MARKET NOTE


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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: Dell Premium Support Plus

Despite the rise of tablets and lightweight laptops, IDC research shows that the global personal computer (PC) market continues to be resilient — posting a slightly positive year-over-year growth in 4Q17. Many end users continue to prefer using a PC for tasks at work and at home. However, users often struggle to maintain these devices in top working condition — and ensuring ongoing security is an enormous challenge. To help address these issues for consumers, last year, Dell introduced the new Premium Support Plus offering for Inspiron, XPS, and Alienware PCs. This new high-end support offering includes access to Dell’s SupportAssist technology, finally delivering predictive support to the consumer market.

Key Takeaways

- Dell Premium Support Plus includes 24x7 access to expert hardware and software phone support, repairs for accidental damage, onsite support after remote diagnosis, and personalized support to help resolve complex software issues.

- Most importantly, Dell Premium Support Plus includes access to new features enabled by Dell’s SupportAssist technology, which can proactively find issues on the covered PC, open a support case, and contact Dell. Dell SupportAssist can also predict problems and failures before they affect the PC. Dell Premium Support Plus will order replacement parts for any issues without user interaction — and if in-person service is required, the support team will reach out to schedule the visit.

- IDC believes Dell Premium Support Plus sets a new standard for predictive analytics in consumer support. While the individual features in SupportAssist are not new to enterprise and commercial PC support, bundling these features into a consumer support offering and making them easy to deploy and adopt finally brings the beginnings of AI and machine learning to the consumer support space.

- IDC recommends considering adopting these preventive and predictive support features, especially to combat growing threats from sophisticated hackers. Automated and proactive security measures will become increasingly critical to maintaining individual security and data.

Source: IDC, 2018
IN THIS MARKET NOTE

With the rise of tablets and lightweight laptops, the demise of the personal computer market has been predicted and analyzed extensively over the past five years. However, the reality is that many end users continue to prefer using a PC for a variety of tasks at work and at home. In fact, recent IDC research has shown that the global PC market decline has slowed, or even flattened in some quarters.

At the same time, although the typical PC user has become fairly technology savvy in recent years, the rapid pace of change in technology has left consumers looking for more alternatives in support. Users often struggle to maintain their devices in top working condition, and optimizing performance to secure their devices and prevent degradations is an even larger challenge.

To help address these issues for consumers, last year, Dell introduced the new Premium Support Plus offering for Inspiron, XPS, and Alienware PCs. This is a new high-end support offering from Dell in the consumer support market and includes access to the following key features:

- 24 x 7 direct access to expert hardware and software phone support
- Onsite support after remote diagnosis
- Repairs for accidental damages like drops, spills, and electrical surges
- Collaborative help to resolve everyday software issues
- Personalized support for users reporting complex software issues, or for users that need guidance setting data backup, parental controls, and more
- International support available around the globe
- Personal control software support

Most importantly, the new Dell Premium Support Plus offering includes access to new predictive support features enabled by Dell's SupportAssist technology. These new features can:

- Proactively find issues on the covered PC, open a support case, and contact Dell (while notifying end users the problem is under investigation)
- Predict problems and failures before they can affect the PC (limited to hard drives, solid state drives, fans, and batteries)
- Detect and remove viruses and malware by scanning the covered PC (occurs monthly by default), addressing any threats and removing malware when detected
- Optimize PC performance automatically by monitoring and scanning the hardware and system configuration files, updating any necessary files, and optimizing network and device performance

Dell Premium Support Plus will order replacement parts for any issues without user interaction – and if in-person service is required, the support team will reach out to schedule the visit. Dell Premium Support Plus is available for Inspiron, XPS, and Alienware PCs that are up to four years old. The service can be purchased through Dell and its accredited partners. Prices vary depending on the covered system and can range from $139 to $229 per year.

IDC’S POINT OF VIEW

IDC is not surprised to see an offering of this nature from Dell, since the organization has a long history of delivering robust, comprehensive support for enterprise PCs through its ProSupport plans. Dell has invested significantly in its enterprise PC support portfolio over the years, developing complex
processes for parts and logistics, as well as advanced technologies to expedite remote, automated support delivery. Given the market need for consumer PC support services, it makes sense for Dell to expand these offerings into the consumer market.

