Fresh

Getting value out of Office 365

How an Office 365 powered intranet drives adoption

Executive summary

From the mid-1990s until the late 2000's, the way IT was deployed in the enterprise had remained relatively constant. Of course, new products, along with more sophisticated tools, emerged and the Internet has changed the way we live. Nonetheless, for much of this period, IT services were delivered in a relatively structured manner and the relationship between IT and business was that of provider and customer.

However, over the last few years, this has changed enormously. A proliferation of devices, powerful new enterprise productivity tools, consumer software and the expansion in the feasibility of cloud-based products has disrupted the way in which IT is provided. It has also changed the relationship IT has with business. CIOs have seen their role evolve from that of adviser to the board and business to being a leader in business transformation. This has changed how IT services are delivered; products and tools can now be accessed more freely by individuals and teams and there is a less structured approach to deployment.

In this whitepaper, we explore what this era of digital disruption means for IT organisations. We explore how a ready-built intranet powered by Office 365 lets businesses access the best of modern enterprise IT while avoiding the common problems associated with fully custom-built solutions.

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The age of digital disruption

Introduction

In Harvey Nash's annual survey of CIOs, Harvey Nash collected the views and experiences of almost 3,700 professionals from around the world. Among the most striking findings was how far CIOs expect the digital revolution to disrupt their businesses. As the chart below shows, a full two thirds of CIOs view digital disruption as having a very significant impact on the business. They're convinced it will create new business models and change how they provide products and services.
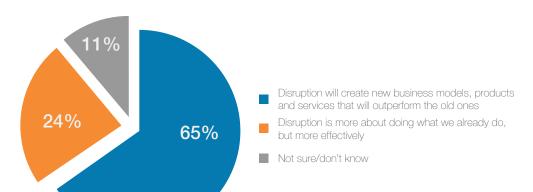
Chart 1: Will 'technology-led disruption' impact your industry over the next five years?[1]

- Disruption will create new business models, products and services that will outperform the old ones
- Disruption is more about doing what we already do, but more effectively
- Not sure/don't know

In many ways, the digital revolution has crept up on today's organisations. In its broadest sense[2], the digital era began during the 1980s and refers to the replacement of analogue and mechanical devices with the digital technology which predominates today. However, it is only in the last ten years that the digital era has really come to dominate with the ubiquity of the Internet, mobile phones and the growth of the Internet of Things. It is also only in the last decade that mobile devices and tablets have become powerful enough to support business applications which until relatively recently would have required comparatively cumbersome 'desktop' computers to run.

The combination of these evolutions and new technologies has combined to create a significant disruption in how organisations deliver their IT services, as the following table demonstrates:

[1] Harvey Nash. 2015. Into an age of disruption. Available online: http://bit.ly/2ae3dt4
[2] Techopedia. 2016. Digital Revolution. Available online: http://bit.ly/1XdsPF9

Method	Problem
New software is released every few years	New software is updated regularly
Storage costs are high	Storage costs are cheap
IT chooses and manages what tools the business will use	Business users are able to choose and suggest their own tools
IT is a provider to the business	Business users are often IT experts too
IT services are structured and managed centrally	IT services represent a more 'pick and choose' approach
Companies tend to only use products from a limited number of major suppliers	New APIs and add-ins mean thousands of small companies with specialised apps can contribute

While not all businesses have yet adopted this model (Harvey Nash's research suggests it is particularly prevalent in media and customer facing industries), the trend is increasingly towards a new, constantly disruptive approach to IT.
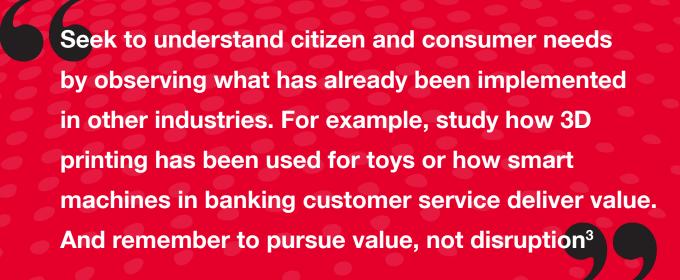
The 'buffet' approach

