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The EUC Managers Guide to Digital Workplace Observability

What observability is, what the benefits are, and how to start implementing observability in your digital workplace today.

Introduction

The digital workplace has evolved dramatically over the past decade, both in terms of the increased reliance on technology for daily operations and the complexity of that technology. In order to manage an improve the digital workplace, service desk teams need more than just a comprehensive view of their IT environments — they need to be able to analyze that data in real-time to make faster, more continuously effective decisions. Enter: digital workplace observability.

Observability has gained interest exponentially in the IT industry recently, as service desk leaders search for solutions that address their most urgent priorities: namely, the need to understand problems at their root causes and proactively fix them, efficiently and consistently.

While digital workplace observability has become something of a hot talking point, it's not a temporary trend or industry buzzword — rather, **it's one of the most important indicators of where the digital workplace stands today,** where it's going, and what service desk teams will need to manage it moving forward.

Whether you're exploring observability solutions or you're new to the topic entirely, keep reading. In this paper, we explore everything you need to know about digital workplace observability, why it's important, and how it empowers IT organizations to better manage the modern digital workplace.

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What is Digital Workplace Observability?

Digital workplace observability, also known as digital experience observability, refers to the ability to understand the internal systems that constitute the digital workplace by the process of gathering and analyzing the data released by those systems.

As a technology solution, a digital workplace observability tool gathers and analyzes output data, produces insights based on identified correlations and provides the context IT teams need to understand why problems occur and how to fix them.

Digital workplace observability is also known as **applied observability,** a name more commonly used in the DevOps space. However, it's important to note that while DevOps focuses on the development and deployment of software, IT teams apply observability to the entire digital workplace, including software, hardware, and infrastructure.

"We wanted to move away from looking at incidents to looking at the underlying data and take actions based on that data. With Nexthink, we were able to see the data, derive insights from the observations and then fix with automation."

-Bhavin Shah, Johnson & Johnson

Digital Workplace Observability vs. Monitoring

Digital workplace monitoring and observability are two distinct activities that improve the service desk's ability to understand problems impacting their IT environment. However, the two are often confused as synonymous, when in fact they are distinct both in terms of purpose and execution.

Monitoring refers to a systematic method of collecting and analyzing telemetry data related to system health, using a predetermined set of metrics. An IT team puts monitoring in place to track specific indicators of how a device, application, or network is performing.

For example, if a SaaS application is down, a monitoring tool will detect the issue and alert the service desk prior to employees reporting a problem. Or, an IT team can monitor disk usage on specific devices in order to know when a high usage rate impacts performance.

Monitoring does enable IT teams to detect and solve problems faster — but it still relies on the service desk to indicate what problems they're looking for. If something goes wrong, and the team hasn't put procedures in place to track the right metrics, they can still fail to deliver timely support.

Observability goes beyond monitoring by not only collecting and analyzing telemetry data, but drawing correlations in real time and using those correlations to expose blind spots and predict future issues. Therefore, an observability solution presents a more holistic and continuously evolving picture of the systems, devices, applications and networks that exist in an IT environment.

To put it simply: putting a monitoring solution in place will inform and alert the service desk about issues occurring. Observability enables the service desk to fully understand what the issue is, why it's occurring, who it's impacting, and what actions must be taken to resolve it.

Benefits of Digital Workplace Observability with Nexthink:

With comprehensive end-to-end visibility of the entire digital workplace and powerful automated remediation capabilities, Nexthink customers are able to see, diagnose and fix any issue on any endpoint, anywhere — with huge benefits.

$34M

Saved by Multinational Conglomerate over 5 years through automated monitoring and issue remediation.

$261k

Saved on Hardware Refresh by ABinBev.

90%

Reduction in application crashes for US Health System.

$1.6M

Saved through Ticket Reduction by US Hospital.

What are the Benefits of Digital Workplace Observability?

Digital workplace observability does more than just empower service desk teams to fulfill their core responsibilities more efficiently — when implemented, **an observability solution completely reshapes an organization's ability to manage their digital workplace.**

The most significant benefits of implementing digital workplace observability include:

1. Facilitate proactive response to IT incidents

While digital workplace monitoring enables service desks to identify issues faster, it still keeps them fixed into a predominantly **reactive** support model. Because monitoring is only effective when IT teams know which metrics to monitor, they'll be stuck reacting to new problems that result from changes occurring in their environment they hadn't prepared for.

