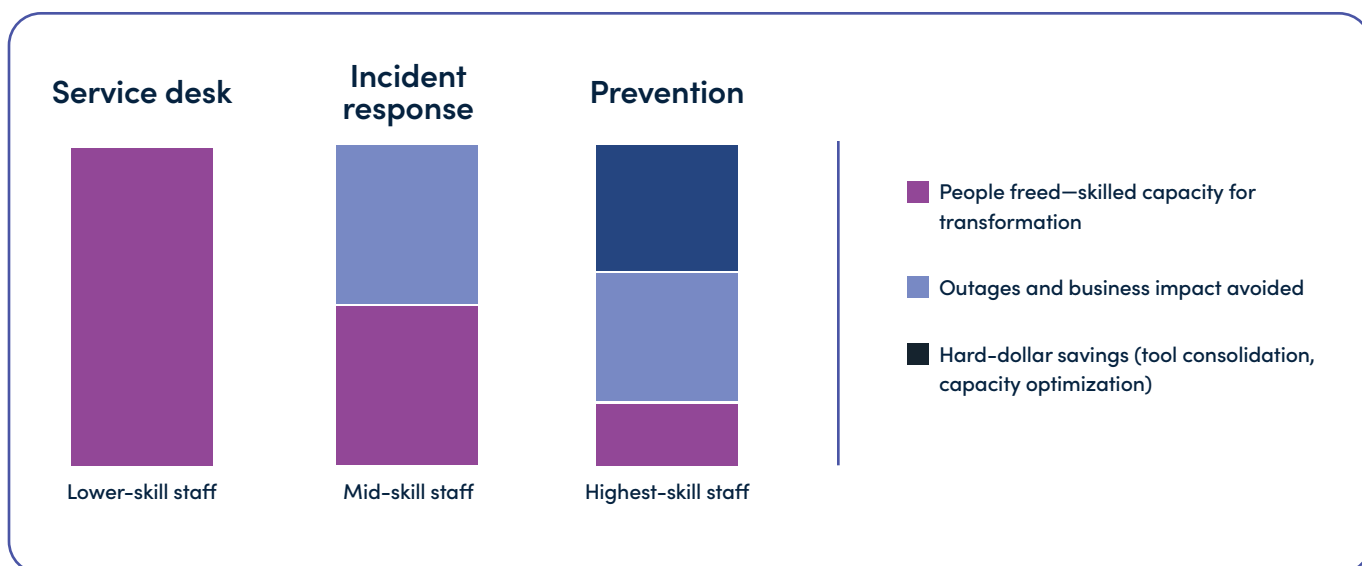
Reducing IT spend beyond headcount, such as software licensing, data storage, or AI tokens.

Because CFOs weigh reclaimed time, risk avoidance, and banked savings on different terms, it's important for CIOs to bring forward

each of these value buckets separately.

Collapsing them into a single figure weakens the argument. And in reality, the mix of the three value buckets shifts as you move across the three stages.

At the service desk stage, nearly all of the value comes from productivity gains when the automation of previously manual high-volume, deterministic work reclaims person-hours. As you move up the model, freed resources account for fewer, yet more senior people, and risks are reduced by avoiding business impact. Finally, cost savings appear at the prevention stage. While prevention frees up fewer resources, it delivers a greater business impact by stopping problems before they start, which CFOs are more likely to recognize and place a higher value on.



