HELP DESK OUTSOURCING:

A Step-by-Step Guide to Success for the Retail Industry

Powering the modern retail organization with always-on tech

Retail stands as one of the most tech-reliant industries today. Amid intense competition, shifting customer demands, economic pressures, and supply chain disruptions, technology has emerged as a saving grace for retailers striving to protect their already-narrow margins.

Whether they are big box, department stores, exclusive luxury boutiques, or online brands, retail organizations now depend on a vast technology ecosystem for inventory management, supply chain, delivery, payment processing, and other critical operations. Point of Sale (POS) devices, store network infrastructure, online ordering platforms, and e-commerce apps combine to form the lifeblood of modern retail experiences – and must work together without a hitch to support the always-on nature of business today.

The POS system in particular has become the focal point of modern retail operations – essential for both operational efficiency, security, and enhanced customer experiences. As a result, any POS downtime comes with a heavy price: industry reports show that retailers lose about **$855 per hour** when a POS device goes down in a single store[1] (impact can vary based on store size and volume).

Unfortunately, retail outages are all too common. **Retail organizations suffer the third-highest IT outage frequency across industries,** with nearly 40% reporting outages at least once per week, New Relic's 2023 State of Observability report[2] found. Outages are also **25% more expensive for retailers** than other businesses, coming in at an average annual cost of $9.95 million, compared to $7.75 million across all industries.

And in today's hyperconnected world, the true effects of downtime stretch beyond a single store and lost sales. A whopping 63% of consumers are likely to abandon a brand they once felt loyal to after a single bad experience, a significant rise from 42% in 2021, TCN's 2024 Consumer Insights survey[3] found.

Supporting critical technology with a high-performing help desk can provide seamless, multi-channel assistance with wide coverage, proactive maintenance, and the ability to quickly scale and adapt to changing requirements. The goal: rapid problem resolution across stores to help retailers maintain operational continuity and customer satisfaction.

Any POS downtime comes with a heavy price: retailers lose about $855 per hour when a POS device goes down in a single store.

- Retail Touchpoints study

Why is effective retail
IT support challenging?

auxis

Retail IT support must be able to resolve high-priority issues in real time to avoid disruptions during peak service hours. But the unique needs of the retail industry, as shown below, make effective support challenging:

1. Retail technology is accelerating

Nearly 90% of retailers plan to increase their technology budget by 6-10%, Total Retail's 2024 Retail Technology Report[4] found. A major chunk (69%) of this budget will be spent on in-store technologies, GlobalData's Retail Technology Investment Plans Survey[5] found.

The increasing array of tech and its growing complexity across hundreds or even thousands of store locations make it both costly and unfeasible for retailers to manage these with in-house IT support.

2. **Different locations may have different support technology**

Many retailers contend with the complexity of managing diverse brands under a single organizational umbrella. Different stores within the same brand may also be using different technology tools and platforms, such as different hardware running the same POS software, or different versions of POS software.

This challenges retailers on many levels, making it difficult to standardize support, troubleshoot processes, and centralize tracking and reporting of sales, inventory, and customer behavior across brands. As a result, retailers need tech support with the ability and expertise to diagnose and solve issues across diverse devices and software versions. Tech support must also be able to support new locations and brands without requiring significant reconfiguration.

3. **Multi-location business models bring unique IT challenges**

Besides unique technical setups, supporting multiple locations generally means dealing with varying time zones and operational hours. Help desks must also be able to support service desk callers with varying levels of tech proficiency, from high school student employees at stores to veteran franchise owners to corporate staff.

4. Security is a critical concern

Retail is one of the most vulnerable industries for cyberthreats, accounting for 10.7% of global cyberattacks[6]. The average cost of a data breach for a retail enterprise in 2023: $3.48 billion, IBM's 2024 Cost of a Data Breach report[7] found.

This makes it critical to have effective infrastructure monitoring at stores and across retail operations for continuity of business and to avoid loss of customer loyalty and sales. But variances in in-store technology can make it challenging to ensure consistent security standards, posing complications in managing software updates, protecting data, and preventing fraud.

Here's where the problem gets worse: the severe IT labor shortage over the last few years has left IT departments across all industries stretched thin - at the same time accelerating technology, security threats, and network reliability issues are causing the volume of help desk requests to skyrocket.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the number of IT support jobs to grow about 10% in the next decade[8]. Tier 1 agent and desktop support analyst ranked among the 10 most in-demand tech jobs for 2025[9], causing salaries to rise.

Job	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile
Desktop support analyst	$55,000	$66,500	$77,250
Help desk – tier 1	$40,500	$49,000	$54,750

Source: CIO.com The 10 most in-demand tech jobs for 2025

Turnover is high from overburdened help desk staff in the U.S., with a recent NICE WEM Global Survey estimating average attrition at a staggering 42%[10]. As a result, many in-house help desks remain stuck in firefighting mode, with understaffed teams delivering inconsistent service, inadequate coverage, limited documentation and metrics, outdated knowledge bases, and issues assigned to any available resource.