Observability, on the other hand, presents a proactive solution to IT incident management. The correlations that an observability solution draws from data yield actionable insights into future problems that may occur. Observability highlights important context across the IT environment — in real time, so service desk workers can identify trends, proactively detecting and addressing nascent issues before they've impacted users.

2. Improve data transparency and collaboration

As digital workplaces adopt more and more applications, it becomes more difficult for individual teams to visualize and share data across platforms. Data silos lead to miscommunications, redundancies, and errors that slow down workflows and inhibit healthy collaboration — not just among service workers, but between service teams and other departments.

An observability platform pulls data from the entire environment into one centralized location. That means that all service team members are able to see what's happening across the system at any given time, in real time. As a result, they can actively collaborate, prioritize problems and delegate responsibilities without any communication breakdowns. And, they're able to share important insights gained from their observability solution with other teams across the organization.

3. Reduce IT costs by doing more with less

Cost-efficiency is a huge concern for today's digital workplaces, particularly within IT organizations. They often run into a common catch-22: they must innovate in order to keep up with their competition and ensure the business's success, but innovation drives IT costs beyond what the business is willing or able to support.

End-to-end observability solves this conundrum by enabling IT to do more with less resources. A digital workplace observability solution accelerates IT operations procedures, reduces time spent manually troubleshooting, and automates much of the support process — which frees up time and resources for an organization's support staff. Thus, they're able to pivot resources to valuable innovation projects without stretching their team's bandwidth or their company's budgets too thin.

"Every company has gone through some level of digital transformation, but for businesses to remain competitive in today's world, they need to continue that transformation. Can you use things like Nexthink to look at the entire landscape of the environment, to say now I know what the challenges are going to be, and how I can address those challenges."

-Mike Holzman, Accenture

Digital Workplace Observability: Key Stakeholders

It's important to note that while IT teams are the workers who will implement and interact with observability technology, the benefits of digital workplace observability extend to every level of an organization. Let's take a look at how implementing observability contributes to the goals of the support desks, the business's leaders, and employees.

Stakeholder 1: Support Desks

Support workers have the difficult task of keeping the digital workplace running — which means maintaining the best possible experiences for employees while also meeting the business's expectations. But the complexity of the digital workplace means that support teams get bogged down by constant fire-fighting, menial work and recurring technology issues that eat up their time and prevent them from generating value for the business.

Observability alleviates these problems by providing support teams with the complete visibility they need into their environments. It gives them insights into the scope and context of IT issues in real time, so they're able to proactively diagnose and solve issues instantly, before they impact users.

The result? Service desks no longer face an endless flow of support tickets, they're able to automate solutions to avoid problems recurring, and they can become more of a partner to the business — proving value rather than driving costs.

Stakeholder 2: Business Leaders

A business in today's climate needs to accomplish a few key objectives in order to succeed. They need to be able to innovate fast to keep up with the speed of digital transformation. They need to be cost-efficient and ensure that their technology investments are yielding the highest ROI possible. And they need to manage and improve employee experience to reduce turnover in the face of an increasingly competitive job market.

Equipping service desks with digital workplace observability technology will contribute to all three of these objectives in the following ways:

- **Fast innovation:** The business's IT department will be able to introduce new tools quickly and successfully with improved visibility throughout the deployment process.

- **Cost-efficiency**: Proactively managing technology usage will enable the business to cut unnecessary hardware and software spend without impacting employee experience, while observing adoption in real-time will ensure that each technology investment delivers on its intended value.

- **Reduce attrition:** Observability enables IT to both proactively resolve issues and deliver more targeted support, which in turn will improve the overall employee experience and bolster retention of top talent.

Stakeholder 3: Employees

Employee expectations have evolved significantly in the era of remote and hybrid work. Now, employees don't just expect to receive quick and helpful IT support — they expect a frictionless IT experience where they can always rely on their technology to work at a high level and without interruption. Moreover, they expect their digital experiences to be consistent wherever they work — whether they're in the office, on the go, or at home.

