

MyIT – CONSUMERIZING THE I.T. EXPERIENCE FOR ENTERPRISE USERS

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Think about how productive your company's employees could become if each enterprise user had a personal IT assistant. The assistant would follow the users 24/7 and act as a personal emissary to the IT department. If users needed something from IT, they would simply tell the assistant. The assistant can do password changes, provide access to enterprise applications, help with issues, and identify the location of the nearest available printer.

Now, think of the impact on user productivity and the reduction in calls to the service desk when everyone has an assistant. Of course, this level of personal service isn't feasible. Or is it?

What if instead of assigning a person to help, you created a virtual assistant on the user's PC, smartphone, tablet, and other devices? The assistant would be there to help, regardless of where the user is located or the device is being used. The assistant would give users a single place to go whenever they needed help from IT.

BMC has been working on just such an assistant. It's called MyIT. Read on for more details.

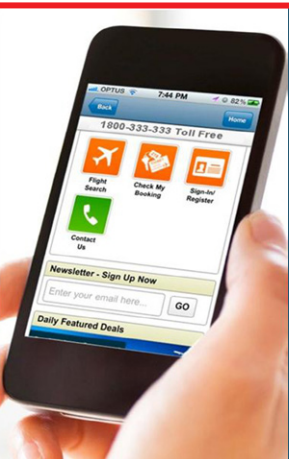
What the User Expects

Enterprise users today are accustomed to convenience and simplicity when they use technology in their personal lives. For example, from their smartphones,

they go to their online banking sites and handle all of their banking business from a single access point. They view account balances, write checks, transfer funds, and perform a variety of other tasks. Or they may go to an airline site to make reservations, purchase tickets, select seats, and check flight status. From their tablet computers, they can choose from an almost limitless number of applications and download them for immediate use. They can also shop online and chat with a company representative. The possibilities are endless.

It's only natural that people would demand the same kind of experience in their professional lives. In fact, knowledge workers of the generation now coming into the workforce are called digital natives because they have grown up in a world in which technology is a natural part of their everyday lives. They expect the same kind of technology experience in their workplace.

People want the same level of convenience and simplicity everywhere. They want a single point of access for all of their IT needs, whether they are requesting a service, getting help with a problem, or just asking a question. And they want to interact from whatever device is most convenient at the time — a PC, tablet computer, or personal smartphone.



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IT has certainly evolved over the years with respect to interacting with users. The service desk provides a place where people can go to request services or report problems. Many organizations have implemented service catalogs where users serve themselves in requesting services.

But even with self-service, users still have to navigate multiple channels — with a different interface — to get what they need. So the experience with IT can be disjointed. To report a problem, they may have to submit a ticket in an incident and problem management system. To request a service, they may have to go to an online service catalog. If they want access to an enterprise application or simply to ask a question — such as “Where is the nearest printer?” — they usually have to contact the service desk.

The gap between the users' need for a consumer-like experience when interacting with IT and the actual experience may create friction between IT and users. That friction impedes efficiency and drags down employee productivity. Friction may also reduce employee morale because it makes the employee's job more difficult.

The gap has another implication for IT. If users are not getting the experience they expect, they may decide to take action on their own, perhaps tapping outside sources for technology. This is evident in the trends referred to as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT).

As users outsource bits and pieces of their experience to external sources, the IT department loses customers and control of technology.

Bridging the Gap

To bridge the gap, IT must create a whole new “consumerized” experience for user interactions with IT. This experience should expand on the concept of user self-service. However, this experience must go beyond the service catalog and beyond presenting users with a screen full of icons.

BMC's approach is to create a single virtual assistant right on the user's device. The user can turn to this assistant for all interactions with IT: installing applications, gaining access to secure content, requesting help with problems, viewing the status of items, and just simply asking questions.

The assistant is backed by a whole ecosystem of solutions that work in concert with the assistant to create the consumerized experience. To be effective, the assistant and supporting ecosystem must meet several critical requirements.

PROVIDE CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE ACROSS MULTIPLE DEVICES

People want the flexibility to use different devices to perform different job functions. Sales representatives may prefer to use their desktop computers for writing reports, their tablets for making presentations, and their smartphones for checking product availability while on the road.

