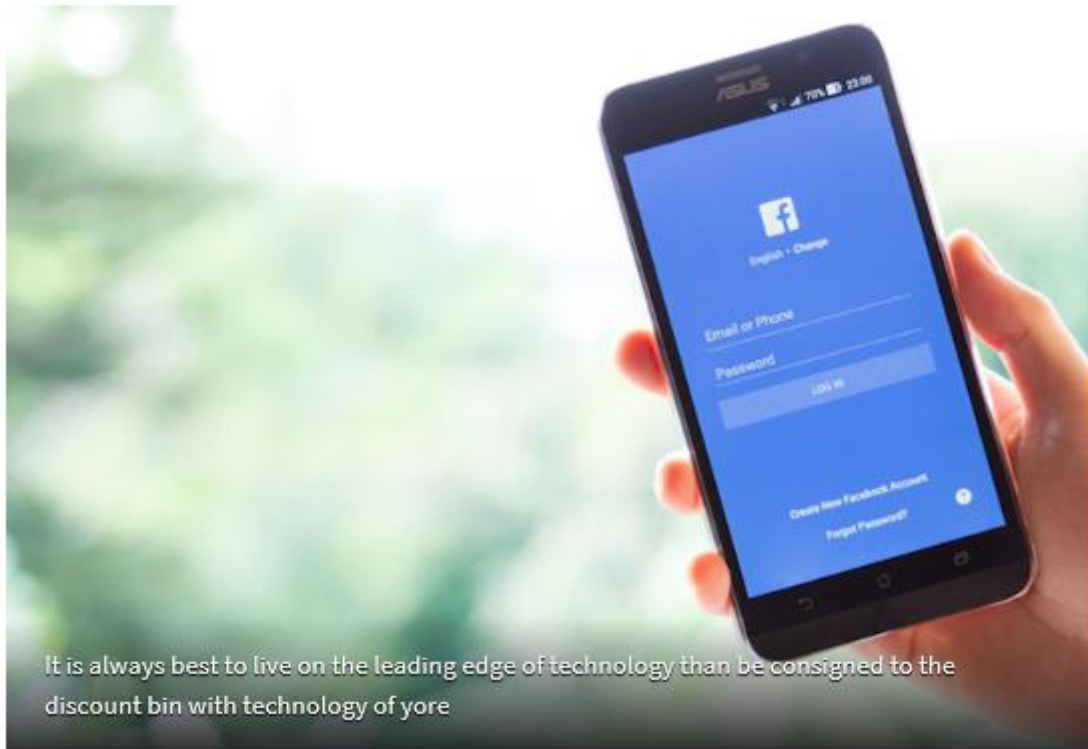# Building social capabilities into IT support offerings

When it comes to achieving solid IT support in your business, the answer could be to add a social element to give employees familiarity.

It is always best to live on the leading edge of technology than be consigned to the discount bin with technology of yore

The reason why IT support can evolve this way is simple. We are all increasingly tied to the phones in our pockets, and a huge chunk of this time is spent checking various social media platforms. In fact, today's use of social media apps is staggering.

Some two billion of the world's population are now said to be on Facebook, 1.5bn people log onto YouTube each month, the number of Instagram users has recently rocketed past the 700mn mark and Twitter now has over 328m registered users.

What's more, the number of mobile phone users in the world is expected to pass the five billion mark by 2019. To put that in perspective, that is some ten times the number of TVs there are globally today.

These phones are becoming smarter too, with it being predicted that 36 per cent of the world's population will have a smartphone in their pocket by the end of next year.

Because of the proliferation of smartphone technology, the world's population is acutely aware of social media. It is no exaggeration to say that smartphones have eased the way in which we all communicate, and brought the world closer together.

Anyone with a connected device can now send a message to billions of people at the click of a button, just by using the social media app of their choice. This interconnectivity we all now enjoy at our fingertips has also given rise to a new form of IT support: social IT.

A question of trust

The goal of IT support is to support staff and enable them to perform their jobs effectively, but as user habits change, so must how the way IT support is provided.

Generation Z in particular are coming into the workplace armed with modernised skillsets, and therefore the workplace needs to talk to them in a language they understand; one that embraces new social forms of communication.

By providing staff with the ability to communicate with the IT support function in a medium they trust and are familiar with, issues can be resolved much more smoothly. This also bypasses the need for users to get to grips with often overly-complicated new solutions.

Embracing more social forms of interaction will improve communication standards throughout the entire organisation, leading to better IT support, collaboration between departments and geographies.

Thanks to its ease of use, social IT can empower both IT and non-IT employees alike to help resolve issues. This results in staff getting an answer faster, and also means that the IT support team are less distracted and able to undertake their other day-to-day duties to keep the business running.

Finally, while a service desk agent can only take one phone call at a time, by using social IT communication mechanisms they can engage with multiple users simultaneously, making the process far more cost-effective.

Swim with the tide

To ensure a competitive advantage, it is always best to live on the leading edge of technology than be consigned to the discount bin with technology of yore. Yet, the need for modern business to embrace social is increasingly about providing more choice and speaking the same language as your employees.

When it comes to communication it is often a case of horses for courses. For example, email is perfect for some situations, while a simple phone call will work for others.

Each generation will undoubtedly feel more comfortable communicating using different means than others, so a modern IT support department needs to consider making all potential means available to them.

As social media technologies continue to become increasingly commonplace in society in general, IT support needs to swim with the tide and build these new social capabilities into their support offerings.

Benefits of the traditional IT support department embracing social media

- Ease of use – uses familiar tools from everyday life. Users do not need to learn new products.

- Communication – improves interaction between employees throughout an organisation.

- Collaboration – provides real-time communications supporting collaboration between one or many users simultaneously. Furthermore, many tools embrace knowledge-management, providing convenient methods of sharing knowledge articles to users to enable them to learn.

- Convenience – provides a quick and convenient way for business users to contact the IT service-desk.

- Speed – empowers IT and non-IT employees alike to answer IT-related questions. Users get answers faster, and IT staff have more time to undertake other tasks.
- Transparency – provides a more open style of business with communications being accessible to many.
- Cost – provides a way of engaging with multiple users simultaneously, whereas a phone call means a service-desk agent can only support one person at a time.