EP 107:

What's Next | Employee and IT Alignment

Jeff Ton:

92% of I T staff, when asked, said that they want to highlight the issues that employees are facing in working from home to senior leadership. So I d really are quite empathic about the employee experience. Mm hmm. Technology is transforming how we think how we lead in how we win from inter vision. This is status. Go the show, helping I t leaders move beyond the status quo, master their craft and propel their i t vision. 2020 the year that proved knowledge workers can work from home and be effective. 2020 was also the year for I t. To shine. Seemingly almost overnight. They enabled a remote work force numbering in the hundreds of thousands. One CIA I spoke with. Put it this way before covid. I had 400 locations worldwide that exploded to over 14,000 over the course of about two days in our continuing series. What's next? We're going to take a look at some of the issues facing I t. Today. What was a Herculean effort in 2020 is now leading to new challenges for the staff, who are required to provide seamless service desk experience to those remote workers. The team at 1E, a digital endpoint management software provider, decided to survey employees I t and non I t about the service desk experience. What they uncovered may surprise you. I know it surprised me. I am joined today by Sumir Karayi the CEO of one E. We're going to take a look inside the numbers. Welcome to status. Go, Samir.

Sumir Karayi:

Jeff, thank you for having me. I'm delighted to be here.

Jeff Ton:

I really enjoyed digging into the survey and reading some of the findings that you were able to uncover through the pole and the survey and the analysis of some of the numbers. But before we get into that, could you give our listeners who may not be familiar with one e a brief overview?

SumirKarayi:

Sure, I'd love to. I started the business about 23 years ago as a consultancy, helping large organizations really improve the experience of every single end point. And thus every employee we do pretty much the same today. But the endpoint. Certainly, since the pandemic has become critical infrastructure, it's just become incredibly important because today the endpoint is how we work, how we collaborate and how we communicate. Like right now I'm speaking through my laptop. We help it deliver a much better experience to that employee and also make sure that employees empowered so that they can be productive and engaged. That's, uh, so needed today. And I know we're going to dig into the changes between managing those endpoints sitting in an office versus managing those endpoints when they're, uh, sitting at home. You know, you're speaking through your laptop. I'm speaking through my laptop, you know, an ocean away, right, and we're able to connect and talk which in and of itself is amazing. But I'd like to dig into the survey, starting with what led you and your team at one e to commission the survey. What things were you hoping to learn? Well, Jeff, we've got about 500 customers. We've got our software running on about 11 million endpoints or laptops, and we have we felt we had a fairly decent idea of what's going on out there. But nothing really beats a survey that's run by experts. So we hire

advancing bone, um, a notable company in this space to go and ask organizations with more than 10,000 people working for them so large organizations about what challenges employees are having during the pandemic. And then very recently, we also asked them to go back to the same sort of organizations and ask what challenges the folks of having in providing a great service to the employees now? Actually, this is this is really valuable data because it's good quantitative analysis of the market. We again we focused on primarily on the U. S. U S organizations that are that are very large. And I think in surveys, the advantage always is that people are providing anonymous data so they can be incredibly honest. And I feel this survey really highlights some of the issues that not only employees have had, but it has as well. But there are many, many good things that come out of this survey. One of the stats that really surprised me was 100% of the I T professionals responding believe the end user is satisfied with their service desks experience while working from home.

Jeff Ton:

First of all, can I say I can't believe 100% of I T professionals agreed on anything, but aside from that, it was surprising to see that disconnect between the I T team and the end user. Can you unpack that disconnect a little bit for us?

