Helping Employees Be More Productive with BYOD

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Summary

BYOD, or Bring Your Own Device, is either the saving grace of IT departments with shrinking budgets or the bane of their very existence, depending on who you ask. However, BYOD, with the right approach, policies, and mindset, can pay significant dividends in employee productivity and job satisfaction, as well as a potential cost-saver for IT. This paper explores the benefits to employees (and therefore to the business) of BYOD programs and ways they can improve productivity among staff.

The History of BYOD

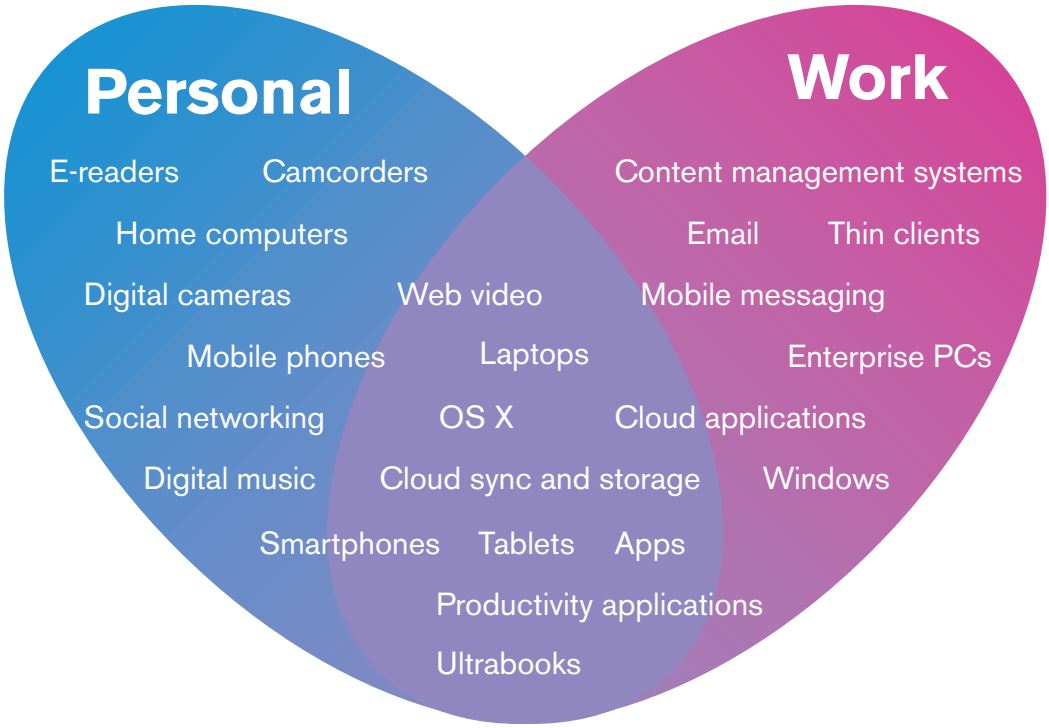
Even five years ago, companies big and small could just call a sales rep or go to the website of their favorite OEM and order X laptops and Y desktops, depending on how many employees were generally mobile and how many were usually tied to their desks. Maybe they'd order Z thin clients and servers to match, Y+Z monitors, a few fancy workstations for engineering-types, and a handful of especially nice laptops for the C-suite. The majority of these would be identical, easily swapped and serviced, and would usually fall into the "solid enterprise PC" category.

Then the perfect storm of computing challenges and advancements changed everything. Windows Vista was launched in 2007 to massive criticism. The iPhone, on the other hand, catapulted Apple from a niche player into the position of mobile juggernaut. And Amazon's cloud services were making businesses take notice of the cloud while Google launched an enterprise version of its Apps product: the cloud had arrived.

Suddenly, those corporate Blackberries were looking pretty tired, PC users were looking for alternatives to an aging Windows XP or an unstable Windows Vista, and the rise of the cloud meant that computer operating systems were more a matter of preference than a requirement for application compatibility. And iPhones just worked so much better when they were hooked up to a Mac. Technology analysts were talking seriously about the "consumerization of IT": employees were tired of generic experiences that couldn't compare to their computing experiences at home and nobody really wanted to carry both a Blackberry and an iPhone (but many people did, relegating the former "Crackberries" to work-only status).

iPhones kept getting better, Android phones rapidly gained market share, Mac OS X stopped being an also-ran (even though enterprises were slow to adopt Macs), tablets came on the scene, and even more applications moved to the cloud. Workers became increasingly mobile and flexible in where they could work as the cloud made content and applications available anywhere, anytime. The idea of having work phones, work laptops, and work desktops as well as personal phones and computers became less and less attractive. Most importantly, when

employees found that they could not only work using their personal equipment thanks to the cloud but also work more efficiently on systems they could customize, it became a much harder sell for users to keep work and personal computing separate..



