



## Instant Solution Brief:

Real-time Help Desk and Customer Support Operations

Using Presence Awareness to Improve First-call Resolution Rates

## **Introduction**

Presence awareness is the cornerstone of real-time communication and collaboration—it is the engine that is powering adoption of Unified Communications, the greatest transformation in the way we work since the email revolution of the 1990s.

When you add presence awareness to your help desk and customer service organizations, you provide your employees and customers with immediate, real-time access to the right person to answer their questions.

Presence awareness enables faster, more efficient interactions that result in reduced costs, increased productivity, enhanced customer satisfaction, and shorter sales cycles.

## **First-contact Issue Resolution**

First-contact issue resolution is the overarching goal of embedding real-time communications in your help desk and customer service operations. 'First-contact resolution rate' is typically one of the key criteria on which such operations are measured. Ken Landoline, VP and Principal Analyst at SaddleTree Research, describes why:

"Our experience in customer contact center operations confirms that the inability to reach the right person the first time is a major driver of customer dissatisfaction in the customer service/contact center environment. Additionally, in many cases, poor first-call resolution performance has been shown to drive a significant share (in some cases, up to a third) of a call center's overall operational costs."

The same concepts apply to internal help desk operations—employee productivity plummets if they do not have access to the information and resources they need to do their jobs effectively...and employee frustration skyrockets if they must jump through multiple hoops to obtain the assistance they require.

### **Presence Awareness in Action**

Consider how much you dislike navigating through a phone system's auto-attendant tree in which none of the options suit your particular inquiry; or how annoying it is to finally reach a real person only to discover you've reached the wrong person and must hold while your call is transferred to someone else who may (or may not) actually be able to help; or how infuriating it is to wait (and wait and wait) for that promised call-back that never comes. Wouldn't you like to eliminate those hassles for your own customers and employees?

Presence awareness makes it possible.

When you presence-enable your organization, you provide every help desk agent and customer support rep with the ability to instantly access experts across your entire environment who are able—and available—to assist. Such experts can be pulled into the chat thread immediately and thereby significantly increase your first-call resolution rate.

Consider these scenarios of presence awareness in action:

An insurance company adds real-time communications to their website. Customer support reps can see which pages particular visitors are viewing and are able to initiate live chats: "Hello, I see that you are reading about Term 10 life insurance. May I answer some questions for you?" Prospective customers are engaged early in their decision process, thus improving the odds of winning the business and shortening the sales cycle.

A multi-national corporation presence-enables their centralized IT help desk. Employees from around the world are able to interact with tech support in real-time. Issues are resolved faster, thereby increasing employee productivity and reducing telecommunications costs.

A manufacturing company whose products ship with 'some assembly required' adds real-time communications to its customer support organization. Customers are able to clarify assembly instructions instantly, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and reduced product returns.

## **Common Considerations**

### **Internal or external use**

You can add presence awareness to your internal communication processes, to your external customer support operations, or both. The decision to deploy internally is often a function of company size and/or distances of time and space between employees and offices. The decision to deploy externally (via the company web site, for example) is typically a combination of a desire to gain a competitive edge and to improve the company's ability to serve customers around the world.

### **Impact on privacy and productivity**

The 'expert' employees to which help desk agents and customer support reps may turn for assistance might worry that adding real-time responsiveness will negatively impact their privacy and productivity. These concerns can be addressed by common-sense business rules, as presence awareness inherently allows users to indicate both their availability and their willingness to render assistance; and by 'intelligent' presence tools that automatically route requests for help to available experts.

### **Traffic volume**

With all the benefits real-time interaction offers your employees and customers, you might wonder if the volume of traffic will overwhelm your help desk and customer support staff. In fact, your ability to provide support from all avenues (telephone, email, IM) will improve dramatically as adoption of your real-time option increases. Because presence awareness enables you to answer support requests more efficiently and more effectively, your staff will be able to handle more cases in a given period of time. And because your first-contact resolution rate will increase, you will have fewer repeat issues and call-backs to handle. The spin-off benefit of these throughput improvements is improved responsiveness to telephone and email support requests without increasing your headcount.

### **Instant Queue Manager and Instant Live Support**

Instant Queue Manager and Instant Live Support add the benefits of presence awareness and real-time access to helpful experts to help desk and customer service operations. Conceptually, the two products deliver identical benefits; architecturally, they differ in that Instant Live Support is optimized for high-traffic environments.

Both will increase employee productivity, improve customer satisfaction, shorten sales cycles, and minimize reliance on trouble tickets; both enable users to seek help from within IBM Lotus Sametime or from anywhere in the world via a web browser; both enable agents to self-manage their availability to provide help while ensuring that each agent assumes an equal share of the workload; both enable agents to reply with canned responses from a central database to ensure consistent answers to common questions; and both log all activity to a central database for internal auditing and/or external compliance requirements.

#### **How it Works**

- ◆ At your option, you can create an initial FAQ tree through which customers and employees can navigate for answers before they reach a live agent
- ◆ When a live request for help is made, a bot alerts an agent (or group of agents) to the new request
- ◆ An agent accepts the request
- ◆ Other agents are notified of the acceptance
- ◆ If the agent is unable to answer the issue, he or she can easily and quickly search for available 'experts' and invite them to join the chat thread instantly
- ◆ The conversation is logged to central database
- ◆ The agent can immediately add comments to the record to indicate if the issue was resolved or whether additional action must be taken

#### **About Instant Technologies**

Instant Technologies specializes in developing innovative, enterprise-class compliance and productivity solutions for IBM Lotus Sametime and Microsoft Office Communications Server, including IM archiving, IM queue management, persistent chat rooms, IM bot development, buddy list administration, and more. Instant Technologies is a Lotus Advanced Business Partner and a Microsoft Registered Partner headquartered in Durham, NH.