Advancing AI and automation can ease the burden somewhat, but they can't replace human agents for more complex issues and security threats. Many retailers also struggle to implement time-saving AI and automation effectively, as long-standing silos prevent deployment at scale[11], states Ivanti's 2024 Everywhere Work Report.

Retail/consumer organizations suffer the third-highest IT outage frequency across industries, with nearly 40% reporting outages at least once per week.

- New Relic State of Observability for Retail report

Building a
high-performance
service desk

Outsourcing help desk services has emerged as a leading solution for ensuring IT teams get the talent they need to deliver exceptional customer experiences in today's dynamic and fiercely competitive retail landscape. Outsourcing can transform an inefficient, reactive help desk into a modern high-performance service desk, offering proactive support, speedy resolution, and modernized, high-quality service.

For retailers, this can mean minimizing operational disruptions during the critical holidays sales season and avoiding costly downtime – securing customer satisfaction and brand reputation through consistent, reliable support.

Today, help desk is one of the most outsourced IT functions, with **65% of organizations outsourcing help desk work,** according to Deloitte's 2024 Global Outsourcing Survey[12]. It is also #1 for reducing costs among IT functions, according to Computer Economics' latest IT Outsourcing Statistics Report[13]. Not surprisingly, **some 80% of organizations outsourcing are expected to increase or retain their investment,** the Deloitte report found.

However, without the right strategy, industry expertise, and specialized knowledge, help desk outsourcing can struggle to achieve the right results. Retailers depend on IT support more than any other industry, but they are also among the most dissatisfied with their IT service experience, HappySignals' 2023 IT experience benchmark report[14] found.

This dissatisfaction often boils down to two factors:

Different store technologies are typically supported by different vendors. Consequently, store workers end up having to raise multiple tickets – spending more time on hold or speaking to different IT support teams if there is more than one tech issue. Retail end users lose an average of 3 hours and 13 minutes of working time during IT incidents, the HappySignals report found.

Poor visibility across infrastructure. With different IT ecosystems across different brands or stores, many help desk providers struggle to provide a single interface or dashboard to monitor and manage all the different types of infrastructure at store locations. This leads to fragmented support, complicated resolution processes, and potential disruption to store operations during critical service hours.

Other reasons for poor service quality include mismatched expectations, inadequately defined or aligned service-level agreements (SLAs), failure to understand client requirements or specialized industry needs, over-emphasis on cost reduction at the expense of quality, and more.

Help desk outsourcing, when executed properly, can help retailers overcome these challenges while focusing internal IT teams on core business functions. Read on to unlock our roadmap to successfully outsourcing your help desk – detailing the considerations, assessments, and strategies retailers need to ensure a seamless, effective transition and quality user support.

> *Retail brands lean on help desks the most to resolve IT issues, but they are also among the most dissatisfied with their IT service experience.*
>
> *- HappySignals Global IT Experience Benchmark Report*

Retail help desk outsourcing: **10 simple steps to achieve value** for your business

1. Start with an end goal in mind

Too many IT outsourcing projects fall apart because retailers don't begin with an end goal in mind. Identifying your business drivers for IT outsourcing – and aligning your leadership team and outsourcing provider behind them – ensures your service desk delivers the value you need.

While help desk outsourcing is #1 for reducing IT costs, cost reduction is rarely an organization's sole business driver. In fact, most companies are realizing they have been underspending in IT as digital transformation becomes essential for competing in today's markets.

Whether your goal is scalability, improved service consistency, expanded coverage and language skills, a higher strategic focus for IT, or another business driver, defining a clear vision from the start is key to accurately measuring your provider's performance and setting the right expectations for the business.

> *Seven in 10 retail executives expect to have AI capabilities in place within the year to help personalize experiences.*
>
> *– Deloitte US Retail Industry Outlook Executive Survey*

Many Organizations Do Not Begin With The End Goal in Mind

What are the business objectives you aim to achieve through help desk outsourcing?

Cost Reduction

Improved Customer & Employee Experience

Improved SLAs & Service Consistency

Expanded Coverage & Language Skills

Scalability

Agility

Security & Controls

Higher Strategic Focus

Real-Time Reporting

2. Clearly define service desk scope and expectations

Most retailers that are still running their help desk internally do not necessarily have a clear understanding of their business requirements when it comes to ticket volumes, hours of operation, and staffing levels. You also need to align the expectations of the group being supported with the cost; for example, is lowering a 3-minute wait time to 5 seconds worth the price of staff and coverage required, or can 3-minute waits be acceptable?