In the past, enterprise IT services could be compared to a traditional office or school canteen. The canteen staff would choose a select number of meals for that day and the users would simply have to eat what was provided. Canteen staff would also measure out how much of each dish anyone could have and dole these out. In terms of IT, this approach would mean offering one specific intranet which only the IT team could choose. It would involve using set word-processing tools and company provided devices. The IT team's role was prescriptive; if colleagues had specific problems, it was down to IT to choose the right solution and deploy it.

By contrast, today's more disruptive era of IT could be compared to a buffet. In a buffet, customers can pick and choose the food that they want most from a much wider selection, and they get to choose how much they have of each dish on their plates. In terms of IT, this means users expect to connect to company systems from any device they want, wherever they are. It means being able to access standard services while also being able to add the tools they need for their specific tasks. And it means the IT team needs to be able to provide a constantly refreshed and up-to-date service.

In an age of digital disruption, how can your organisation provide for this ever-changing and unpredictable scenario, while still delivering value? This whitepaper aims to tackle this most pressing of issues.

Staying ahead in an age of innovations

It can be hard to know how to prepare your business for an era of endless innovation and disruption. With the quantity of potential 'game changers' on the horizon – from 3D printing to drones to smart robots, deciding where to invest and how is extremely complicated. To answer this question, it's worth turning to Gartner, a leading technology analyst. Speaking at 2015 Gartner Symposium in Orlando, Florida, Hung LeHong, VP and Gartner Fellow advised CIOs to:

> **"Seek to understand citizen and consumer needs by observing what has already been implemented in other industries. For example, study how 3D printing has been used for toys or how smart machines in banking customer service deliver value. And remember to pursue value, not disruption[3]"**
>
> **- HUNG LEHONG, VP AND GARTNER FELLOW**

By being aware of how other industries are already advancing, it will become much clearer how best to act in your specific niche.

[3] Levy, Heather. 2015. A view into digital disruptions. Available online: http://gtnr.it/1XZfmSx

The evolution of the workplace

Among the most important changes across all industries in terms of digital revolution, is the enormous expansion of the digital workplace. Deloitte, the business analyst, defines the digital workplace as the technology-facilitated evolution of the traditional, physical workspace:

> **"The digital workplace encompasses all the technologies people use to get work done in today's workplace – both the ones in operation and the ones yet to be implemented. It ranges from your HR applications and core business applications to e-mail, instant messaging and enterprise social media tools and virtual meeting tools"[4]**

Digital workplaces, such as Microsoft's Office 365 or Google Drive, provide a ground breaking new approach to the workplace. Based in the Cloud, they allow employees to access company data and applications from wherever they are based and however they wish to connect. These tools are also centrally provided and managed, meaning IT teams can trim down their infrastructure and do not need to manage and maintain local servers. They also provide evergreen updates to their services and new tools are constantly released.

For example, Sway, a story telling presentation tool, was released to all Office 365 customers in August 2015. This meant anyone with the correct Office 365 enterprise account could access this new feature from day one – rather than waiting for their IT department to buy and then install the product - a radical change in the rules of the game.

[4] Deloitte. 2011. The digital workplace: think, share, do. Available online: http://bit.ly/2coKha5

The risks of this new era

While the technology underpinning the digital workplace is highly welcome, it does pose certain challenges to IT organisations. For example, these new products can sometimes undermine a company's control over its environment. Similarly, constantly releasing new products and tools into the environment which your users don't actually need is likely to cause confusion and may damage continuity. When each of these new features needs to be reviewed, staff retrained and questions about compliance addressed, the benefits of a disruptive environment become less clear.

Besides being potentially overwhelming, a digital workplace can also be cumbersome to deploy: an improvement on traditional enterprise software deployed to local servers, implementing a cloud-based digital workplace in your company can take months, if not longer. Each product must be rolled out separately, users accounts migrated and rules governing data and compliance implemented.