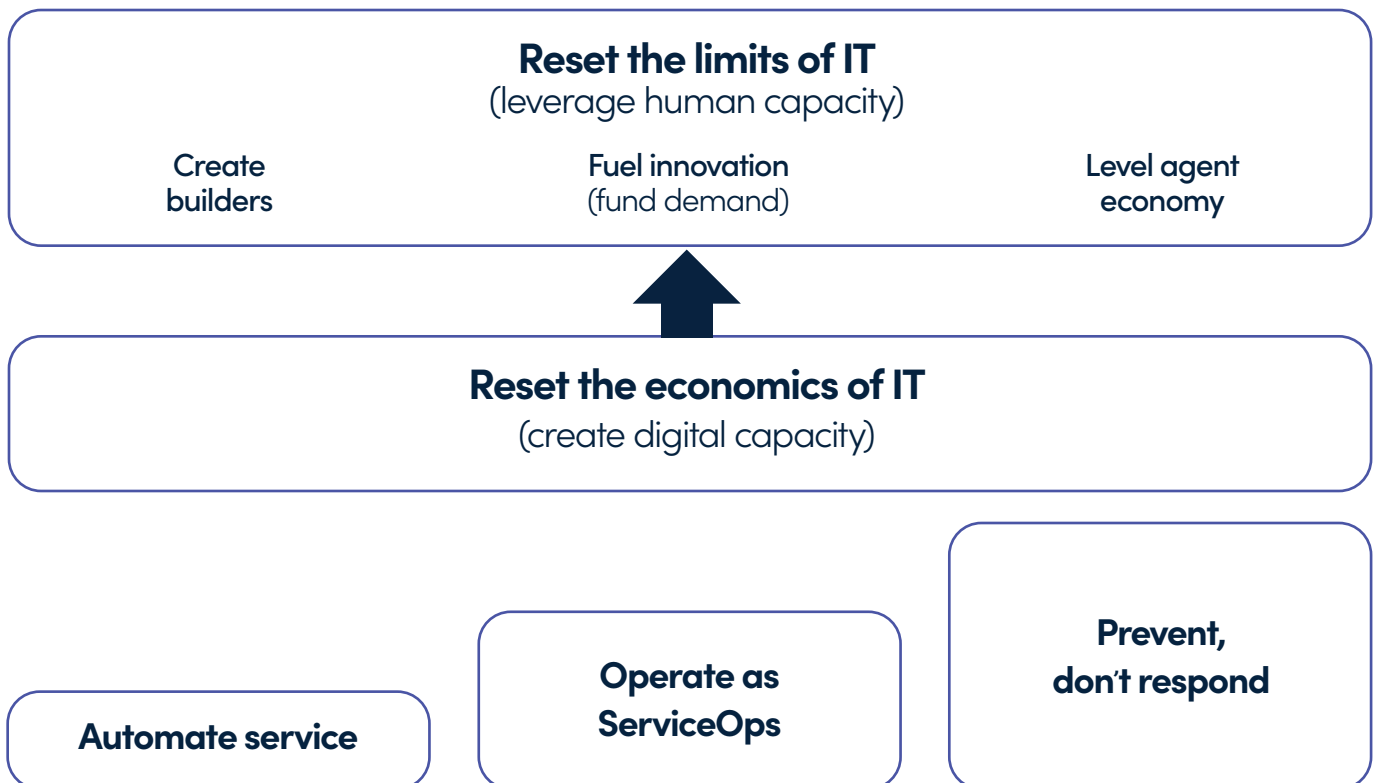
Because prevention is the stage that produces hard-dollar cost savings, beyond people efficiency, it's the stage CFOs can bank on without qualification. Retired tooling and freed-up capacity hit the budget as spend removed rather than risk reduction or time reclaimed. As a result, that enables CIOs to present prevention in the same terms as any other cost-savings program, rather than as a hedge against outcomes that may—or may not—occur.

While all of these returns are valuable, none of them hold up without a trustworthy operational data foundation. And because engineers and agents are only as reliable as the operational truth they work from, achieving value at all three stages depends on accurate discovery, a current configuration management database (CMDB), and service topology resolved through open telemetry (OTEL).

Freeing up people across all three stages is the start of a separate and larger return. When organizations free up senior people, they don't just recover capacity from the break/fix cycle. They can refocus experts with the process knowledge and business relationships to redesign how the enterprise runs. And that is the kind of valuable work agentic AI can't do without them.

Built to support AI-enabled operations, BMC Helix CMDB emphasizes data quality, transparency, and accountability

[Learn more about AI-ready CMDB.](#)