Sumir Karayi:

Absolutely. Um, well, the other surprising bit of data from that particular question was that 69% of I t folks believed that employees are completely satisfied with the service that they're getting now. That did not really correspondents as well to the employees themselves. So about a quarter less so. About 44% of the employees said that they were completely satisfied. So of course, there are fewer numbers of employees that are saying that they are as satisfied or completely satisfied. But the good news is that in many, many aspects and many questions that were asked, there is a huge amount of alignment with between I t and with the employees. So, um, let me give you a couple. 84% of I T folks said that they worry about the employee experience and actually that compared very nicely to 86% of employees believe that I t do worry about their experience, so at least it starts from a good place. Another start that I really like is the fact that 92% of it staff, when asked, said that they want to highlight the issues that employees are facing in working from home two senior leadership. So I'd really are quite empathic about the employee experience, and they know that it's not a first class experience. If the office is the first class experience, then working from home isn't quite the same. And I'm sure we'll explore some of those topics where I think there certainly is a very simple disconnect that we can fix. 81% of its employees said that they enjoy working with employees, whereas only 39% of employees believe that I enjoy working with them. So this is probably one of the big reasons why employees don't like to call the service desk because they think now these people are just going to think, you know, it's Joe has called again and he knows nothing but actually idea not feeling that way. So there are real positives out of the survey, and this is the easiest thing to fix, right? It's just a perception issue. It actually wants to work with the employee, and if we just tell employees in most organizations that this is true, it actually solved quite a big gap here.

Jeff Ton:

I think it points to sometimes just the language that the i T service desk professional uses when they're talking with the end user. And that language conveys maybe a little bit of irritant. Or, you know, they can almost hear some of the eye rolling sometimes. And I think it points out that one of the things that

would benefit organization is to spend some time just coaching the staff that is answering the phone from the end user or interacting directly with the end user on better ways to communicate, because sometimes it can come across as a little bit condescending as they're working together. Have you found that to be the case in the work that you've done through one E as well as these surveys?

Sumir Karayi:

Well, if you just think about the experience when you know one of your parents calls you for that technical support question and you sort of roll your eyes just you know, I think we all have made that mistake right. We all have made this mistake that Oh, come on, just reboot that thing right um, but fundamentally what? The service telling us that I t actually enjoy the experience of talking to employees. I t wants management and senior leadership to hear about the challenges that the employees having. So, yes, can. Can I have some empathy coaching sessions? Absolutely. Um, one of the things that we've done inside our own business is we've actually started on mass presentation or zoom and teams presentation skills training. And what we're finding is that there are some really little sort of tips and hints that we can just all have that just make us much more available and seem a lot more empathic than if we are just hiding away in the corner of the screen, where the person can't even see the rest of our face and engage with the person in a way that they can't even here. So I think there are very easy things that I can do today to just improve the connection. But the great news is that the connections already there in terms of reality and I care about the employee, they want to help the employee.

Jeff Ton:

I think that zoom training or tips and tricks that you mentioned would be beneficial for all of us who are spending an inordinate amount of time these days on zoom, WebEx or other platform calls. I think we could all learn a lot from that.

Sumir Karayi:

Absolutely. And frankly, I mean, I actually got quite a lot of out of that training as well. A friend of mine actually runs this. She used to produce a program called Tomorrow's World. The BBC. If you're old enough, if you're as old as me, then you'd remember it. It was this sort of amazing program as I was growing up in school, and it was all about the next thing in technology, and she used to produce it. And so she knows everything about presentation and communication. Obviously BBC trains. So, Actually, I've really learned a lot from the training itself, and I certainly would encourage our listeners to sort of think about getting as much training as possible in this new form of communication.

Jeff Ton:

Yeah, I think it would be incredibly valuable whether you're in I t services support or whatever role you happen to be in. And I love how you point out, Samir, that the survey does convey that I t really wants to support its end users and wants the organization to invest in that experience in the report. As you're talking about some of those points, you discuss XLAs for those who might not be familiar with the term. What is an XLA. And how does that differ from SLAs?

