Executive Summary – Nexthink V6

Overview

- Impressive IT analytics tool to drive proactive Incident Management
- Available as On-Premise or Hosted by MSPs, Wipro, Getronics, etc.
- Integration with service desk products, ServiceNow, LANDESK, etc.

Strengths

- A proactive way to do Incident Management
- Can notify users and work on a fix without a single inbound call to the Service Desk
- Incidents affecting key services highly visible
- Impressive use of automation to drive efficiencies in Incident & Event Management

Weaknesses

- Positioning needs to be clear to avoid confusion; this is proactive probable cause analysis rather than reactive root cause analysis

Primary Market Focus

- Large customer accounts

Independent Review

Nexthink was founded in 2004 and is not your typical ITSM tool; instead of the industry standard Incident, Problem and Change modules, Nexthink is an end user IT analytics product that can be used to support security, operations and project functions.

Part of the Nexthink ethos is that people don’t like reporting Incidents, they’d rather live with the issue rather than dealing with the hassle of contacting the Service Desk. We need to move from a reactive model whereby we’re reliant on the end user to let us know when something’s wrong to a proactive monitoring when Event Management can pick up any potential issues and alert the appropriate team so they can take action before customers are adversely impacted. Nexthink was designed to “have the Service Desk Analysts back” by providing real time alerts and alarms on the live production environment. From the time I spent talking with the team at Nexthink it was clear that end users aka people are at the centre of everything they do. When we were having a chat before the test kicked off, one of the guys said that his favourite part of the job is talking to customers and end users and that really came across during the demo.

The initial dashboard you see when logging into the tool is a real time view of business critical services. As a Service Desk analyst you can see at a glance if any end users are experiencing issues with any services and drill down into the end users and their endpoints to see more details. One practical scenario we went through was if a major application such as SAP was unavailable. By simply clicking on the SAP icon, you could see a status summary of the service and the number of affected users. How cool is that? Not only can you pounce on the issue like a “cheetah on a trampoline” (http://dilbert.com/strip/1997-03-09), by simply right clicking on the service, you can notify the affected users by e-mail so you’re already fixing the issue and/or open a major incident or problem without a single end user having to pick up the phone.

The tool was designed with real life Service Desk scenarios in mind; the service was built to reduce white noise so if a single user had an issue with web services it would be tracked but not onward notified but if there was a sudden spike, for example three times the usual rate of web services issues, then an alert would be raised and the Service Desk analyst would be prompted to take further action.
Driving proactivity is a key part of the Nexthink ethos. One of the biggest sources of incidents can be poor performing systems and services particularly at month end. Nexthink allows the Service Desk analysts to view the end users experience over time and objectively analyse the details. In one of the cases someone installed the Ask.com toolbar and it was causing intermittent performance issues for some web applications and the end user's system in general. It would be hard to identify the probable cause without end user analytics, and Nexthink can determine with a single click if anyone else has installed the tool bar and if they are experiencing a similar issue enabling you to create a child ticket with the list of affected systems from which to remove the offending software. As part of the product training, Nexthink advises Service Desk analysts to spend the time saved by automation to go out and talk to users; maximising value and improving the relationship between IT and the rest of the business.

The end user analytics are also helpful in asset tracking and licensing monitoring allowing analysts to easily track the software and hardware estates using the inbuilt reporting functionality. It can also be used to see what versions of software are out there, how those versions are performing for the business and how many are unused (let's face it - it's always Visio & Project right?) enabling the licenses to be freed up.

Nexthink are well known in the ITSM industry and have partnered with ServiceNow, LANDesk and many other service desk vendors so that it’s possible to have the best of both worlds; a comprehensive ITSM solution and the proactive monitoring and faster incident resolution provided by Nexthink. If I was a fairy godmother, I would give this product to every Service Desk in the world as the value add is so impressive; in empowering the Service Desk it makes Incident Management proactive and maximises user experience.