As part of your outsourcing selection process, make sure to invest time in thoroughly defining scope and expectations for your service desk provider. Here are some key considerations to keep in mind:

Coverage hours

Big-box retailers, warehouse clubs, discount retailers, and supermarkets operate in high-volume, low-margin businesses. With hundreds and even thousands of locations across regions, high transaction volumes, and extended operating hours, speed and efficiency in service is paramount – and any POS or IT system failure can have serious consequences for revenue and customer experience.

Even retailers that operate at relatively lower volumes, such as clothing stores and department store chains, require continuous and extended support hours to accommodate in-store and online transactions – particularly as more stores double as mini-warehouses for fulfilling online orders. This is even more important during critical holiday sales periods and promotional events, where a downtime of even a few minutes can put a big dent in expected revenue - and a longer one can hurt retailers' hopes of moving from red to black.

The ability to provide late-night coverage without compromising on quality is a vital aspect to consider when selecting a retail IT support provider, with 18x7 coverage hours often providing the most efficient issue resolution for retail brands.

Role of the service desk

Clear, realistic expectations of what a service desk can provide, and ensuring you pick the right provider for the job, are critical to successful outsourcing. Work with a provider who has retail experience and can align with your business needs, offer **scalable support,** and integrate seamlessly with your existing IT infrastructure.

Personalization

Gone are the days when users were willing to make multiple calls to a help desk to have an issue addressed, repeating the issue each time for every new agent they spoke with. Today, users demand personalization – expecting agents to have their information and history of previous interactions at their fingertips, as well as the latest resolution status available.

This is all the more true for the retail industry, as fast-paced service environments leave little room for repeated disruptions that eat into already-thin margins.

To provide the level of customized service the retail industry requires, a help desk partner should possess AI-powered automation capabilities that can collect and contextualize data in real time and tailor support to each user's unique preferences and needs.

AI and automation capabilities

AI-led automation is the biggest force transforming IT support today. AI-powered automation for the service desk has advanced rapidly in the last few years – particularly with the advent of Generative AI (GenAI) – and has already demonstrated an ability to take on many tasks typically performed by entry-level agents.

AI-powered self-service portals, automated ticketing systems, automated chatbots and AI virtual assistants, predictive analytics, and other initiatives contribute to increased efficiency, faster issue resolution, enhanced user satisfaction, and a more proactive and responsive service desk.

Automation is helping companies solve 80% of tickets[15] in the first interaction for basic tasks like password reset – meaning only two out of 10 tickets need more than one interaction to bring them to closure. Resolution times are also down by about 23% due to automation.

Going a step further, GenAI-powered self-service is helping IT teams provide faster resolutions to recurring issues, while also independently resolving more than half (53%) of tickets raised, the 2024 Freshservice Service Management Benchmark Report[16] found.

Seven in 10 retail executives expect to have AI capabilities in place within the year to help personalize experiences,

Deloitte's 2025 US retail outlook survey[17] found. Yet, retailers rushing to tack on AI need to be cautious as the capabilities for implementing such cutting-edge technologies can vary tremendously across providers. Be sure to research and ask detailed questions about the AI skillset of the help desk outsourcers you are considering to ensure you receive the right support.

> *GenAI-powered self-service is independently resolving more than half (53%) of IT tickets raised.*
>
> *- Freshservice Service Management Benchmark Report*

Unified care models

Exceptional support partners can extend beyond basic IT service desk functionality to deliver a unified care model for monitoring and managing all in-store technologies and operational support topics from a single support team. The result: seamless resolution of IT as well as operational issues across stores – malfunctioning POS systems, network connectivity issues, missing supply orders, questions about marketing promotions, etc.

By offering a single, convenient touchpoint and a unified view of IT and operational tickets, their status, issue resolution timelines, etc., these unified care models can save store staff valuable time figuring out the right source for issues and focus on what matters: serving customers.

SLAs with XLAs

Traditionally, clients and service providers are bound by service-level agreements (SLAs) which establish mutually agreed-upon terms, guidelines, and metrics. But these are now increasingly complemented by experience-level agreements (XLAs), where the priority is the customer experience and business impact.

XLAs expand service focus from merely meeting metrics to aligning IT services with operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and smooth service delivery. While SLAs focus on specific metrics like resolution times, XLAs consider a broader range of factors including user satisfaction, usability, and the overall end-user experience to provide amore holistic approach to performance measurement.

XLAs are also adaptable to diverse service demands and evolving customer expectations as they emphasize continuous improvement, compared to predefined and sometimes rigid SLAs. For instance, rather than just measuring average response time, an XLA can focus on ensuring POS system uptime for fast, uninterrupted checkouts. Another XLA could measure the retail staff's satisfaction with help desk support, ensuring agents understand the unique needs of retail technology and operations under time-sensitive conditions.

Today, 45% of RFPs incorporate XLAs as a key ask, states a recent Everest Group survey, while there's been a 35% increase in engagements with XLAs as contractual commitments[18].

