



Chapter IX

End User Support Usage

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how different end user qualities affect actual use of support sources in organizations. It identifies three qualities: information technology-skills; computer self-efficacy; information technology (IT) -involvement. Sources of support are divided in: formal sources of support; informal sources of support; use of internal documentation and use of external documentation. Hypotheses are tested empirically through a cross sectional study in a large Norwegian organization. The results show end user qualities in varying degree may affect the end users' choice of different support sources. The study also shows access to a computer expert and giving collegial support might be important factors for explaining the variation in the end users' choices of support services.

INTRODUCTION

Support services are central elements of any organization. To be competitive, organizations need to optimise the use of the information technology (IT)-resources. The problem is, however, end users tend to spend a lot of their working hours fixing IT-related problems that has nothing to do with their actual work assignments. The employee's expertise and skills in using computer systems have become a critical factor for successful use of information technology in organizations (Cheney, Mann & Amoroso, 1986; Nelson & Cheney, 1987; Mirani & King, 1994). Gartner Group found that about 60 percent of the time end users spend in front of a computer will be to make it work satisfactorily and to learn how to use different programs (Kirwin, 1995). The solutions for solving these problems usually are to offer the employees training, education, assistance or guidance. Do these solutions solve our problems?

Some information systems (IS) researchers have studied the antecedents of variation in the support needs of end users so that these needs can be better explained, predicted and fulfilled (Mirani & King, 1994). Maybe one should look at the end user's actual use of support and make this the basis for figuring out ways to make end users more effective in their daily work.

Why do end users choose different support services? Is it due to variations in end user qualities (i.e., skills, self-efficacy, involvement, etc.)? Is it the qualities of the actual support (context, vicinity, sources, etc.)? Or could it be a result of the end user's relation to the support personnel or the competence of the support personnel that makes the end user choose his source of support? These questions are many that must be answered when searching to find causes of variation in the end user's use of different support sources.

Most literature view end user computing (EUC) support from an overall organizational perspective. Information centre (IC) approaches, generally, do not take into account differences among users, when designing and providing support services (Mirani & King, 1994). To make end users more effective, a useful approach could be to map the causes for the end user's need for different kinds of support. By finding these causes one could improve end user qualities and, therefore increase effectiveness. My focus is on end user qualities, and I aim to find out whether basic end user qualities can affect the way end users choose sources of support or solve their IT-related problems. That is, *are there any basic end user qualities that can be of significance when they choose their sources of support?*

The objective of this study is to identify end user qualities (variables) that may be important for explaining differences in usage of different support sources. I will address three different qualities that might be of significance, when end users solve their problems. These qualities include: IT-skills, computer self-efficacy and IT-involvement.

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