Sumir Karayi:

So if you think about SLAs, service level agreements, you have to define that service in some sort of form. And Allah is defining that agreement in terms of experience, um, and experiences is this new sort

of fairly newish term. But it's being adopted across all parts of the business today, so people are talking about experience of the employee. They're talking about experience of the customer they're talking about. You know, experience is pretty much that are shared across our all our stakeholders. So in the context that we are talking about, around endpoints are our laptop, and Allah is really about a few different things. That employee wants to be able to work at any point in time. So they and also location, of course, these days, so do they have the facilities to do in doing that? they also want performance. I mean, performance was a really interesting one because 98% of employees and about the same number of I T folks said that performance was either important or critically important. And generally you don't really say something that important or not. Everyone agrees on something being that important unless you've got some challenges with it. And I think this is one of the surfer core areas of experience. And then there are some other things that you want every employee to have do. You want them to be empowered. So if they need some software that they need to do their work, they don't want to wait three days. I didn't want to have to call the service desk and say, Okay, can you can you send me the software? And you know, three or four days later it appears on the computer and they go OK, so they want instant gratification when they need to get an application or a service or access to something and when they call the service desk. Also, they and of course they don't want to call the service desk. I mean, no one wants to call the service desk, Um, but when they call the service desk, they want the service desk to respond in a timely fashion. And this is where again, we've got some problems, right? We've got some problems because three quarters of the employees in the survey told us that when they call the service desk that they wait ours days and weeks rather than have that problem resolved in the first call within the first hour. Now, that's not a great experience. And if I just go back to performance because that's they, that's one of the just the key experience indicators. A lot of people are telling us that they are not getting the performance they used to in the office. So nearly three quarters of I T professionals told us, Well, machines just run slower outside the office. Well, that's a big problem, right? Because if that machine's running slow, then I can't do my teams call at the same time as work so people can't see me, and my whole experience of talking to my colleagues has now been disrupted. So I think experience, uh, zealous or experience experienced. XLAs, experience level agreements, are actually a really good way to focus us on the employee being productive and engaged. And if he can do that, then I think what the business can do is transform itself towards this sort of new way of working this hybrid way of working where people can work from home just as effectively as they can work in the office. I think a lot of businesses are thinking about this now.

Jeff Ton:

Yeah, I like the approach of the XLA Being from the perspective of the end user rather than the traditional lobbying more from the perspective of the service desk, right? We're always talking about what we solved 85% of our priority one tickets within SLA. Or we solved. Uh, you know, we had 99.9% up time or whatever. We always talk about it in terms of the technology side of things, not on the user experience. And the analogy of the story that I always like to use is the business doesn't care that your that your infrastructure is up 99.99% of the time. What they care about is it available when they need it. And if it's that 1 1\/100 of a percent, that you're down when they need it than they care, right? So it's more about what's the business looking for? And so that experience on the end user side talking about the endpoint is hugely important and the challenge that came to my mind. And I don't know if you have any thoughts on this Samir, but especially looking at performance. It's probably not the machine itself. It's the connection back to the office that is causing the performance issues in a lot of cases, and you're

so dependent on the home Internet service. So how does how does an organization manage that part of that, uh, connection and performance indicator?

Sumir Karayi:

