

User Experience is Critical to the Adoption of New Technology

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Did you notice that your eagerly awaited new smartphone didn't come with a manual? You simply picked it up and immediately began using its features with delight, making it one of the most important work tools at your disposal and something you simply can't survive without. This is the way that technology should be. It saves time and should be an indispensable part of the user's life. People don't always adjust to change easily so feeling completely comfortable and in control of a device ultimately makes or breaks the user experience.

Most technology trends begin outside of the workplace and then filter into the work environment. The futuristic technologies once considered out of reach have become the norm and users are comfortable with them. This has created an expectation among users when it comes to the technology in every aspect of life, including at work. Anything they interact with from their mobile phone, tablet, the information kiosk at an airport, ticket sales or mall directory must be easy to use or it will be cast aside. Less is more, and simplicity is the key to saving time.

Among the most prolific impacts that the consumerization of IT has had on technology in the workplace is the usability and functionality of business software. There is no manual for social networking, mobile phones, web-based email, tablets or data storage but people know how to use them. The intuitive way that they work and their design mean that the user can easily learn how to use them through experience. And the inclusion of similar technologies creates the expectation of how things should work rather than how they do work.

When a business implements new business software it is critical that the user feels comfortable and ready to accept it as one of their most valuable work tools. This will ensure that users are comfortable, and the business begins to reap the benefits of the investment with minimal disruptions.

In a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) survey conducted by Epicor in the Middle East, India and Africa, a staggering 90% of respondents agreed that speed, reinvention, agility and innovation are critical to the success of any organization serious about optimizing performance and gaining competitive advantage. Consistent and standardised functionality of business software is a corner stone in achieving these objectives. Reducing clicks, more intuitive functionality and customised dashboards are just some of the ways that usability can be improved and expected functionality included.

An offshoot of this is the concept of allowing employees to bring their own device (BYOD) to the workplace. It is cumbersome to carry around more than one device and people's technology tastes differ. This has resulted in tech savvy companies implementing BYOD policies and the infrastructure to support it. They also bring their web-based email accounts, online data storage facilities and social networking with them. In order to ensure the security of information and the smooth running of a BYOD policy, putting the right infrastructure in place is very important.

Industrial espionage is a real concern in a competitive market but a well planned and orchestrated BYOD strategy means there is no cause for concern. Employees are able to work outside of the office space, anytime and anywhere, which ultimately improves efficiencies for both the employee and the business. It also means less hardware is needed, and mobilising the workforce at a lower cost. It also gives the user choice in terms of what device and operating system they prefer, which directly contributes to their productivity and happiness.

Businesses that haven't kept pace with the shifts in technology don't measure up to user's expectations in terms of functionality and ease of use, and are quickly seen as archaic. This creates a mine field of problems in terms of employee adoption, change management and the time it will take for staff to be up to speed. This also means that the time to value will be far too long. Developing a future-proof technology strategy with a keen focus on emerging and disruptive trends, that is- based on best practice functionality means that the businesses will realise improved speed, agility and streamlining of operations at a much faster pace, and with greater success.

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