

Oracle Podcast Transcript

Rebecca Brizi:

Welcome to the Springer Nature podcast, in which we'll explore the topic of how information professionals can empower their end users to improve information functions. Today, we're talking with Christy Confetti Higgins, manager of Oracle's virtual information and learning services team, along with senior cybrarian, Scott Brown. Oracle offers suites of integrated applications plus secure autonomous infrastructure in the Oracle cloud.

I'm Rebecca Brizi, a senior analyst with Jinfo Limited. We're a global analyst firm focused on the business information industry and we're proud to be the research partner to Springer Nature for this podcast series. We asked Christy and Scott about how their team manage the balance of delivering information through service departments versus end user self-service at Oracle.

The balance of delivering information through service departments versus end user self-service is always shifting. Tell me about the experience of end user empowerment in your work.

Christy Confetti Higgins:

Oracle's around 135,000 or so employees, so our team is about five people. So, by necessity, we really need to be very much a self-service organization. However, Oracle's culture is really self-service, so that matches quite nicely. We work really hard to make sure employees can easily find and use and share the information they need to do their work, so that they can be self-service and really get what they need when they need it.

So that's our goal as an information team, but we also know that employees now are pretty information savvy, so they expect that experience. They expect to be able to find the things that they need on their own, so part of what we do to help with that is really integrating the information services where employees are already working. So, things like Slack and blogs and part of it is making sure that we're targeting the information to the right audiences.

So again, it is self-service, but we partner very closely with the business to integrate the information to where those employees are working and to curate the right resources and information and learning that's important to the work happening in their world, so that they can find it more easily.

I think another piece is we're also working more and seeing trends around employees wanting more guidance. I don't think that's really anything new for information professionals, but now we're seeing this play out in the form of things like learning paths. So, our team partners really closely with the learning experts in HR and the subject matter experts out in the business, to create learning paths with information and learning resources to help guide employees, to learn a specific skill or learn a specific topic.

So, it could be something like Python or empathy or some type of certification, but that work is really also meant to be self-service. So, although we're curating the resources and providing that expertise, they're then there for employees to leverage in a self-service way.

Rebecca Brizi:

A lot of this is highly demonstrative of how effective end user access requires a lot of expert work behind the scenes. What are some other things that you are doing that end users probably don't realize you are doing?

Scott Brown:

So, I think there's quite a few things. One is definitely, as we've been kind of touching on, is needing to have a solid pulse on the business to understand the information needs and what goes into that. And so, part of that is using a lot of data on our end to understand what's being used, how people are using that information, what are they looking for, how are they looking for it and then diving into that to not only share that with the business, but to also make decisions based upon that for our use.

So, if we're able to use that kind of data to share back a story to a line of business or to a leader and say, "Here's what your people are looking at" or "Here's some resources that you may want to explore further," that's going to be really valuable for that business.

And so, we're trying to capture these kinds of case studies as well by interviewing users, but ultimately trying to understand the impact of what that information and learning brings to the organization. That's really what we're aiming for in long-term.

Christy Confetti Higgins:

Having that deep pulse on Oracle's business - we must have that in order to deliver good information services. And then with that, part of that piece of having a good pulse on Oracle's business are those relationships. So, we work closely with our HR business partners and our organization development consultants.

And so that's a critical piece that I also think happens behind the scenes that our users probably don't realize, is that we are partnering with a lot of different people in order to understand what those needs might be because certainly an HR business partner has a very close relationship with the business and has a different understanding of the need that business has and how there could be an information or learning component that we can help support. So that I think is a really big piece.

The other things that come to mind around that is we monitor and track a lot of sources of information in order to know what's new that relates to our users and the business and that takes a lot of time. We have a lot of alerts set up ourselves, we work very closely with our vendors behind the scenes to understand what's coming from their perspective and share with them kind of what we need and from all of that activity that we have in terms of being proactive to share the right information in the right places, we need to have a good pulse on the business.

So, staying up with the information vendors and like I said, their content, their feature functionality because of course the content is the most important thing. If we don't have the right content, none of the rest of it matters if employees can get easy access to content that's not mapping to our business needs, that is not good.

So, staying up on even our own Oracle technologies. From both knowing what those technologies are, how they're being used in the business, how we're supporting customers with that technology. All of those things help us deliver better information services to the organization.

Rebecca Brizi:

You've touched on quite a bit of this already, but to bring together everything that goes into making end users aware of products, making those products accessible and making it a good experience, what are some of the efforts that you employ to improve end user awareness, access and experience of information tools?

Scott Brown:

So, one of the things that certainly came out of the pandemic was this significant increase in interest in remote information and being able to get access to these resources when everyone was suddenly working remotely. And we're always doing presentations, but doing a much larger scale, much larger audience of presentations around what resources are available.

So that's been a really great vehicle in order to expand that awareness and to continue to drive usage throughout the organization. And usually what we're doing with those teams and with those partnerships is customizing those. So it's not just "Here are the resources go out and use them", it's, "Here's the data that your team is already looking at." Again, anonymized and generalized. "Here are the resources that are available that might be most useful for your team based upon your focus area," whether it's marketing or technical or whatever that might be. And so really trying to tailor those kinds of presentations to the group that we're speaking with so that it gains even more attraction.

And then certainly meeting with leaders, when possible, to help kind of reinforce and amplify that information to their business because they clearly have a lot of influence with their teams and so to have the leader come on and say, "These are great resources. Check them out, take a look at them," that's been really useful.

Christy Confetti Higgins:

Scott and I are part of a bigger team. All around employee experience and strategic communication, so we have a lot of support around kind of the awareness piece from our communications team, which is really helpful.

So, I think a couple of other things around end user access and that awareness piece that I would share would be things like learning paths. So, when we create learning paths, that we are curating the best content to help guide the users and we're being very user focused when we create those learning paths. And so that creates another level of awareness of our resources. So, an employee may be interested in a skill like Python and jumped into a learning path and then realize what amazing content is available from one of our vendors around the topic of Python.

So, providing that content curation and learning path piece to help guide employees, it's also as a result, improving the awareness of some of the high-quality information services. And I think as information professionals, we are experts, so we know how to research and evaluate and analyze information and

we know how to ask the right questions to deliver the right information based on those needs. And so, pulling that together and surfacing it in the way that we have been, has increased I think, overall awareness of some of our resources as well.

And then kind of that communications piece, is so important to get that right. To have a good, solid communication strategy where you're targeting those high quality information services into the right places. So, looking at different channels, like I mentioned Slack, or it could be newsletters, it could be presentations, but where are the right channels to reach the right audiences that we're trying to reach with those information services in a very real way that's in context to their business.

So as Scott mentioned, giving presentations, it's not a general presentation, it's very customized. So our communications, we try to be very purposeful in what we communicate and where, so that we are reaching the right audiences. So, with that, there's many different channels, we have a multi-channel approach to our comm strategy and a very targeted approach and the key is knowing the audience and where they are, what they need and our communications team helps us significantly with that work.

Rebecca Brizi:

Christy and Scott, thank you. You heard from Christy Confetti Higgins and Scott Brown of Oracle speaking about the tools, tactics and the strategies that they use to provide high-quality end user access and training. Listeners, thank you for joining us for Springer Nature's podcasts on key topics in information strategy and management. Learn more about this project by visiting Springer Nature's resources for information professionals.