So that's actually a great question, because we just tend to blame the WiFi or the Internet connection every time we have a problem and we were making that assumption as well. So what we did was we wrote a technology we call a digital twin so effectively it's a every five minutes or so on that computer, on on every single computer for about 200 milliseconds. The employee never notices this. It tries to do similar things to, um to the things that the employees is doing themselves, you know, run applications, make connections, et cetera, and what we found. And, of course, if there's a problem, if the machine suddenly slowed down, we diagnose the problem. And what we found with this digital twin technology running the synthetic transactions. But they were mimicking what an employee would be doing. What we found was often these issues outside the office and not actually being caused just by the network itself. They often been caused by issues such as security tools. Now, security tools often want to, um, take up a lot of resources on your computer so that they can protect you. But also they want to talk back to whichever you know the cloud provider or back to your network to actually exchange information. And what we found actually is that security tools will often cause a real slowdown in responsiveness of that machine, even though the normal metrics that I do use are not affected. So everything gets slow, so the employees sort of going, Why is Internet Explorer taking so long to open up? Well, it's because the security tool is hammering the registry at the time, and there is no metric that shows that you're in a long queue at that point. And so fundamentally I mean, there is a really interesting problem here, which is we zoom always that it's going to be one thing, but it is a combination of three or four or 55 things. So the things that cause performance issues are, of course, the network and they never can go up and down. Um, but actually, by and large in the States and in many parts of Europe, we have fairly stable network in these days. Of course we have glitches, but generally we are seeing performances is actually pretty good. A lot of the tools are quite good at managing slight glitches anyway. But then we've got the the machine itself and the applications running on the machine and the overhead, which is generally security and management tools. When you take a combination of all of these, then sometimes you get these weird sort of effects, which are quite hard to predict because there are so many inter leaved issues and I think one of the ways to deal with them is try and recreate what that employee is going to do and which is which is the way we do it. And then then highlight that back to the service days before the employee actually is, You know, complaining about this problem. It's one way of doing it. Um, I think another way, of course, is to get as many analytics as you can do all the analysis in the back end after a day or two. The only problem with that is, is that the employee calls the service desk, and the service desk still doesn't have that information. But fundamentally, the problem has many vectors that can affect performance, and you've got to get to root cause. And the root cause is changing as well, right? I mean, because it might be networking this minute, but actually another seven minutes time. It might be the security tool that's running a scan across your disks. Yeah, it's really having visibility into those causes that enables the service desk to react in an appropriate manner rather than just Well, it must be your home, Internet or your home WiFi.

Jeff Ton:

So that's great insight and something that I know I learned just from listening to your explanation of that. So thank you for that. I would like to go back to something you mentioned a few minutes ago. We

were talking about the satisfaction levels you mentioned First Call resolution, and sometimes an issue takes days or even weeks to resolve. And one of the numbers out of the survey that I found surprising was the average number of minutes that employees disrupted when they experience an issue is 52 minutes. What is driving that number so high? From what you've seen.

Sumir Karayi:

This is a great question, and I think you're really coming to the number of one of the key problems that we haven't experienced today. When you think about 52 minutes, very few people stay on the phone for 52 minutes. So what's happening on that in that average call? Is that that call that the employees calling the level one technician the first technician at the lowest level person in that service desk? They sort of, you know, they talk about the problem. They try and diagnose it. They probably can't diagnose it. The level one technician is then escalating the call to a more senior person who then calls back the employee and then tries to resolve it. Now that is a really big problem, right? You know, because the employee hasn't had the problem resolved immediately. They have now waited. Another start from the same question shows that three quarters of the employees tell us that they wait ours days and weeks for the problems to be resolved rather than the problem is resolved in the first hour. So the challenge out here is that we are still using 20 year old technology, um, most people and this is this is most organizations, and I'm talking about large organizations again that can afford tools they are still using. Seven out of 10 of them tell us that they are still using tools like remote desktop to diagnose problems. Now, if you just think about remote desktop, what is it? Well, it's basically it's an analog off of you asking me for help on your computer and me saying badge over, Jeff, let me just sit on your seat, go and get yourself a coffee. Also rummage around your machine and maybe I'll figure out what's going on or not. But basically you can't work right now, and that's exactly the same thing. And so the challenge with that, of course, is it's highly disruptive. Of course, to the employee, you can only do one machine at a time, so there's no scale fighting. So the to do list isn't going down any time soon, and it also can be automated, right? And if I'm just sort of doing things manually on your machine, then I'm not going to be able to automate them. I think it's high time the industry moved on. We asked another question about real time analytics, and the reason real time is important in this is the employee needs this problem fixed when they can't work. So it's their time. Which is real time, of course, right? It's not sometime in the future when I get around to it. So that's why remote desktop is still used by seven out of 10 organizations. But most organizations have not invested in in real time technology where they can, as the employee is experiencing the problem, what they call the service that they can diagnose the problem remotely without having to tell the person to budge over and get themselves a coffee. Um, they can actually diagnose the problem and fix it. So I think that I think it's time the industry moved on and maybe invested in some technologies to support the service desk itself with real time technologies such as arson and other companies produce these technologies as well, but effectively replace remote desktop. It's time for it to move on. Really, I think it's time for it to be buried, ready to use technology to solve technology issues.