Differences Between SLAs and XLAs

| SLAs	XLAs
SLAs apply a technical lens on objectives and fail to portray a true picture of end-user experience	XLAs focus on all parameters of an end-user experience lens to present a complete picture, helping to mitigate situations where service metrics may seem superficially sound but hide poor service delivery and enterprise dissatisfaction
SLAs working on a penalty-based model are a good measure of standard requirements	XLAs involve both reward and penalty, motivating collaborative efforts to make improvements for end users
SLAs are static metrics, thus only the ability to cope with disruption gets measured	XLAs are continuously evolving, thus the ability to eliminate disruptions also gets measured

Source: Everest Group

> *Today, 45% of RFPs have XLAs as a key ask, while provider engagements with XLAs as contractual commitments jumped by 35%.*
>
> *- Everest Group research*

3. Determine levels of support and escalations

It's a common misconception that a high-performance service desk will handle every issue. While it should function as a one-stop shop for end users, it's only one component of a solid IT support model. A well-structured service desk is essential to effectively address the diverse and evolving challenges in the ever-changing IT landscape.

Today, depending on your business requirements, retailers can opt between the traditional tiered support model and intelligent swarming support.

![auxis]

Tiered Support Model

Escalation-based Process

Swarming Support Model

Collaboration-based Process
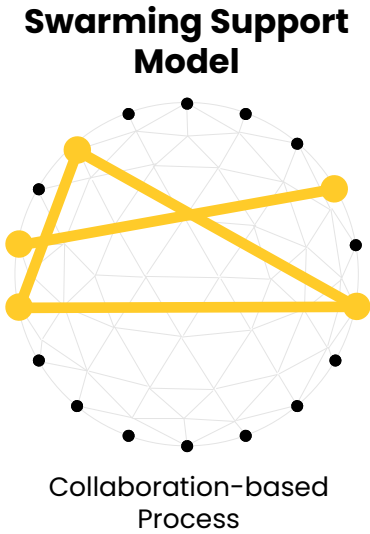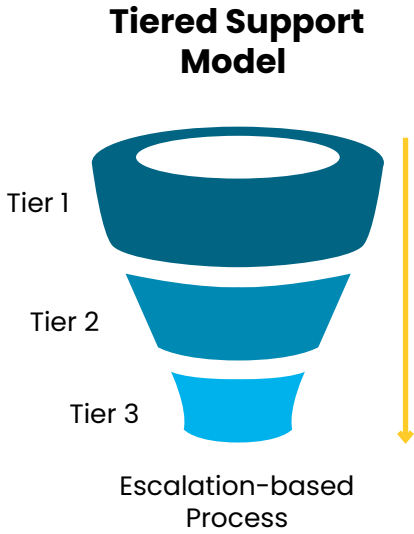
Tiered support model

An outsourced service desk generally handles basic Level 1 support, with a defined process for escalating complex issues to higher, more specialized tiers. Quality providers may also offer more advanced Level 2 support, as well as technology that supports Level 0 self-service channels like chatbots or AI virtual assistants.

- **Level 0:** *User-retrievable information and* **self-support with zero agent interaction** *through the organization's AI-powered self-service portal.*

- **Level 1: Basic level of end-user support** *involving usage issues, access privileges, and recording requests that need escalation to higher levels. L1 agents – which now increasingly include AI bots along with human resources - are trained to resolve known problems, fulfilling service requests by following documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) or scripts.*

- **Level 2:** *Experienced and more knowledgeable technicians provide* **in-depth end-user troubleshooting from the backend,** *assessing incidents or problems and providing resolution for issues that L1 cannot handle.*

- **Level 3:** *The top level of tech support, providing* **expert and specialized knowledge of a specific product or service.** *This group typically has access permission to the highest level of technical resources available for issue resolution. Reproduces problems in a lab environment, involving root cause engineering by senior or specialized technical engineers if necessary.*

- **Level 4: Outsourced support for products or components that are not directly serviced by the organization.** *Examples include printer support, machine maintenance, vendor software support, and depot support. Issues or requests that are forwarded to Tier 4 support are monitored by the help desk until resolution.*

To maximize the effectiveness of this model, here's what organizations need to keep in mind: every business uses different systems and applications, and a help desk may not be able to support less-frequently used technologies in the Level 1 tier. Level setting at the start ensures both you and your service provider are clear about the service desk's role within the IT support model.

That doesn't just mean defining Level 1 support. To avoid misaligned expectations, it's vital to spell out what issues are covered at every level, what the escalation points are, and who will provide higher levels of support across key applications and infrastructure.

🌐 Swarming support model

The swarming model is a collaborative and cross-functional approach to resolve significant and complicated support issues in real time. Rather than adhering to a strict tiered structure where issues escalate to specialized teams, swarming involves a diverse group of support personnel collaborating simultaneously and sharing knowledge to address and resolve reported problems quickly and effectively.