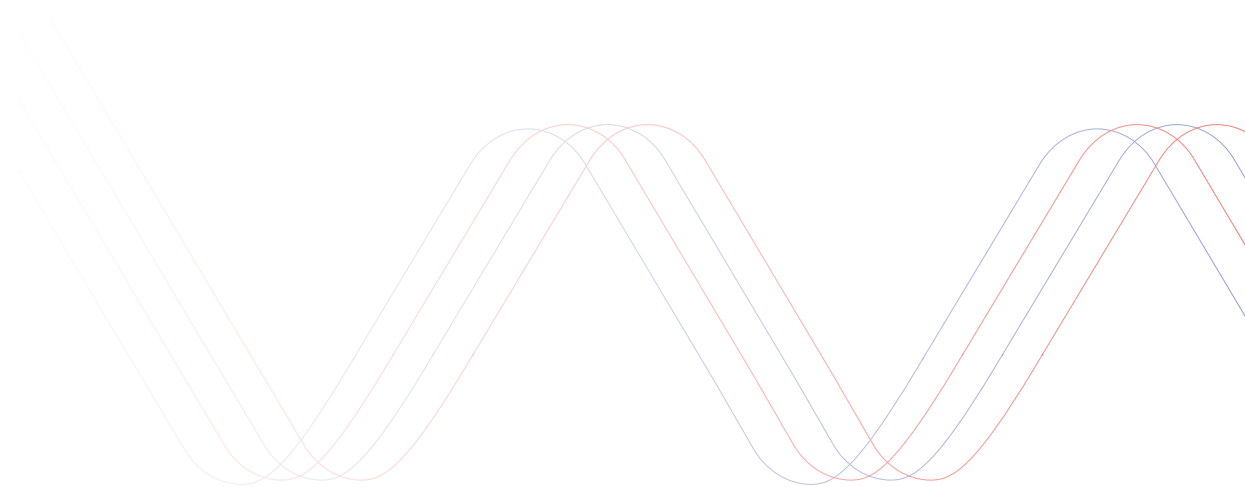
Digital capacity: Turning freed experts into the transformation engine

When a CIO presents AI ROI as a headcount reduction to their CFO, two things generally happen. First, the CFO accepts the number. Then they ask why it isn't bigger.

The reality, however, is that the enterprise's ability to realize maximum value from AI depends on many of the engineers that are freed up. That's why CIOs must proceed with caution. While decimating a department may produce short-term savings, it also produces long-term loss of capabilities and expertise, not to mention a hit to morale for the employees who remain employed.

Instead of leading with a reduction in staff, CIOs should quantify the digital capacity freed up by AI. This highlights the full-time employee (FTE) equivalents made available to unlock the process and lend the technical expertise that's still needed to lead AI-driven transformation across the enterprise.

Resetting the limits of IT is about creating new possibilities for the business. That means redirecting digital capacity to innovation and growth—not eliminating it.



IT as leaders of the agentic AI wave

From enterprise resource planning (ERP) to cloud to the first wave of AI automation, IT teams have been at the forefront of every major technology shift in the enterprise. Not only do IT teams possess the technical knowledge to implement change, they also understand the process relationships needed to translate platform change into business change.

Creating digital capacity benefits organizations in two ways. First, within IT itself, experts can redesign the processes that AI will run so that automation produces a positive return, not just a faster version of the same, often subpar, outcome. Second, across the enterprise, experts can apply that same process—

rethinking discipline to finance, operations, supply chain, or customer experience, any area with potential to realize value from AI. Because these experts led process transformation in prior technology shifts, they are well positioned to lead it again.

Once an organization frees up capacity, the next step is to direct those resources towards the highest-value problems. Which leads to the next set of questions:

- **Which problems should the enterprise tackle first?**
- **How should they prioritize them?**
- **What is the governance model?**

AgentOps: The control layer that governs what agents do

AgentOps is to AI agents what DevOps is to software: a discipline that spans the full lifecycle of agent management, not a feature that governs a single step. When it emerged more than 15 years ago, DevOps served as the response to the growing disconnect between software development and IT operations teams. It introduced order to the delivery process not by restricting who could build solutions, but by establishing processes that governed the building, testing, deployment, and monitoring of the software.

The same approach applies to agents today. Thousands of agents, mostly ungoverned and not operating reliably in production, exist

across enterprises. This reality is not an argument against agentic AI, rather, it's an argument for treating agent operations as a discipline.

The process and technical experts (digital capacity) now freed up by fixing the operating model are the right choice to support AgentOps. They know which workflows will benefit the most from automation—and which ones will not. And while citizen developers are often in the best position to automate the processes they own, they are not skilled at writing test cases, generating test data, or validating edge conditions. These types of guardrails will need to live in the tooling.

Agent creation

The best tooling adds guardrails on top of the tech stack the team already owns instead of requiring them to rip and replace what they're already using. These tools generate test data from trusted transactional sources, automate the testing a business developer would likely skip, and enforce the software development lifecycle (SDLC) discipline to prevent agents from reaching production in a broken or unpredictable state. The result is enterprise vibe coding with vibe testing: the user develops the agent, the tooling validates and tests, and the output is an agent that meets the enterprise governance standards versus one that simply runs.

