What happens when you take best practices for IT service management (ITSM), add technology to support those practices, and then throw social media into the mix? How do you reconcile end users’ need for instant service and access to information with IT’s desire to retain process control? What about the complications introduced by an empowering environment where processes are undefined and “random acts of collaboration” often provide the best answers? These challenges and more are discussed in this Q&A with Anthony Orr.

WHAT’S CAUSING I.T. ORGANIZATIONS TO RETHINK THEIR APPROACH TO SERVICE MANAGEMENT?
Consumers of corporate technology have come to expect a highly personalized experience. When they interact with IT, the services provided need to be easy to access and intuitive, with the underlying processes and complexities hidden from view.

It’s important to consider how service is delivered from the user’s perspective. Think about the experience you want the users to have and their expectations. Then look at the service and identify the best ways to deliver that experience. When you go to a portal and log on, for example, focus on what the user most wants to see. Try to get inside the mind of the end users, and elicit feedback from them. Are the services being delivered as fast and easily as the user expects? To stay relevant and useful, the whole IT service management experience needs to be user-outcome focused — more personal, intuitive, and easy.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOCIAL TOOLS, SUCH AS CHATTER, MEET THE SERVICE DESK?
Social media has made communication among individuals and groups instantaneous and more collaborative. Service desk technology can leverage the capabilities of technologies like Salesforce.com’s Chatter, the enterprise social network, which helps IT professionals to find information they can use to provide a better experience for the end user. These technologies can be very useful for solving “how-to” questions and providing solutions for incidents.
Chatter feeds and other social sources also can be used to enrich the content in the knowledge management system (KMS). The impact and significance of the KMS can be maximized by incorporating social media and other external content to unlock the latent knowledge spread across multiple repositories and Chatter. These new sources of information can help drive down costs, maximize user productivity, and make the service desk more efficient.

The integration of the service desk and social media can make a big difference in other ways. Imagine that you are giving an important presentation and your audio-visual equipment crashes in the middle of the teleconference. You put in a help desk ticket and explain that this problem needs to be resolved immediately. The integration between a technology like Chatter and the service desk enables an agent to engage the network of experts in the organization and have them collaborate in real-time with the end user to fix the problem. This coordinated effort drives a highly efficient and much speedier response to the problem.

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WHAT'S THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE I.T. INFRASTRUCTURE LIBRARY (ITIL®)?
Services, processes, and systems aligned to ITIL best practices can be enriched and enhanced through the inclusion of social media. For example, service outages can be broadcasted across the enterprise using a social media tool, and unnecessary escalations to the service desk can be avoided. Similarly, groups of users who consume a specific technology service or type of technology can communicate and share tips and strategies for tackling minor issues or optimizing performance.

Social media also facilitates cross-team and process collaboration and validation. The problem management team could use Chatter, for example, to investigate the impact of a problem and explore what related activities and changes may have contributed to the issue at hand.

Social media conversations in the realm of IT service management don’t always relate specifically to users or groups. Sometimes it’s a particular IT service or significant asset that is the basis of the conversation. It’s increasingly common for especially important services in the technology environment — such as the e-mail service — to have their own social group and followers. Any planned changes, ongoing problems, or incidents related to that service are instantly communicated to all concerned via social media. This optimized and rapid form of communication more than fulfills ITIL’s advocacy of real-time, inclusive updates.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE AS A SERVICE? HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT THIS EMERGING DISCIPLINE?
Knowledge as a service means a radical shift in the way IT organizations think about IT support and services. By thinking about the support and provisioning of IT services as an exercise in knowledge and information management for decision support, IT teams can gain a fresh perspective.

Most people have the same types of problems or issues with key systems and equipment. So why isn't there a single resource for dealing with those issues that is highly networked, providing crowd-sourced knowledge across many organizations? For example, it could be that the group or “crowd” actually comes up with the optimum and most efficient way to set up a smartphone. Instead of rejecting this information, a smart and progressive organization might embrace this valuable and self-refining input and incorporate it into their working practices. This approach will reduce calls to the service desk and provide timely results.
If your ITSM solutions plugged directly into a series of these talent pools, they could allow you to interact with these resources seamlessly as if they were part of your organization. This would make IT leaner and more agile.

**HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO EXTEND SERVICE?**

When you open up and expose your organization using social media networks, public or private, in addition to the transparency you provide, you also gain a better understanding of your audience and internal customer. Interactions with IT become more conversational as opposed to a simple service transaction. At the same time, IT gets a more accurate view of the challenges the business faces in using the IT services it provides. This information can form the basis of a long-term and continual service refinement strategy.

Social media is also an excellent platform for the dissemination of important service-related information. You can use it to provide continual updates on planned changes and upgrades, known problems, and expected resolution times. It is a clear and immediate representation of your engagement with your customer and your commitment to providing excellent service.

Think about all the services and processes your support organization currently undertakes. Which of them would benefit from more responsiveness and collaboration during request initiation? Which would be more effective if key milestones were reached and points of validation were addressed in a more coordinated way? And finally, which activities would benefit from clearer communication? If you take a customer-centric view of the role of IT support teams, it becomes clear that most of the critical functions would benefit from the integration of social media.

**WHEN PEOPLE CONTACT THE HELP DESK, WHERE DOES SOCIAL MEDIA FIT IN?**

People are increasingly using social media as their primary point of contact. Social media also plays a role in users’ buying decisions. Integration between the social media platform you are using and your IT service management solution is becoming critical.

It’s clear that the modern employee expects to communicate with other areas in the business in real time and in a highly collaborative fashion. If the service desk does not support the social channel, employees will go around IT for requests and resolutions. If IT is not plugged into this transformation in communication,

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Then IT will lose track of the problems and challenges that users face and risk becoming marginalized. Social media can help with continual service improvement.

**ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS?**

When you choose a service desk, think about how much your company can benefit by leveraging advanced social collaboration capabilities as part of a social enterprise strategy. The service desk can facilitate higher levels of productivity for end users with the integration of social media. Ultimately, the outcome will be improved service delivery and support, as well as improved overall customer satisfaction and efficiency. Who wouldn’t sign up for that?

For more information, visit Remedyforce Service Desk.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Orr is currently director of Service Management for the Chief Technology Office (CTO) and a member of the Thought Leadership Council at BMC Software. Orr has worked for BMC for more than 15 years in various managerial, consulting, marketing, and technical positions. He is an author of the ITIL v3 2011 publication update and a senior examiner for APMG with responsibilities for the ITIL v3 certification examinations. Orr is currently a board member of itSMF Houston Local Interest Group (LIG) and former vice-chair of the 2005 itSMF USA Certification Committee. He participates regularly as a speaker and expert panel member for itSMF LIGs.

Orr has more than 30 years of IT experience and has held various roles in other companies prior to joining BMC. In these roles, he has been responsible for strategy, architecture, implementation, and management of numerous service management disciplines and processes. Orr is a frequent speaker on best practices at industry events and BMC customer forums. He has authored numerous white papers, pamphlets, podcasts, videos, and blog posts on service management topics.

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