Swarming provides an alternative framework to the traditional tiered approach. A quality help desk provider should be able to provide both support models, with flexibility to tailor the approach based on the unique needs and preferences of the client. This is critical to maximize the effectiveness of IT support delivery in today's fast-paced environment, and a provider who is not able to offer both options will be unable to effectively address the diverse and evolving needs of their clients.

4. **Choose the model that's right for you – dedicated or shared resources**

Outsourcing providers offer two models for help desk support: dedicated and shared. In both scenarios, a quality provider should offer support that serves as an extension of your in-house team, using the same processes in a remote format.

For a retailer, the model you choose should depend on your number of locations, ticket volume, and how much specialized support is required for your infrastructure. For instance, if you are a big-box retailer or supermarket chain with high transaction volumes and multiple systems like POS, self-checkout, digital signage, etc., you need a dedicated support team. That's also true for multi-brand retailers managing POS systems, inventory platforms, etc., across different brands.

Shared services are ideal for retailers who have more standardized IT infrastructure and need less customized support, such as off-price retailers or those with a limited chain of stores. This drives efficiency and cost savings by allowing organizations to share resources performing similar work. Dedicated support allows greater customization, offering the ability to handle more complex systems and procedures with outsourced teams dedicated solely to your account.

Standardizing your organization's technology solutions can be a long-term strategy for simplifying help desk support. Overly customized service desks are more expensive and lose the leverage provided by shared service models.

What organizations should keep top of mind when making this decision is that users value specialized expertise, irrespective of the model. Retailers must consider factors such as team size, coverage hours, complexity, support for specialized systems, and overall cost when deciding on the model you want to adopt for your organization.

Prioritizing the alignment of the chosen model with your unique needs ensures an effective and responsive support system.

The cost of replacing IT staff is roughly equivalent to six to nine months of their salary, coming to about $35,000 to $52,000 in additional costs for an employee earning $70,000 per year.

– Society for Human Resource Management HR Benchmarking report

5. **Defining the best location strategy based on your business footprint – do you need nearshore, onshore, or offshore?**

IT leaders ranked physical proximity as the #1 factor for choosing an IT outsourcing provider on Computer Economics' report – even if a lower cost could be achieved in a more distant location. Instead of looking for providers in far-off locations offering the lowest cost per ticket, retailers are increasingly prioritizing service providers within the same geographical region due to reduced operational challenges, easier management of data residency issues, and compatibility of language and time zone.

In fact, access to talent trumped cost optimization for the first time since the pandemic as the biggest outsourcing driver across functions, Deloitte found.

But locations without highly educated populations can struggle to provide the skilled talent needed for effective help desk service. Onshore locations incur the highest costs and have the most difficulty finding and retaining quality resources willing to work night shifts. The cost of replacing IT staff in the U.S. is also high – roughly equivalent to six to nine months' salary, or about $35,000 to $52,000 in additional costs for an employee earning $70,000 per year, according to the latest HR Benchmarking report[19] from the Society for Human Resource Management.

Latin America, over the last couple of decades, has become a go-to destination for North American help desk organizations. Similar or overlapping time zones with the U.S. enable the real-time collaboration needed to resolve urgent IT issues quickly.

Roughly 70% of retail brands plan to increase onshoring or nearshoring over the next three years to align operations like IT with locations that balance cost, resilience, and speed, states Bain & Company's 2025 Retail Holiday Newsletter[20].