IDC believes the new Dell Premium Support Plus offering sets a new standard for predictive analytics in consumer support through the SupportAssist technology. The individual features in SupportAssist are not new to enterprise and commercial PC support; automated alerts and predictive analytics have been around for several years. However, bundling these advanced PC support features into a consumer support offering and making them easy to deploy and adopt finally brings the beginnings of AI and machine learning to the consumer support space.

As consumers adopt more technology into their everyday lives, the importance of robust support practices focused on optimizing performance become increasingly important. Given the growing threats from sophisticated hackers, automated and proactive security measures will become increasingly important – critical to maintaining individual security and data.

Given this announcement, IDC expects that other PC support organizations will accelerate efforts to include automated, predictive analytics into their PCs and support packages. While Apple's Genius Bar has been successful with a high touch, in-person support model and Amazon's Mayday button has made on-demand video support easily available, Dell Premium Support Plus brings predictive, preventive support to the consumer market – a critical support feature with the proliferation of new technologies in cloud, mobile, and the "Internet of Things (IoT)."

In addition, IDC anticipates that these new deliverables will change consumer support services significantly. The consumer appetite for mobile apps across a wide range of devices shows no sign of slowing down. If anything, the rapid growth of IoT devices with specific "at home" applications will continue to grow over time. Consumers are now more willing and able to follow a self-service model when purchasing, installing, and supporting these applications. IDC expects that recent demographic shifts will contribute to these changes, as younger generations who are more comfortable with technology start changing how, when, and where support is required and delivered.

IDC also believes that, while the need for support in complex and interconnected home networks will persist, many of the first-line support issues that currently arise will increasingly be addressed and solved by automated, predictive support delivery. As the opportunities for these support services grow, effective product and support packaging and marketing efforts will help support providers like Dell continue to remain relevant in the consumer space. Pricing and positioning that can be precisely targeted to specific segments will be critical to long-term success.

Furthermore, IDC expects to see additional changes in direct-to-consumer support delivery as these services evolve over the next five years. As more consumers adopt predictive and preventive support deliverables across their devices, the path to resolution will change dramatically in the coming years. High-quality consumer support delivery will increasingly require advanced hands-on support, since consumers will become more proficient with resolving their problems without assistance using advanced tools and utilities. As a result, maintaining and improving consumer support delivery will require support staff who can answer difficult questions on the first try – especially for consumers paying a premium for in-person support.

However, even with these positive trends in consumer support services, IDC expects that Dell could face some challenges with this offering. Because some of the key features are largely driven by and enabled through technology, the nuts and bolts must be easy to configure, adopt, and consume. Dell
will have to continuously confirm that critical advanced predictive and preventive technology is on and in working order to help consumers take advantage of the features — which can be difficult in the consumer space, given the wide variety of technology experience among users.

In addition, as automated remote support grows in popularity, IDC recommends proceeding carefully when adding new features and functionality. Many end-user consumers remain wary of automated control of their devices, particularly when their personal data is potentially accessible by the provider. With security concerns at the forefront for many PC users, IDC expects that some will have pointed questions about what will be done to their machines, when, and by whom. Make sure that end users can always opt out and not participate in any automated support programs, and limit the degree to which support will affect any significant functionality and data on the device.

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Synopsis

This Market Note highlights the introduction of the new Premium Support Plus by Dell, introduced as a new high-end support offering for the consumer market.

"Recent IDC research shows that the global personal computer (PC) market continues to be resilient — posting a slightly positive year-over-year growth in 4Q17. Many end users continue to prefer using a PC for tasks at work and at home — even while they struggle to maintain these devices in top working condition," said Elaina Stergiades, research manager in Software Support. "To help address these issues for consumers, last year, Dell introduced the new Premium Support Plus offering for Inspiron, XPS, and Alienware PCs. This new high-end support offering uses Dell’s SupportAssist technology to set a new standard for predictive analytics in consumer support — finally delivering the beginnings of AI and machine learning to the consumer market."
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