Finding the balance between constant innovation and the continuity required to maintain order in the business is extremely important. In order to address this specific challenge, Content and Code have created Fresh, a solution more akin to a website that sits in Office 365 gradually introducing end-users new to the Microsoft cloud platform to Office 365 apps wrapped up as common use cases – for example, people search being used to discover existing colleagues and connect with them using Skype or Yammer. By combining a ready built digital workplace with all the tools a company will need, but building it on Office 365, companies strike the balance between constant innovation and maintaining control. It delivers the essentials a company will need from their environment fast, while also being flexible to change and receiving latest updates via Microsoft's evergreen approach.

How a digital workplace powered by Office 365 lets you thrive in this new era

While disruption is often viewed as a negative, this need not be the case. With disruption comes new opportunities and possibilities, and organisations that capitalise on this change by choosing the right digital tools at the right time can expect to reap long term benefits. As outlined in the previous section, digital workplaces like Office 365 are the cornerstone of the digital revolution in the workplace and provide the keys to thriving in this new era.

Introducing Fresh from Content and Code

Fresh is a purpose designed digital workspace from Content and Code and is built on Office 365. Fresh offers an 'off-the-shelf' product, a communications and collaboration tool built on Office 365 that allows you to effectively 'plug in and go'.

Since being released in 2011, Office 365 has become Microsoft's fastest ever growing business[5]. It is the leading digital workplace in the industry, providing an extensive suite of powerful tools via its Azure cloud network. Upon logging in, users access a homepage from which they can access online versions of many of Microsoft's most powerful tools, including Yammer, SharePoint, Office, Delve and many more. However, while Office 365 is incredibly powerful, it can be complicated and time consuming to deploy in many businesses, hard to govern centrally and requires expert support to organise.

By offering the 'best of' Office 365, Fresh gives customers a fully functioning communications and collaboration tool fast. They still get all of Office 365's 'disruptive' benefits – such as evergreen updates, world class security and cheap cloud storage – yet they also maintain tighter control over their environment than the standard Microsoft version of Office 365.

[5] Clarke, Gavin. 2014. Office 365 Microsoft's fastest growing business ever. Available online: http://bit.ly/LB6jHc

Overcoming the challenges of the digital era

As the Harvey Nash research referenced above highlights, CIOs are well aware of the challenges of the digital era. They understand that the way services are delivered is changing and that this will affect their businesses. In a perfect world, we would be able to simply move straight to the latest platforms, yet in reality, many organisations simply cannot do this – due to their structure, purpose, compliance requirements and so on.

A pre-built digital workspace built on Office 365, such as Fresh, is therefore well positioned to overcome many of the major challenges facing CIOs in this era. In this section, we address these major challenges and explore how Fresh can help overcome them:

1. **Mobile working**
The explosion in mobile devices in recent years has taken businesses by storm. However, besides checking emails and calendars, mobile is all too often underutilised by end users. Despite being incredibly powerful, most modern workers find they can achieve little real productive work on their smartphones and tablets.

The Fresh approach
Fresh makes mobile working a viable option. It provides an easy to use interface which allows effective interaction with your organisation's tools. Whether it's 'liking' a colleague's work in Yammer, reviewing and editing documents in OneDrive for Business or staying up-to-date with the communications department's latest videos from the home page, Fresh lets you capitalise on the power of modern mobile devices.

2. Inherent constraints of traditional Intranets

Traditional intranets could often be fairly restrictive. They depended on a local server to access and store data and were costly to extend and enhance. The problem with even the most cutting edge on-premises Intranet, is that in 6 months' time it will start to feel out of date in the digital era. Besides constantly rebuilding a new Intranet, this solution is starting to feel irrelevant in many organisations.