> *Roughly 70% of retail brands plan to increase onshoring or nearshoring over the next three years to align operations with locations that balance cost, resilience, and speed.*
>
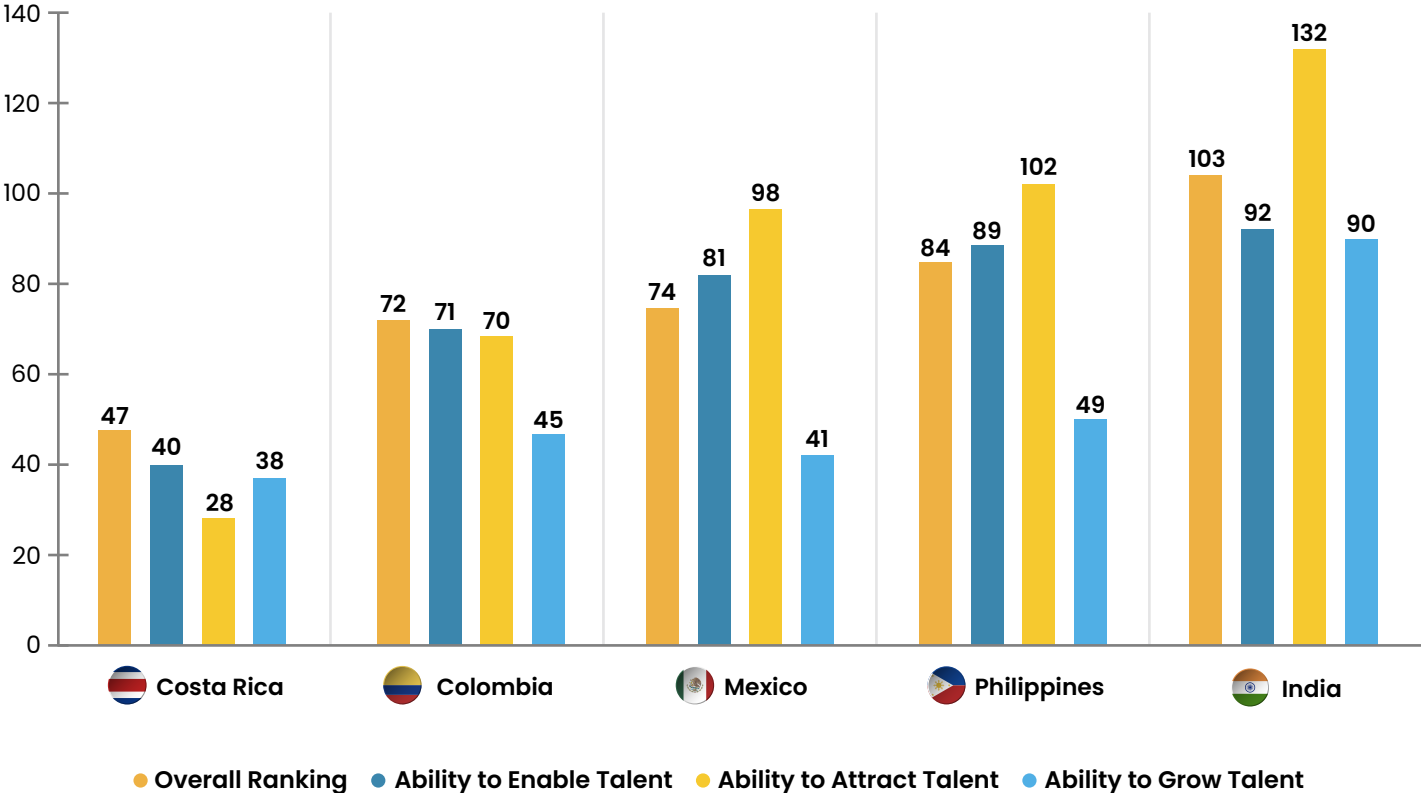> *- Bain & Company 2025 Retail Holiday Newsletter*

By comparison, the bottom-of-the-barrel pricing and overnight shifts needed to align with U.S. business hours in offshore locations like India and the Philippines leave many providers struggling to attract "A team" resources capable of resolving urgent help desk issues quickly. Asia's notoriously high turnover is also at its worst during overnight shifts, impacting consistency and performance.

The latest World Economic Forum-endorsed INSEAD Global Talent Competitiveness Index underscores India and Latin America's widening talent gap. India's talent competitiveness has decreased every year since 2020 on the INSEAD Index[21] as difficulty attracting and retaining talent in a saturated labor market leads to an increased skills mismatch for employers. India ranks 103rd globally on the report, while top nearshore markets like Costa Rica, Colombia, and Mexico score significantly higher – coming in at 47, 72, and 74, respectively. The Philippines ranked 84th.

Nearshoring makes sense from a cost perspective as well – average wages of tech employees in Latin America are just about 38% of those in the U.S., according to the 2024 CBRE Scoring Tech Talent report[22]. Overall labor arbitrage averages 30-50% in LATAM, although savings can vary by country.

The below chart shows how Latin America's talent competitiveness outpaces Central and Southern Asia in every area:

Global Talent Competitiveness Index Rankings for Top Outsourcing Destinations

Country	Overall Ranking	Ability to Enable Talent	Ability to Attract Talent	Ability to Grow Talent
Costa Rica	47	40	28	38
Colombia	72	71	70	45
Mexico	74	81	98	41
Philippines	84	89	102	49
India	103	92	132	90

Source: INSEAD Global Talent Competitiveness Index

Latin America's multilingual nature is also key to retail IT support. By combining strong English fluency with the ability to easily service the large percentage of Spanish-speaking employees in many areas, nearshore providers ensure issues are communicated accurately to every user and instructions for achieving speedy resolution are clear.

Latin America further offers robust multilingual capabilities, supporting global store locations with proficiency in French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Russian, Thai, Japanese, Arabic, and other languages.