Jeff Ton:

I think that's great, because I know as an end user myself, there's a lot of times when, um, I'm reluctant to call the service desk, not because they're not helpful. They are, and they're great to work with. But because I know I'm going to get called back at the least convenient time to have them help me, and then I've got to interrupt my day again to have them help me, and they're always fantastic to work with. Uh,

for those of you on our service desk that are listening to me, say this, I know that I appreciate what you do, but it is. It's another disruption for that call back. I can remember I was CIO for a retail organization several years ago, and we constantly fought this battle with our service desk in that the retail store would the manager would call in with a problem affecting his or her store, and then invariably we would have to call back. And you know, the retail manager wasn't available. So we just put the ticket on hold, and it's like, Well, of course, they're not available. They're not sitting there waiting for you to call them back, their managing a store or whatever the case may be. So I think that goes back to that empathy that we were talking about earlier is if you have empathy for what's going on with the end user, maybe that helps a little bit, and I know we're getting close to time here. Sumir and I think I would love to spend some time here for a few minutes on the five point plan that you include in the report of this of this survey. So can you describe the five point plan that you use and how our listeners might be able to use this to assess where they are.

Sumir Karayi:

I would love to. We asked a question, and this really informs the five point plan. We asked a question about what are the priorities for it management in particular and what was a bit surprising that 73% of folks said that the number one priority is to keep up with technology trends. It wasn't employee experience, it wasn't the business strategy of business goals. And actually this is a challenge Variety today, just keeping up with the vendor updates and just keeping up with technology trends. It's just taking up most of the time. So we thought, Why don't we make it easier? Let's just talk about what can people do to really massively improve the employee experience? And the plan is pretty simple. The first one is, of course, align it with the business and employees. And in the first survey, we did ask employees, What do they want to do most or focus on most? They said they want idea to prevent issues. They want it to speed up as your resolution, and they want to provide access to software, etcetera and services so that they can do their job. Pretty simple. Ready? So the employees have given it their marching orders. The second aspect really was around sentiment, feedback. So there are tools again, like us that can, when we see a problem that employees are facing, you can ask for sentiment automatically in a context sensitive way. So sentiment is like just giving you a row of smiley faces from sad phase two really happy face and maybe enabling you to sort of put some context in there. It's a bit like when you, um do you remember the days you used to go through airports and airport security? Most of us probably still remember them, I hope. Um, and you'd get this just after security. You often get this sort of not smiley face to the smiley face. Certainly in Britain we have them in every airport, and it's just to gather some feedback on how pleasant or unpleasant the experience was with security. Um, that's exactly it, right? It's context sense of, as in its contextual at the time, and we can do the same with, of course, with software. So ask the person when you think they're having a problem, whether they're having a problem. And that way I t r again aligned automatically because there's lots and lots of false positives in, uh that are generated by most I D tools. Every tool generates alerts, but this one has been corroborated by the employee themselves. So let's just focus on those first. It just gives you alignment. The third one is, of course, this real time diagnostics and response that people are crying out for as a replacement to remote desktop so that that employee can carry on working while they have a problem. I can fix it in the background, and they just informed the employee that Okay, it's done. You can have access to that service or whatever the problem was. The fourth one is really about the service desk and operationalize ng automation inside the service desk. So that that level one technician, the first person you call can fix your problem rather than it takes 52 minutes. And the way to do that, of course,

