

Use it or lose it--eliminating adoption issues

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Published on [ZDNet News](#): March 22, 2007, 11:13 AM PT



Commentary--End-User Monitoring software can improve end-user experience and performance to drive adoption of critical business applications.

It's an all too typical scenario, the management team at a multi-national enterprise made the decision to standardize on one Customer Relationship Management solution across the company. As the company has grown, its sales managers have lost visibility into the activities of their reps and lack insight as to where they stand with their pipelines. The new CRM system promises to provide powerful lead handling, opportunity management and forecasting tools so sales managers can be confident their teams are producing at their full capacity. New order management software will streamline the order management process. The management team expects benefits in a number of areas--ranging from increased win rates, higher average transaction values, improved forecast accuracy and an accelerated quote-to-cash process. The business case is built on the fact that the new CRM system will cost (software, infrastructure, services and personnel) \$1,450,000 to deploy, is expected to yield a ROI of \$750,000, annually. The software will have paid for itself and will begin putting profits into the company's coffers within 24 months of deployment.

ROI isn't real, until it's realized

For the executive team, the decision to go ahead with the purchase is sound, but something unexpected happens along the way to realizing that ROI. The sales force tasked with using the new system finds the software awkward to use and complains that the software 'doesn't work' and is slow.

Several months after the deployment, as much as 90 percent of the functionality is not being exercised. The back-office personnel find the software cumbersome to adopt into their routines and ultimately creates their own workarounds to get results. This common end-user behavior is creating an insidious new form of "virtual shelf-ware," a condition that results when management thinks the application is deployed, but partial adoption and non-compliant use of enterprise applications is the hidden cause behind unrealized ROI.

Experience and Performance Management (EPM) software is becoming an increasingly popular weapon to directly attack the problems of adoption and effective, efficient use. A comprehensive Experience and Performance Management systems monitors all aspects of the end-user experience and performance within enterprise applications. EPM solutions monitor end-users in real time to provide a look into how they interact with critical applications, showing a company if the application is being used incorrectly or even abandoned. The technology can also determine if the system is running slowly. These systems can record deviation from an application's normal use and report the findings back to IT or the business owner, which in turn allows IT and the business owner to work in tandem to identify which users need to be trained, or in some cases retrained, on the proper use of a specific application.

Ask yourself if EPM is right for you

How can you tell if you should be evaluating an Experience and Performance Management system? Here are some questions to consider.

Are you certain that all of your end-users are actually using the functions of the application required to execute their role?

A comprehensive EPM system captures and reports real metrics about application usage. Who is using which transactions? How long are they active? How long are they idle? EPM gives you the ability to pinpoint and analyze user adoption issues that are hindering the achievement of business results.

Do your end-users ever use system performance as a key reason why critical objectives are not met on time and on budget?

One of the benefits of an EPM system is that it gives you the ability to correlate business outcomes with efficient, effective application usage. Since a full-featured EPM system captures and reports real metrics about the end-user's experience with the application, you will now know if the users are experiencing long transaction response times or if there are a lot of system errors presented to the end-user. You will also know if the end-users themselves are causing a lot of errors by their own behavior. You will then know where to apply corrective action. Perhaps it's a user training issue, or perhaps the errors are being caused by a cumbersome or confusing user interface that can be corrected.

Do you suspect there are a lot of problems and issues that never surfaced to the help desk?

Well, you're probably right. It is often reported in surveys of the service management process that 70-80 percent of all end-user problems are not reported because the end-users ignore the errors, abandon the transaction and/or find workarounds. An EPM solution gives you the ability to pinpoint and proactively remediate problems which impact the efficiency or effectiveness of the end-user population using the application. An EPM system will make sure you have visibility into all errors -- for all users, in all locations, all the time.

When your end-users do report problems to the help desk, do you find they are wasting a lot of time trying to answer questions and document or recreate the problems?

An EPM system captures the actual work flow the user experienced – before, during and after the transaction. This information is immediately available to help desk personnel so there is minimal business disruption from issues with the application. Employee productivity impact is kept to a minimum when there is an issue (users spend less time on the phone with help desk and problems are resolved faster).

You can't manage what you can't measure

It's rule No. 1 in the management handbook, isn't it? And the rule that is the driving force behind many enterprise software investments. But, without a strategy to measure end-user adoption, and without a strategy to gather insight about the end-user's experience and actual performance with the application, many IT organizations are left with the reality that they can't manage and improve end-user adoption and proficiency.

EPM solutions help prevent adoption issues that plague costly application deployments by providing actionable insight that can ameliorate or eliminate the underlying issues that affect adoption.

- Application support teams have real-time metrics to proactively address response time issues and problems;
- Help desk personnel have immediate visibility into actual user interaction with the application, so they can quickly resolve end-user issues with minimal disruption;
- Training organizations can pinpoint which specific application areas (and which specific users) require additional training; and
- Application and Process Engineering can spot cumbersome work flows and errors that are affecting end-user satisfaction and efficiency.

For the business executive and CIO who need to drive the highest possible levels of adoption; efficient and effective use of core enterprise applications; as well as drive return on investment Expertise and Performance Management systems are becoming a priority. Only with the insight into end-user metrics that an EPM system can provide can you really know if:

- Applications are delivering an acceptable user experience
- End- users have adopted the applications
- Key processes are being executed effectively and efficiently

These elements are the key to achieving business value and ROI from the investment you made, and continue to make in your core enterprise applications.

biography

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