An IT team that leverages digital workplace observability is equipped to meet and exceed these elevated employee expectations. Their proactive incident management efforts will lead to issues being solved in the background, before employees experience adverse effects to their key applications and devices. And the support team's 360-degree view of the environment means they'll be able to maintain high standards of performance across all work environments, whether remote or in-office.

Employees
- Stable, reliant workplace and applications
- Work from anywhere
- Never open a ticket

Digital Workplace Teams
- See changes continuously
- Diagnose and prioritize issues at scale
- Fix issues proactively and communicate

Business
- Ability to innovate fast
- Cost efficient operations
- Low attrition in important talent

"When we found out there were unhealthy SCCM clients across the environment, we used Nexthink to find and improve the SCCM client health. We deployed a self-healing remote action, and we've seen our patching compliance numbers skyrocket."

-Tim Donovan, Centene

Digital Workplace Observability: How It Works

Now that we've defined digital workplace observability, explained its benefits and key stakeholders, let's dig deeper into the actual features and functions that make an observability platform work.

Keep in mind, the following list is far from comprehensive — but it will provide you with a deeper understanding of how a digital workplace observability platform operates.

1. Data Collection

An observability solution gathers real-time data from a variety of outputs. While most observability tools concentrate largely on data from applications and data centers, solutions like Nexthink also gather real-time end-user experience data that highlights changes in the ecosystem from an employee's perspective.

The usage data gathered from cloud applications is incredibly useful for support teams to identify the root causes of any issues that arise. By combining cloud application data with information collected from end-user devices, IT teams get a more comprehensive visibility into their environment — all in one centralized location, without needing to toggle between various data platforms.

2. Context and Correlation

This is the first step in which observability sets itself apart from traditional monitoring solutions. When an observability platform gathers data, it automatically draws correlations in real time, recognizing patterns that point to the root causes of issues. This valuable context quickly points support teams in the right direction when it comes to swift incident resolution.

3. Real-Time Alerts

Any time the observability solution detects an incident that's impacting the environment, it triggers an immediate alert to the service team. These alerts can be integrated into external systems so that IT staff know where to target their solutions and employees experience the least friction possible.

4. Diagnostics

Artificial intelligence and machine learning enable support teams to immediately visualize the nature, scope, and impact of nascent and occurring issues. AI-powered dashboards are designed to troubleshoot issues like execution crashes and high CPU usage-related problems, while integrated diagnostics panels enable IT to troubleshoot web applications directly on specified application pages.

An observability platform can also make detailed suggestions for improved troubleshooting with pattern-based analysis.

5. Automation and Remediation

Finally, support teams can close the loop with insights-driven automation and remediation capabilities. A library of one-click automated operations and personalized remediation scripts enable them to automate their solutions to common problems so that they fix in the background of employees' day-to-day experiences.

They can also leverage targeted self-help campaigns deployed directly to employee devices, so employees can resolve their IT issues with a single click.

> *"If you can't measure it, you can't fix it.*
>
> **-Brett Sonderby, Deloitte**

Digital Workplace Observability with Nexthink

If you want to take advantage of all the above capabilities and much more — including advanced investigations and live dashboards — look no further than Nexthink Infinity.

Nexthink Infinity is the most advanced cloud-native observability and automation platform for End-User-Computing (EUC) teams. The platform works across applications to provide overall visibility, diagnose and proactively mitigate issues.

Nexthink also offers a variety of expansion products to bring the benefits of observability to your entire infrastructure, including Application Experience (a one-stop shop for real-time visibility into the adoption and performance of all applications) and Collaboration Experience (deep insights to stay ahead of issues impacting collaboration tools like Teams and Zoom).

To start your journey to Digital Workplace Observability today, request a demo of Nexthink.

ABOUT NEXTHINK

Nexthink is the global leader in Digital Employee Experience management. The company's products allow enterprises to create highly productive digital workplaces for their employees by delivering optimal end-user experiences. Through a unique combination of real-time analytics, automation and employee feedback across all endpoints, Nexthink helps IT teams meet the needs of the modern digital workplace.

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Want to learn more about how Nexthink can help you improve employee experience?