

10 thoughts about IT

by Gianni Anchois

I recently spent some time looking at the two clusters of enterprise and consumer IT clients, how they relate to technology and how they choose, purchase and use it. Here are ten of my thoughts.

1. Corporate purchasing is subject to exactly the same rules as consumer spending, the only difference being the money spent is someone else's. So believe it or not, more and more corporate buyers actually purchase what they want, not necessarily what they, or their company, need.
2. Thanks to Apple, we now know that the best strategy is not to pay so much attention to what consumers want (i.e. never directly ask your user or fan base which features the next device should have). Likewise, in the corporate world you should never engage a customer asking what the IT needs are. In the first place, they usually don't really know. Secondly, they don't necessarily want to know, since technology is evolving at such a rate that makes it impossible to be on top of things.

And thirdly, they expect you and your company to tell them. Talk about business objectives and opportunities instead.

3. Notwithstanding popular belief, all corporate IT purchases start with a price comparison. Problem is, if you accept that, you've already lost half of the deal. Literally anybody can sell something on price only. Instead, your company should be in a position to command a price premium. Yes, even in today's commoditised world of IT.
4. Corporate users are consumers in real life. They are already bringing their loved devices into work and use them for work. If your IT solution cannot include BlackBerrys, iPhones, iPads, Android-based devices and in general provide a flexible platform for future technologies, you have already lost. No IT provider can wall-fence an IT environment anymore.
5. If your IT solution is difficult and cumbersome to put together and to price, it's too difficult for a client to understand, hence to purchase.
6. Under-delivering is always a bad idea. If you do it to an enterprise customer, you may have more time and ways of analysing what happened, remediate, explain why it will not happen again, and at least delay for some months being sued and taken to court for breach of contract. In other words, you've got plenty of time for damage control. If you under-deliver to consumer clients, however, your brand will be hacked to pieces in real time on Twitter and Facebook. So you might equally end up in misery, only much faster in this case.
7. Corporate clients also often fall in love with a brand or a piece of technology. Only, when they do, instead of tweeting about it, they build an internal showcase so they can look good with upper management. Then, and only then, they might get vocal about it, depending if their boss liked it and lets them.

8. In the consumer space, if you love your company's products, it shows and it will make you more successful. I still have not found the same love of a company's products (or services) in the corporate space. At times I suspect the reason why is that most of the sales reps do not know their products at all. And this also shows.
9. The technology adoption lifecycle works the same in the enterprise space as in the consumer space, only enterprise customers like to spend more time in the late majority stage because to them it feels safer. If you can regularly push a large number of them to the early majority stage, you win. I'm afraid very few of them will ever be early adopters.
10. Beware of the IT market analysts and those who claim to be able to predict the future technology trends: truth is, nobody believes them anymore. They are only there to cover clueless people's asses. Everybody knows that any technology prediction looking forward to more than a year is just guessing. IT and technology in general are evolving at such a rate that, joined with the harsh reality of corporate business slowdown, it has become plainly impossible to predict longer terms market trends. Remember this the next time that somebody puts a two-by-two chart or fancy quadrant under your nose.

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