Agent marketplace

A marketplace provides the ability to share agentic development across the organization and agentic ecosystems. This includes pre-built agents from third-party developers and software companies that are vetted and available for deployment. It also allows business owners to browse an internal catalog and select agents, built by their colleagues, to deploy within their own workflows. The difference between agent marketplaces and traditional catalogs is that agents do not earn a free pass into production—governance follows them in.

Governance

Knowing which agents are running is not the same as knowing whether the agents are delivering results. That's the problem with most governance approaches. Many stop at inventory—a catalog of deployed agents with a kill switch. But a kill switch only helps after things go wrong and someone detects it.

Real governance is continuous. It validates agent output against operational data in real time, flags drift before it causes damage, and aligns agent activity with business outcomes—not just deployment counts. And to make real governance possible, organizations need a strong operational data foundation.

Agent outcomes

An AgentOps practice requires organizations to quantify results in two dimensions: digital capacity generated and operational KPI improvement. Digital capacity refers to the FTE equivalents that are freed up as agents absorb work, measured in the same terms as the CFO conversation: skilled time freed up, not resources cut. Operational KPIs tell IT and the business whether or not things are actually improving.

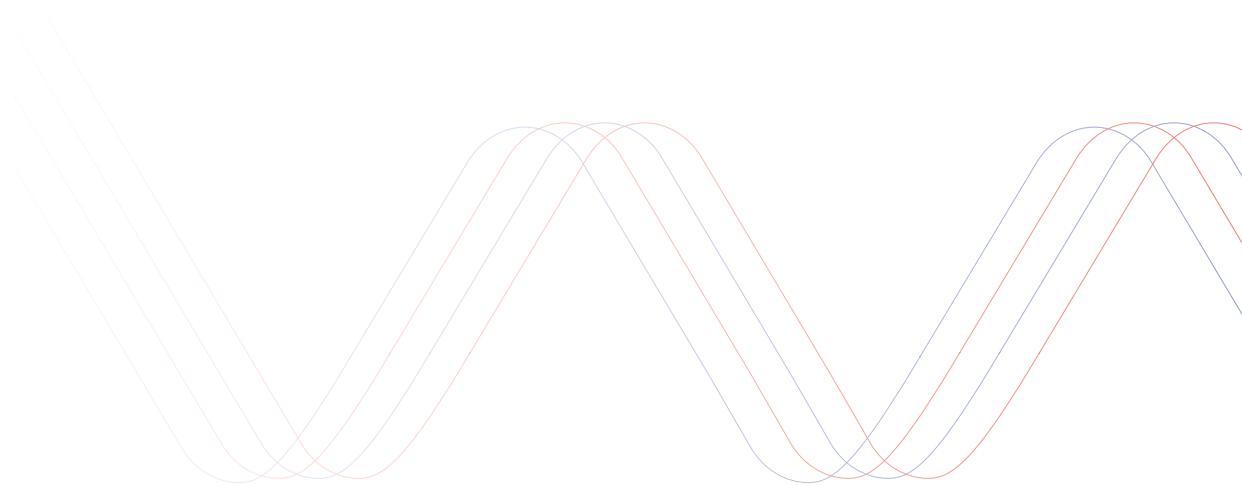
Measures such as mean time to resolve (MTTR), first-call resolution (FCR) rate, and change failure rate show whether the operating model shift is effective—not merely that agents are active. Together, these dimensions demonstrate the return. One tells the CIO how much capacity the enterprise has gained, while the other reveals where the business is reducing downtime, rework, and failure.

Portfolio management

Tracking projects, resources, and business impacts across the business answers the questions surfaced by value measurement—which problems should IT solve, and in what order. While building a marketplace creates options, portfolio management turns those options into a prioritized investment.