> *Top nearshore markets outperformed the leading Asia-based locations on the latest Global Talent Competitiveness Index, with Costa Rica, Colombia, and Mexico scoring 47, 72, and 74, respectively, vs. India at 103 and the Philippines at 84.*

- INSEAD Global Talent Competitiveness Index

6. Don't fall for the myth of cost per ticket

The old adage "you get what you pay for" has never been truer than with outsourcing vendors. Solutions that look attractive on the surface like cheap Level 1 ticket servicing often hide ugly surprises, like poorly trained staff and frequent ticket escalations.

For a low cost-per-ticket model to work, organizations need high volumes, extremely standardized systems, and low service delivery expectations. Engaging a generalized outsourcer without deep retail expertise and with bottom-of-the-barrel pricing is unlikely to deliver the specialized service and retail industry experience needed to successfully support multi-location business models and diverse technology systems – over-emphasizing cost reduction at the expense of customer satisfaction.

7. Be sure you're comparing apples to apples when you quantify your business case

The business drivers you identified for outsourcing your help desk should drive your business case. But make sure you're comparing apples to apples when determining whether you should leverage an outsourcer or operate your help desk internally to achieve your goals. Too many organizations fail to realize the full cost of operating a service desk when building their business case, leading to an improper evaluation.

Hidden costs like technology, quality assurance, knowledge management maintenance, and workforce management are built into vendor prices – but often overlooked as part of internal assessments. The cost of recruiting, retraining, and onboarding agents is another significant help desk expense that's rarely considered but can, as mentioned previously, easily add up to over $100,000 per employee.

Outsourcing eliminates the pain and cost of handling this high turnover rate, keeping your time and money focused on business priorities.

8. Establish a robust process documentation and transition plan

Too many outsourcing providers regard transition as an afterthought, but it sets the foundation for long-term success. Taking time to properly transfer knowledge from one team to the next – and making sure documentation is updated – creates service desks that truly function as extensions of in-house teams.

It also establishes a service-centric model, enabling agents to consistently deliver exceptional performance with repeatable processes anyone can follow. Traditional help desks are people-centric, struggling to complete tasks if a resource with critical knowledge or skills isn't available.

Many help desk issues can be avoided if the provider makes the effort to understand the client's business environment and end-user requirements – and keep their knowledge base updated.

Today, AI-led automation can play a big role in enhancing providers' understanding of their client's business, delivering more personalized support, and maintaining an updated knowledge base. This includes using data analysis to identify common issues, patterns, and trends in user requests; AI algorithms to automatically update and maintain the knowledge base that can also feed into self-service portals; and continuous learning capabilities that can evolve their understanding of the business as it changes.

Challenge potential vendors to detail a robust knowledge transfer process that includes documentation, effective training, and a structured solution for deploying tools. Dig into how the transition will occur, how you will know it's completed, if the provider has AI, automation, and other advanced capabilities to keep information fresh, and how the vendor measures success.

> *Average wages of tech employees in Latin America are about 38% of the average salaries in the U.S.*

- CBRE Scoring Tech Talent

9. Consider selection criteria carefully – and choose the partner who defines what's most important to you

Now that you have a clear vision of what you want from a service desk, it's easier to look for the right vendor. Basic expectations are obvious, covering account management support, reporting, and analytics.

But an outstanding partner should also offer proven toolsets that help you work smarter in an increasingly challenging and competitive environment, including AI and automation, best practices like ITIL, and service management certifications.

Think beyond cost and look for a high-performance provider who wants to develop a long-term partnership with your organization. Demand continuous improvement plans and a commitment to excellent ticket servicing with minimal escalations. Zero in on providers who offer a proactive approach – for instance, minimizing ticket volumes by identifying repeat issues and addressing the root cause.

It's also essential to pick partners with experience supporting the unique challenges of multi-location and multi-brand business models, proving their ability to understand the intricacies of supporting hundreds or even thousands of stores where the caller may be a retail worker with a limited understanding of IT systems.

Your partner must be capable of providing advanced solutions for centralized management and standardized processes, even across geographically dispersed sites. Retailers also require partners who prioritize rapid issue resolution to prevent disruptions to customer transactions.

Many help desk outsourcing providers fall short in their ability to customize solutions and provide a good end-user experience, with operations that depend on economies of scale delivered by labor arbitrage and large service volumes.

Access to talent trumped cost optimization for the first time since the pandemic as the #1 outsourcing driver.

- Deloitte's Global Outsourcing Survey

Consider these key criteria to select a service desk partner who will help you provide quality service for the long term:

What to Look for in Your Outsourcing Partner

1	**Proven Toolsets & AI Automation Capabilities**
2	**Real-Time Analytics & Performance Improvement Mindset**
3	**Robust Knowledge Management Practices**
4	**Strong Quality Controls & Security Maturity**
5	**High-Caliber Talent with Strong Recruiting & Retention**
6	**Contractual SLAs and XLAs**
7	**Flexible Contract Terms & "Spirit of the Agreement"**
8	**Deep Experience Providing Retail IT Support**

Cultural Fit "Extension of Your Team" Philosophy

Long-Term Partnership Focus

10. Trust the process!

Help desk outsourcing has come a long way from when the in-house IT help desk was outsourced purely for cost savings. Today, employee experience is paramount and service quality is ranked higher than metrics that SLAs traditionally capture, like the speed of the first response or the number of tickets closed.

