Key Emerging Trends in Customer Expectations in IT Infrastructure Services – User Experience

V Indira Priyadarsini, Sr Lecturer, EEE, Govt Polytechnic College Vikarabad
Sunil Nallan, IT Infrastructure Leader

In IT Infrastructure World the perspective of Service received by Customers have transformed over last two decades with the help of skilled labor, process maturity and technology advancements that have happened. Digital is the buzzword across the world - riding on Cloud, Automation, Mobile and BigData Analytics, which transformed the customer expectations over a period. Meeting Service Level Agreements (SLA's) defined in the contracts is no longer a key measurement in IT infrastructure services. End User Experience matters the most of the IT departments in Customer Organizations. In an engagement, all the Service Level Agreements may be doing exceedingly well however Service Providers are struggling with increasingly growing Customer Expectations around User Experience.

Out of many evolving customer expectations, this article aims at examining one of the key trends around End User Experience. Let us look at some of the areas where Service Providers can put their energy and effort in enhancing User Experience.

1. **Short asset acquisition cycles:** In any organization, typical process to buy incremental Infrastructure like Servers, Storage etc., goes through a pre-defined procurement cycle, which is Request for Proposal process (RFP). This process, depending on the complexity of requirement and budget goes into market inviting for quotes from various Service Providers followed by technical and commercial qualification process. This process typically takes 12-16 weeks of thorough diligence followed by releasing the Purchase Order on qualified Service Provider, who then will take any time between 4-8 weeks for delivering goods followed by another 4 weeks of configuration and roll out to Production. If you analyze the above process, it takes anything between 20-28 weeks before it is available for an end-user to start his work – which is approximately six-month cycle. Constant technology evolution and changes could very well defeat the purpose of procuring due to the lead times, which could lead to End User frustration. It is the age we are living where anyone having a Smart Phone has access to Cloud and can enhance Storage with a click of a button. Same expectation is creeping into corporate environment amongst their end-users and wants everything on-demand. The only way Service Providers can meet this expectation is by offering On-demand Services through their Cloud Offering. This is the only way to reduce the Asset turnover cycles and meet User expectation. This will go long way in enhancing User Experience

2. **Minimized Human Intervention**: One of the major challenges for Service Providers while delivering services is around the human errors done by their employees. One small error can bring down the IT Infrastructure Services for hours in a customer organization, which could affect many applications hosted. This is a major frustration point as this may have impact on

deliverables End Users may have. Even if you take a simple example of an end user laptop being down the IT process warrants him to raise an Incident on ITSM tool with right priority so a technician can walk over to him to repair end user's laptop. This could take any time between 1-4 hours depending on the priority, which will affect productivity and inturn the User frustration. Only option to reduce the wait time is to enable the End User with tools like Self-Help and/or Self Heal. Let us look at what these tools are and how can these help in enhancing User Experience.

- Self Help: This tool rides on knowledge base containing procedures on how to solve some of the basic problems. End User can search on keywords related to his problem and get help from the knowledge base so he can solve for himself and save time. One of the major challenges is adoption of this process as humans does what is easy for them in terms of turning the problem to someone else rather than solving through this process.

- Self-Heal: This is much advanced than Self Help. In this process, there is very less human intervention. Self-heal Agent running on End-User Laptop or Desktop or Server can detect some the problems in advance and can invoke some of the pre-installed scripts to heal the problems before the User comes to know. It also has ability to auto-ticket the issue in ITSM tool and close it for records. This is becoming popular as many Service providers are attempting to bundle this in their service offerings, as this will enhance User Experience largely as uptime of the User Asset is high.

3. Digital : As the Smart Phones and associated apps are becoming way of life for many, Service Providers are also investing time and material on developing Apps on Android or IOS to enhance the End User Experience and provide them Digital experience they are used to. Lets look at an example where a User has to raise a ticket related to an issue he is facing. As per process he has to click the links on his customer portal which will take him to ITSM tool where he has to enter his personal details like Name, employee ID, email, Department etc., and then a short description of his issue, which will take atleast 10-15 minutes of his time. The process is same even if he wants to call help desk and report the issue. Some of the users are becoming restless about this process as it is consuming their time. Service Providers now came up with Mobile Apps where Users can enter his Employee ID and all the details are auto populated. While users are entering their problem descriptions, the Big Data Analytics engine can show the user solution for similar problems encountered by other users and can help users with predictive text for the problem description User is typing. These techniques, which are evolving, will definitely help in enhancing End User Experience.

4. Voice Recognition Assistants: Alexa, Google Home have become way of life in people's lives and some of the Service Providers are thinking to integrate apps with these voice assistants, which will again improve End User Experience.

As you can see from above examples on how Service Providers can improve the End User Experience. The only way to Champion, a Partnership with in a Customer Engagement is to win End Users. You may

be meeting Service Level Agreements – unless you meet Key Customer Expectation i.e End User Experience renewal of any contract is a far dream for any Service Provider.