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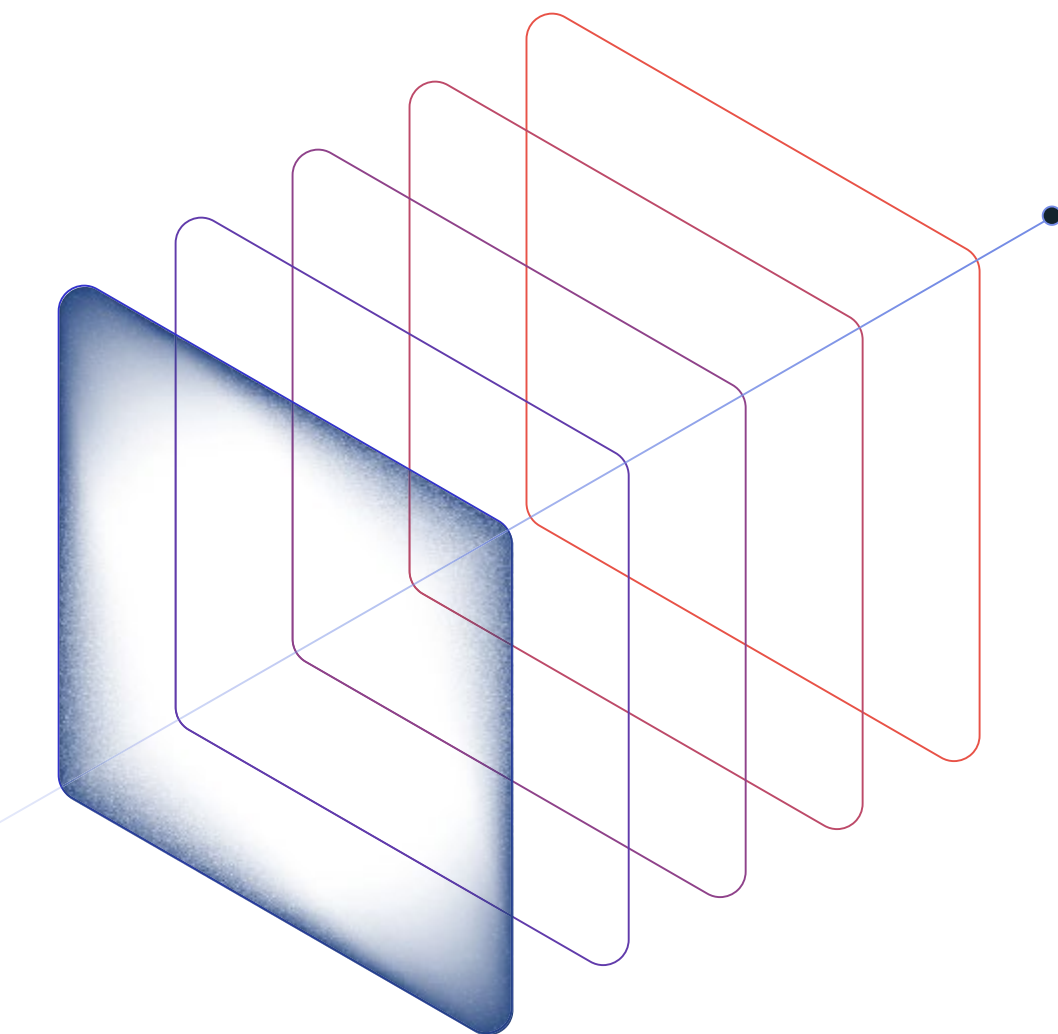
“Knowing which agents are running is not the same as knowing whether the agents are delivering results.”



From reliability to possibility

With capacity and discipline now pointed outward, these strategic IT organizations can look towards the processes and possibilities that define what the business can achieve next.

Resetting the limits of IT shifts the conversation from how IT maintains the enterprise to what IT can make possible for the enterprise. CIOs who make this shift can stop defending a cost center and start leading a transformation. They can confidently answer the board when they ask, “what did our AI investment produce?” And not just in terms of cost reduction, but also in the context of digital capacity that actively expands possibilities for the business.



How BMC Helix helps reset the limits of IT

BMC Helix combines agentic AI with an integrated ServiceOps foundation that connects service management, operations, observability, automation, and configuration data into a continuously improving operational model.

Instead of relying on disconnected AI copilots or fragmented automation layers, BMC Helix lets organizations deliver AgentOps and gain shared operational context, stronger governance, and AI-driven workflows designed to improve resilience and prevention over time and deliver digital capacity to help improve the business.

Learn more at helixops.ai/it-solutions/reset-limits-it.

About BMC Helix

BMC Helix helps the world's most forward-thinking IT organizations reset the economics of IT—bringing IT services, AIOps, and agentic AI together so busywork disappears, incidents are prevented, and compliance just happens. With an industry-leading open-first platform, BMC Helix's dynamic fleet of AI agents augments works across enterprise IT service and operations management to accelerate outcomes for ServiceOps. Learn more at www.helixops.ai.

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