

IT Analysis – We are all IT users now - end point management

By Bob Tarzey, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd

Sales managers need to segment target markets in order to marshal their staff and minimise conflict in the field. One obvious way to do this is by business size; the way vendors of any product or service sell to and manage small business customers is often very different to the way they deal with large enterprises.

But how do you define a business's size? The most common measure used is the number of employees; useful because most business will disclose this information. Turnover would be another way, but many private companies keep this information to themselves so it is of little practical use especially in the small and mid-sized business (SMB) market.

But even number of employees is problematic; do you count temporary workers, contractors, and employees of outsourcers? There is no simple answer, because it depends on what you are selling. If it is chairs, most office-based workers need one, employee or not, but home-workers do not even if they are employees. This problem of definition is particularly acute for vendors of information technology (IT); here what really counts is the total number of IT users and the proportion they form of the total work force varies widely.

But even that does not tell the whole story. Increasingly, businesses in all industries are becoming more and more reliant on vast networks of IT devices that are not assigned to users; in some cases the number of devices may exceed the number of employees by a considerable factor. Take the world's 4th largest lottery organiser, the UK's Camelot. It employs a modest 1,000 or so people making it a mid-market company in most people eyes, but it sells its products via over 26,000 outlets all of which have lottery terminal of some sort—an enterprise network by any standard.

Lotteries may sound exceptional, but they are not. Examples of vast networks of "non-PC" IT devices are all around us: customer information

displays at rail-stations, bus stops and airports, in-store advertising on video monitors, huge networks of surveillance cameras, wireless LAN devices providing public internet access in coffee shops.

Some of these devices are linked together by private networks but many rely on the public internet (or cloud if you prefer) for at least part of their connectivity to the central systems that drive them. For this reason, at least in part, the communications protocol used for running and managing such network is most commonly IP (internet protocol), as have all the tools available for managing such device networks.

Management tools allow software patching, fault monitoring, security updates and so on to be carried out remotely. This ensures high availability whilst keeping costs down, engineers only needing to be despatched when there is a hardware fault. Specialist tools also enable remote power management, for example switching off monitors at night—cutting costs and earning environment points to boot.

Traditional systems management tools from the likes of BMC, CA, HP, IBM and Microsoft are focussed on broader IT management and whilst they have end point management capabilities embedded in their product, this is not a primary focus and the end point management modules are not generally sold separately.

There are a number of specialists in end point management; these include software offerings like Altiris (owned by Symantec), Bigfix, Ipswitch, and LANDesk. Another, Kaseya, provides a software platform specifically targeted at MSPs. Then there are appliance based products such as Uplogix's secure remote management.

So some might find a cloud based service a better way to go, after all the devices are in the cloud, the users are in the cloud so why not put the management tools and data in the cloud too? This is leading to an increasing interest in

software as a service (SaaS) based offerings like NTRglobal's NTRAdmin. Other "SaaS" like offerings are being developed based on tools from some of the vendors listed above.

One thing is for sure, any vendors wanting to take lead in the market for remote end point management needs to focus on counting devices not just people.

Quocirca's report, "We are all IT users now", is freely available at:

http://www.quocirca.com/pages/analysis/reports/view/store250/item21534/?link_683=21534

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, Dell, T-Mobile, Vodafone, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at
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