



Avoiding Discounting Pressure with Preemptive Support

By Todd Chipman, Senior Director, WW Support Marketing, BEA Systems

The stakes never stop rising in IT support. New technologies emerge and the landscape is constantly evolving. Yet, despite these changes, most vendors have been reluctant to alter their support offerings. Instead, they rely on the same old techniques to support more and more sophisticated technologies. This puts added stress on existing support, and leaves customers feeling under-served and disappointed. Luckily, there are emerging solutions.

Proactive Support: Too Little, Too Late

Recently, there have been some shifts in the industry as it has moved from reactive to proactive support. Though this shift has helped to add some value to the support paradigm, even a proactive support model cannot entirely meet the needs of complicated IT environments—it is simply too hard to predict all the possible contingencies.

And still, many customers do not feel they are getting what they pay for. These customers believe that even many proactive support offerings have not evolved enough to fit new realities. Increasing pressure on their IT budgets has caused them to search for ways to manage an expanding environment with a shrinking pool of resources. They want support tools that show a measurable difference and truly change how their support is provided, and many have yet to see that sort of change. This disillusionment, and the belief that the support options available to them are inadequate to the task, can leave key accounts highly-vulnerable to discounting pressure.

Preemptive Support: Delivering the Right Answer

The most effective solution to provide genuine innovation in support is by offering Preemptive support. Taking proactive support one critical step further, Preemptive support (such as BEA Guardian™ which I am proud to point out) puts new and more robust value into your support paradigm. Preemptive support gives customers a way to identify and then resolve potential trouble-spots before they can ever manifest. Most importantly, this next-generation support solution finally offers customers a way to

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stay permanently ahead of their rapidly-changing environments.

In the past, support systems required at least a seed of a problem to be present, and once that seed was planted, it often grew and impacted operations before it could be addressed. The onus was on the customer to find the problem, engage support, and then wait, sometimes hours, sometimes days or weeks, until a resolution was provided; a process that was highly linear and time consuming. On the other hand, preemptive support allows customers to be virtually everywhere at once, keeping an eye on all the diverse and changing parts of their environment and providing them with a resolution, in many cases before they are even aware of the problem.

A Dynamic, Customizable Solution

The value-optimized, preemptive support experience puts the power directly into your customers' hands. They can scan for potential incompatibilities when making routine changes to their environment, or the moment they suspect a problem may develop, and immediately they will receive a solution they can put into action. A system that expands and self-evolves, preemptive support keeps up with changing environments, fully meeting or exceeding the needs and expectations of the most high-value customers. They can automate their troubleshooting process, while still retaining full control of their updating procedure. Preemptive tools also act as an extended team member, maximizing revenue and margin, and expanding as needed, which helps to conserve resources and avoid any sense of bloat.

As a result, preemptive support allows your customers to remain in control of not only their operations, but their budget. In the past, your customers may have had to trade-off increased resources and budget in order to gain the reduced risk of downtime and poor performance, but preemptive support provides the reduced risk to the operations and a measurable return on investment as it frees up valuable IT man hours and resources traditionally spent in troubleshooting.

How Preemptive Support Works

Preemptive support from BEA works on a similar model to virus protection software. It is a framework installed on a single computer, which scans only on your request and identifies potential trouble-spots, advising you on solutions. Also like a virus protection system, it continually feeds back information and updates, expanding and adapting over time to maintain effectiveness and become more and more powerful.

BEA's preemptive support, BEA Guardian, uses simple diagnostic Signature Patterns™ to offer intuitive and detailed information about potential problem areas and how to fix them. This streamlined software tool lets customers assess their application environment and then search for and eliminate potential software problems before they might require

the attention of IT support staff, or impact operations and end-users. BEA Guardian also provides integrated and automated maintenance that helps streamline day-to-day operations and ensure smooth deployments.

BEA Guardian Preemptive support:

- Scans a domain in seconds for software concerns or potential incompatibilities.
- Locates the right updates and service packs so the IT team can spend time working on other issues.
- Regularly updates BEA Signature Patterns to access the most current information and help ensure system and application stability.
- Gathers case information and helps file a support case if needed.
- Protects margins and defend against competitive price pressures by offering value-added support.
- Reduces license carves and increase support revenue.
- Improves operational efficiency and offshore dependence achieved by case deflection.

BEA Guardian's Signature Pattern technology identifies and offers solutions on known issues before new cases can develop, which cuts the number of cases generated from the outset. Signature Patterns also allow the system to expand and grow, matching network conditions to a dynamic archive of potential issues.

The Bottom Line

The cost-savings of preemptive support are immediately and dramatically apparent. Consider a fictitious example of a company with a 384-person IT organization that generates 100,000 customer issues annually. With each engineer able to solve one issue per day, it costs about \$1,000 to solve each issue that arises, which amounts to a \$100M spend annually. This spend can be dramatically reduced by using preemptive support.

Preemptive solutions increase engineer productivity by allowing cases to be deflected or solved much more quickly, reduce the need for resources to solve issues and lighten the expense load on a company. For example, BEA Guardian is able to impact a case multiple times, depending on the number of signatures which relate to each case. The more cases created, the more signatures result, and the more likely an issue will be caught earlier. This allows engineers to be more productive by eliminating or speeding case resolution. Increased productivity, in return, effectively reduces the FTE levels required to solve cases, overall, and can lead to increased expense savings. Annual savings can double, triple or even quadruple. In the example we mentioned earlier, we might see FTE efficiency rise up to 17% (up to 64 FTEs) which could lead to a one year savings of up to \$3M and a two year savings of up to \$13M.

Making the Difference

In the final analysis, preemptive support is a dynamic solution that provides differentiation for your support services and brings your offering to the next level. It leaves customers feeling secure that they are getting as much as, if not more than, they pay for. This shows your customers the clear value of your support, as well as deepening your relationships with them over time, and helping you, ultimately, to protect your business from support discounts.

About Todd Chipman.....

Todd Chipman is the Senior Director of Worldwide Services for BEA Systems, Inc. Under his leadership, BEA support has introduced innovative industry recognized offerings like BEA Guardian, Mission Critical support Continuum, and Customer First which have dramatically increased support revenue, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

Prior to joining BEA, Chipman held executive roles as SVP of Marketing at Allied Telesyn, VP of Product Management at CenterBeam, and VP of Research at Giga Information Group. Chipman graduated from the University of Idaho with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Computer Science and an MBA from Pepperdine University.

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