is use the same tool. I just talked about this real time diagnostic tool. Just use it inside the service desk, ideally within the service. Um, the I. D s M tool that you already have like service now. And many organizations like us have built those integrations directly into service now, And that's actually a really big step for most organizations. If you just think about how people operate today, the service desk has their main tool that logs the call. But then they have to drop out of that tool and go into a set of other tools to diagnose problems to fix them, et cetera. Well, let's just get people well, let's just do what software is meant to do, which is automate, automate that service desk tool so that people can resolve is he is directly from the service desk and the final one that came out of the survey that I wasn't surprised about, of course, and none of us will be that that cyber is still a problem. I mean, cyber is a bigger problem than ever, And what employees have what I t. I T Staff has have found 70% of them told us that they are finding compliance and security basics like patching much harder now that employees are remote and well, there are tools that can help with that as well. And of course, organizations must invest in those. So organizations have been. Most organizations have been very, very good at buying security tools. What they haven't done is they haven't invested in tools that actually patch machines and ensure that compliance of machines is happening so effectively. What they've got is a really good alarm system with all the security tools they bought. But they're not. They're not closing the doors and windows, so let's just have some tools that enable them to close the doors and windows rather than just have the best alarm system. Do these make sense?

Jeff Ton:

Yeah, they really do. I loved reading through the five point assessment because you go through the explanation that you just provided to our listeners and there's some items to check off, and you kind of grade yourself as you're going through that I think that will be really valuable in. I know we will provide a link in the show notes to the report, which also includes that assessment. So, Sameer, you know, we've talked a couple of times. We are all about action on status Go. We want our listeners to learn from the insights of our guest, but we also want our listeners to be able to take some action based on what they've learned. So what are one or two things that our listeners should do tomorrow to get them started? Because they listen to you and I today?

Sumir Karayi:

That's a great question, because, really, I've outlined quite a big plan, really? So where do you start tomorrow? Well, the easiest one tomorrow morning, but you can have if you're working in it is go to the employees or representatives of the employees and tell them that you enjoy working with them is the first thing that employees need to hear. And then they will start talking to you a lot more because right now they believe that you don't want to work with them. So that's like the first win that you can have straight out of the box. I think I think the second one is really about performance. Um, I think you need to take performance really, really seriously. It's not. It's really easy to just say, Oh, it's probably the network, right? It's probably the Employees Network that slowed things down. Our experience tells us that's not true. It's true in some cases, of course, but it's often not true, and I think there is much we can do about the experience in terms of performance of that employee. Almost immediately, um and then, of course, we've got a five point plan. But if you're going to do something today, start communicating and focus on performance, they'll give you massive winds straight away.

Jeff Ton:

I love that as the initial steps because they immediately begin to provide returns in the employee experience. If you if you share with them that you really do want to help. If you help break down that disconnect, and then if you look truly at the performance issues and what are causing them, I think you're going to really help that x l a or that end user experience. Samir, I really want to thank you for taking your time to talk with us today. I've enjoyed our conversations, and I've learned so much from the conversations that you and I have had. I know our audience has as well, but thank you for taking the time out of your day to share your insights with us and share this report with the broader community.

Sumir Karayi:

Well, Jeff, it really has been a pleasure. You understand the data, I suspect even better than I do. So you've asked exactly the right questions. And I also don't want to leave your show without saying a big thank you to Meaghan, who really made me a lot calmer just coming on the show with all the right information. So thank you to both you, Jeff and Meaghan. And, of course, your listeners as well.

Jeff Ton:

To our listeners. If you want to learn more or if you have a question, I encourage you to visit inter vision dot com. The show notes will provide links and contact information, and as I mentioned, we will provide a link to the report as well so you can read some of the data. Points yourself. This is Jeff Ton for Samir Cry and Megan Schafer, our executive producer. Thank you very much for listening.