Technologies that can assist in providing a better service experience have also advanced vastly: automation, self-service portals, multi-channel support, remote assistance tools, and analytics, as well as the potential demonstrated by Generative AI and agentic AI.

However, finding the right partner to implement those technologies effectively is of utmost importance. Given the fast pace of change and number of challenges that retailers face today, you need an outsourcing partner with the flexibility to evolve and meet your changing needs as well as provide continuous improvement.

The long-term success of outsourcing your help desk hinges on executing it correctly: picking the right vendor, outsourcing the right processes, and putting the right tools in place. This is essential for retail help desks to move from the old "break-fix" approach to a proactive high-performance service desk, upscaling end-user experiences with better processes, governance, and proactive management.

Like any new venture, help desk outsourcing is bound to experience some initial bumps in the road. But if retailers clearly understand the value outsourcing can provide – and remain genuinely committed to making it work with the partner they select – the bumps will be irrelevant in the rearview mirror as you follow the path to success.

> *Help desk is one of the most outsourced IT functions, with 65% of organizations outsourcing help desk work.*
>
> *- Deloitte Global Outsourcing Survey*

About Auxis

Trusted by large enterprise and mid-market organizations across industries for nearly 30 years, Auxis is a management consulting and Latin America outsourcing firm that helps organizations modernize and scale their back-office operations through innovative processes, technologies, and organizational structures. Core solutions include IT, Finance, and BOS Nearshore Outsourcing; Industry-specific Services, Intelligent Automation; Cloud; and Business Intelligence.

Auxis' retail industry solutions merge next-generation digital innovation, optimized processes, and the advantages of nearshoring to deliver best-in-class services that span IT store support; customer care; POS operations; one-of-a-kind remote compliance audits and coaching; dynamic analytics; and back-office support. Leading retail operators rely on Auxis' innovative solutions to elevate customer experiences, boost profitability, and unlock exceptional results.

A nearshore outsourcing pioneer, Auxis has appeared annually on IAOP's elite Outsourcing Global 100 list since 2015, is a Platinum Partner and an Americas Partner of the Year for the leading intelligent automation platform, UiPath, and is a corporate member of the Service Desk Institute. To learn more, visit www.auxis.com.

Sources

1. Retail Touchpoints study, 2021

2. "2023 State of Observability" New Relic, 2023

3. "2024 Consumer Insights Survey Results" TCN, December 3, 2024

4. "2024 Retail Technology Report" Total Retail, September 2024

5. "Retail Technology Investment Plans Survey" GlobalData, May 2023

6. "Distribution of cyberattacks across worldwide industries in 2023" Statista, March 22, 2024

7. "Cost of a Data Breach Report 2024" IBM, Jul 30, 2024

8. "Employment projections data for computer support specialists, 2023-33" Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2024

9. White, Sarah K. "The 10 most in-demand tech jobs for 2025 — and how to hire for them" CIO.com, Jan 10, 2025

10. "Contact Centers – From Attrition to Retention." WEM GLOBAL SURVEY REPORT, NICE, January 2022

11. "2024 Everywhere Work Report" Ivanti, April 10, 2024

12. "Global Outsourcing Survey 2024" Deloitte, 2025

13. "IT Outsourcing Statistics– Outsourcing Trends and Cost/Service Experiences for 11 Key IT Functions" Computer Economics (Avasant Research), 2023

14. "The 10th Global IT Experience Benchmark: H1/2023" HappySignals, November 2023

15. "IT Service Management Benchmark Report" Freshworks, 2023

16. "2024 Freshservice IT Service Management Benchmark Report" Freshworks, May 7, 2024

17. Edsall, Daniel; Oliver, Doug, Skelly, Lupine. "2025 US Retail Industry Outlook" Deloitte, January 21, 2025

18. Jaiswal, Shivam; Singh, Udit. "Exploring the Paradigm Shift of Experience Level Agreement-based Contracting and its Impact on Enterprises." Everest Group, 2023

19. SHRM HR Benchmarking Report, Society for Human Resource Management, 2022

20. Cheris, Aaron; Grichel, Kurt; Kamel, Marc-André; Koszyk, Stephanie; Rigby, Darrell. "Top 5 for 2025: Retailer Resolutions and Forecast for the New Year" Bain & Company, January 2025

21. "The Global Talent Competitiveness Index" INSEAD, 2023

22. "Scoring Tech Talent 2024" CBRE, September 4, 2024

auxis

www.auxis.com