Technical Summary

| Incident logging, categorization & automation options | Incidents can be created directly from the Nexthink console including directly from the affected CI. Nexthink alerts can be reported as Incidents via email or web API to the Service Desk so Incidents are reported without the end-user having to pick up the phone. Nexthink’s analytics determine what is anomalous and report issues without overloading the Service Desk. What’s unique about Nexthink is the real-time analytics that generate alerts about anomalies and enables IT and support workers to instantly drill-down for an informed response. |
| System access options (web, fat client, mobile, etc.) | Multiple access options available: Web (Nexthink Portal) and Windows (Nexthink Finder). For native integration with helpdesk console, Nexthink’s data and analytics are available via web API, scripted query language (NXQL), and the Nexthink Finder can be launched with context of the CI including the time of the Incident. |
| Incident tracking and lifecycle | Nexthink End-user IT Analytics provides Incident Managers with the tools that allow them to solve issues quickly. Once an issue has been addressed, a simple one-click investigation can be launched that will inform IT of other users and devices that are likely to experience the same issue. Remediation can be completed proactively reducing costs to the business and dramatically improving end-user satisfaction. |
| Prioritizing and escalating incidents | Nexthink helps workers prioritize incidents by automatically and continuously determining the scope of impact for an issue – i.e. how many end-users are affected – in real-time. Nexthink’s historical record can be used by service desk workers to determine for how long a service has been interrupted, independent of when the incident was reported and marked resolved. This enables IT to determine true SLAs as experienced by the end-users. |
Nexthink provides a service centric view from the end-user perspective that Service Desk workers can use to determine the health of an IT service. Using custom alerts, Nexthink can automatically detect and open major incidents, including the scope, i.e. who is impacted. Nexthink can also determine when the service is restored to end-users, so that Service Desk workers can be confident when they close the incident that it is resolved and a new end-user won’t re-open the incident and/or think that IT is not providing a good level of service.

Applying industry models and frameworks
Alignment with standards and framework is available in the form of investigations, which are imported from the Nexthink Library in the cloud.

Incident closure
Nexthink can be used to verify/show when an IT service is restored down to the context of the individual end-user endpoint (CI).

Reporting and analytics
There are >100 out-of-the-box dashboards available for download from the Nexthink Library. Administrators and users can create and customize their own sophisticated dashboards. In addition, users can create their own custom metrics.

Interaction/workflow with Problem Management
Nexthink provides full visibility to help identify the scope, probable cause, bypass incident reporting, and identify end-users that are impacted from a pre-emptive and predictive standpoint. Most importantly, this information is connected to the IT infrastructure and is based on accurate and factual data.

Incident Mgt beyond the service desk
The Nexthink Engine can be extended to include non-IT related information, but must be associated with either an end-user or endpoint.

Strengths
- A proactive way to do Incident Management; can notify users and work on a fix without a single inbound call to the Service Desk
- Incidents affecting key services highly visible
- Impressive use of automation to drive efficiencies in Incident & Problem Management
- Customers and MSP Partners claim that a proactive model using Nexthink can reduce end user incidents by 25% or more

Weaknesses
- Positioning needs to be clear to avoid confusion; this is proactive probable cause analysis rather than reactive root cause analysis.

Customers
- Advocate Healthcare
- French Ministry of Defence
- Magna Steyr
- Swatch
- Swarovski

In their own words
“Nexthink’s End-user IT Analytics is a unique technology for service desks and help desks that virtually eliminates the dependence on end-users reporting issues and providing feedback. It’s the only technology, when integrated with ITSM tools that professes to enable proactive Incident Management as well as proactive problem management and claims to reduce incidents from end-users by 25-33%.”
Commercial Summary

Vendor

Nexthink

Product

Nexthink V6

Version Reviewed

6

Date of Version Release

September 2015

Year Founded

2004

Customers

600+

Pricing Structure

Number of Collectors/Devices (Windows, Mac, Windows Server, Mobile Devices) and Modules (Security, Web & Cloud, Integration Toolkit, VDI Transformation).

Further Information


This independent review is part of our Incident Management group test 2016, read the full report at http://www.theitsmreview.com/2016/02/incident-mngt-2016/.

Also participating; Alemba Ltd, Atlassian, Cherwell Software™, HPE, InvGate Inc., ManageEngine, Marval Software Limited, Matrix42 AG, SUMMIT Software Inc.