The Fresh approach

Fresh is perfectly suited for this new era of evergreen software updates. As soon as Microsoft releases a new update, you will be able to access that. An additional benefit of Fresh is that Content and Code has a particularly close relationship with Microsoft, meaning we have much better awareness of upcoming changes and can help you adjust to these in advance.

3. Rapid deployment

In an era of digital disruption, it can be shockingly slow for businesses to upgrade to the latest enterprise IT platforms. While migrating to environments like Office 365 should be fast, many companies struggle with migration requirements and preparation.

The Fresh approach

We know that your colleagues expect change fast. Delivering positive change is, after all, the purpose of a CIO. However, the traditional way of migrating to a new environment is often fraught with difficulties. So, when we designed Fresh we wanted to create something which could be deployed fast and have a measurable impact within weeks of launch. Fresh can be deployed in anything from a single day upwards, depending on the amount of pre-launch tweaking or customisation required.

4. The needs for business specific tools

IT in the digital era is characterised by a 'buffet' approach. Employees with specific needs expect to be able to pick and choose the tools they value most and which help them work most effectively.

The Fresh approach

Fresh incorporates all of the most important productivity tools offered by Microsoft in Office 365. However, sometimes your colleagues will need specific products too. As mentioned above, Fresh allows you to extend the 'standard' offering and include additional tools as required. You also get to include any apps from Microsoft, third parties, your own custom built ones or those created with Content and Code.

5. Security

Moving into the Cloud and providing employees with mobile access to company data is, of course, an important step in bringing your organisation into the digital era. However, providing this kind of access does also entail risks and security issues.

The Fresh approach

Fresh is built on Office 365, which is inherently a highly secure environment and Microsoft offers numerous levels of security. Fresh draws on this by incorporating security by design best principles, taking a multi-layered approach to keeping your online environments safe and secure.

Ensuring your data resides in your Office 365 tenant has been an important point of product strategy, particularly when considering the EU's GDPR regulations grace period ends in May 2018. All stores of personal data will need to be covered and we're ensuring that the problem can be solved in Office 365 rather than on a custom built platform.

6. Support when you need it

Moving to the Cloud should be fully supported; simply 'dumping' a new Intranet on your colleagues will not be a success. This may sound obvious, but in many industries, this 'build it and they will come' approach is still in action today.

The Fresh approach

We understand just how big a leap moving to the Cloud can be. We therefore provide all our clients with expert and long term advice and support. Our team can provide help with anything from low level technical engineering to higher level engagement and change management issues.

7. **Personalisation in the Cloud**

A standard Office 365 license gives you access to an extremely powerful environment. However, it will also mean you have to use Microsoft's own standard design templates, unless you're prepared to invest in heavy customization – which can bring its own risks. For the vast majority this isn't an option, and since Office 365 is deployed centrally, all companies that use it will see the same screen when they log in. This is fine, but many companies want to personalise their digital workspace, to provide consistency across their brand.

The Fresh approach

We understand why companies want a personalised digital workspace, and when we deploy Fresh we are able to design it to incorporate your company's brand and personality. Fresh stays close enough to Office 365's original theme to avoid conflicts with Microsoft updates, yet allows much more personality than the standard platform.

The digital age is here with all its inherent challenges and opportunities. By using a platform such as Fresh, you can capitalise on the opportunities, while avoiding the major constraints.

Lead change in your organisation

The digital era has fundamentally changed the role of IT departments, and the purpose of the CIO. Where once IT was about providing 'clients' with a service, the goal is now to effect change through the choice of tools that will streamline and improve business. This is a real evolution and is being felt across industries worldwide. This new approach to IT will only become more prominent in the coming years.

This evolution is welcome and offers many opportunities to help businesses become more successful and streamlined. However, balancing the need for change with a sense of continuity and control is just as important as being adaptable. Fresh is well positioned to help you achieve this balance, by combining evergreen updates and the power of the Cloud, with an environment which you can control and maintain far more consistently.

To learn more about Fresh, and to explore how it would work in the context of your business, talk to us at Content and Code today.

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