That's why the assistant should be available on every device, whether the device is owned by the enterprise or by the user. A consistent look and feel across devices is also vital because consistency allows users to switch devices without having to learn multiple interfaces. The assistant should, however, make sure the interface works effectively for each device type to take full advantage of the capabilities of each platform.

BE EASY TO DEPLOY AND USE

Ease of deployment is a must-have. People should be able to download the assistant effortlessly to their devices, including their personal devices. The first time the assistant is activated, it should automatically register the device on which it resides. From that point on, the assistant becomes the single conduit between the user and the IT department.

Once the device is registered, it is made subject to the control of IT and managed to any level that IT requires. If the assistant is installed on a personal device and the user later uninstalls it, the device should automatically be returned to the state it was in when it was solely for personal use. That might include wiping corporate data from the device.

Finally, users are accustomed to interacting with consumer sites using natural language. For example, they can ask a question such as, “Where can I find a fuel filter for my 1987 Chevy?” The assistant should allow the same level of natural language communication, supporting such questions as, “How can I get access to the Salesforce.com application?”

GUIDE USERS THROUGH PROBLEM SOLVING

The assistant should do more than accept and forward an incident ticket when people need assistance. The assistant should also take an active role and guide them through a problem-solving process.

For example, a user may tell the assistant that he is having a problem accessing a particular enterprise application. The assistant could search a knowledge base and present the user with a suggested resolution or known workaround. If the response is inadequate, the user could click a button to ask for additional help. At this point, the assistant could query the user for a convenient time to schedule a one-on-one appointment with the appropriate IT support person so that the user’s work schedule is not disrupted.

In some cases, problem resolution may require the addition of software to the user’s device. For example, a user may report from her mobile device that she is having trouble accessing a particular Web site or opening a PDF document.

The assistant could look up the configuration of the user’s device from the asset management system that

resides in the ecosystem and determine that the required version of the Firefox browser or the PDF reader is not installed. The assistant tells the user that she needs additional software. It then transports her, in context, to the enterprise app store component of the ecosystem that holds preapproved corporate applications. The assistant highlights the Firefox browser (or PDF reader) in the app store. A click on the download button installs the software. The process is virtually identical to getting apps for personal use.

Without the assistant, the user would have had to call IT and describe the problem. The help desk would probably have suggested that the user go to a particular Web site to download the software. The user would then have to take responsibility for finding and installing the application.

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BE USER AWARE

A good assistant must be user-aware. That requires the ability to determine such factors as a user’s access device, his or her organization and role, and current location. For example, the assistant can tap the GPS tracking capability of a mobile user’s smartphone to determine a location.

In addition, the assistant should be aware of what the user is doing an act accordingly. If a user is making presentations from his tablet computer using a PowerPoint deck stored on SharePoint, the assistant should push the latest version of the deck to the user’s tablet.

LEVERAGE EXISTING I.T. SERVICE MANAGEMENT INVESTMENTS

Many IT organizations have invested heavily in the service desk, change management, and device management. The assistant should leverage these investments wherever possible. For example, the assistant should tap the incident tracking capabilities of the service desk solution to ensure that all incidents are handled to completion. The assistant should also take advantage of the service catalog to automate request fulfillment.

It's important that the assistant be vendor-agnostic with respect to the systems it supports, as long as those systems provide the required capabilities.

Closing thoughts

Today's enterprise users expect to the same kind of experience with technology at work as they do in their personal lives. Most IT organizations, however, are not meeting this expectation. As a result, users are becoming frustrated in their interactions with IT. That drags down productivity and may drive users to go around IT and seek outside sources of technology.

To meet the demand, IT needs to consumerize the user experience. MyIT provides an innovative and effective vehicle to accomplish this objective. The assistant becomes the face of IT to users. They have a far more satisfying experience and that drives up their productivity and their job satisfaction.

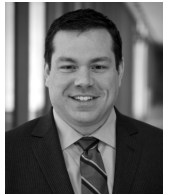
For more information, visit www.bmc.com/products/myit.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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