Defining the Scope of BYOD

Businesses have taken a complete spectrum of approaches to BYOD. These range from continuing to prohibit any personal devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) from accessing corporate data or communications to providing equipment allowances and letting employees purchase their own technology. Most fall somewhere in between, with varying degrees of support for personal devices. Oftentimes, IT staff simply turn a blind eye, meaning that BYOD is happening informally on a large scale even as corporate computing equipment continues to be purchased and assigned.

Clearly, this latter case isn't the best use of IT budgets, nor does it allow IT to mitigate the potential risks and challenges of BYOD. One size certainly doesn't fit all, however, and businesses, regardless of their size, need to decide on the scope of BYOD for their organization and develop policies around their chosen approach.

IT Staff and the BYOD Spectrum

No Means No

IT staff at this end of the spectrum want nothing to do with BYOD. It's a security risk, it's a hassle, the infrastructure can't handle it, and it's simply not going to happen. Sometimes this is the right choice. There are environments when security trumps all else. Sometimes, though, it's just stubborn resistance to change. The question is, are there systems in place to stop determined employees from checking their email on their iPhones?

Grudging Resignation

The CEO wants to use his iPad instead of the perfectly nice Windows 7 Pro ultrabook that was just purchased for htim. The CEO's secretary wants to use a Mac at home to stay connected with the road warrior CEO. And the rockstar engineer insists on bringing his mobile Linux workstation to the office. BYOD is going to happen whether you like it or not. Time to see what utilities exist for securing a heterogeneous environment.

See No Evil, Hear No Evil

At first, this seems like a reasonable compromise. Kind of like "Don't ask, don't tell." But then it becomes obvious that what you don't know can hurt you. Without understanding potential vectors entering the network or knowing of redundancies between employee devices and IT-purchased hardware, it's hard to realize the potential benefits of BYOD or to mitigate any threats. Why is the wireless access on the 3rd floor maxed out? I dunno…

Anything Goes

There are many settings when a laissez-faire approach works quite well. SMBs can often be flexible enough to embrace employee devices and ramp infrastructure quickly to address the challenges of BYOD. In larger enterprises, though, this can become a nightmare for procurement, security, and capacity planning. Employees might love it, but IT's responsibility is to ensure that things run like a well-oiled machine, not a geek's paradise.

The Voice of Reason

Policies and procedures may not be any fun, but they allow an organization to collaboratively decide on the best approach to BYOD that suits their needs. One size doesn't fit all, so an organization that truly wants to embrace BYOD and maximize its productivity benefits needs to involve a variety of stakeholders and plan around the areas of security, infrastructure, management, purchasing, acceptable devices, and even work-life balance.

Modern CRM systems may be either web-based or use a client-server architecture. The more complex a system, the more likely it will be to rely on specific client-server software configurations to provide the richest experience for end users and the most robust database features on the back end. However, what many vendors call "rich user interfaces", many users call overly complicated. The most popular CRM systems in terms of enterprise use have largely been designed around data collection needs, but end user adoption can suffer as a result. Newer entries into the market that focus on the user experience can address one of the biggest problems that businesses face as they look to CRM software: getting users to abandon paper or spreadsheets and really embrace the tool.

Why BYOD?

There are two major reasons to take the plunge into the world of BYOD and they actually go hand in hand:

1. Employee satisfaction
2. Employee productivity

There are other reasons as well, but there is considerable debate as to their validity:

- Cost savings
- Re-alignment of IT effort
- Simplification of IT processes, particularly around hardware procurement and deployment.

Let's start with the easy ones, though. By and large, happy employees are productive employees. They tend to stay with a company longer, reducing turnover and all of the associated problems with recruitment and retraining. Better employee retention also keeps experience and intellectual property in-house.

BYOD empowers employees to choose the devices that feel right, offer the best environment for their work habits, and meet their expectations in terms of performance. While the difference between a MacBook Air and a Dell ultrabook may seem negligible to IT staff who spend their time in the cloud or using various dashboards and console utilities, it can be everything to an end user who spends 10 hours a day dashing between meetings, laptop in hand, ready to jump into a comfortable computing environment.

For the programmer who favors Linux or the project manager who wants the largest laptop screen she can find to visualize PERT charts in meetings or the road warrior who wants to pair an iPad with a work-assigned desktop, the flexibility behind BYOD can have significant impacts on both productivity and employees' overall satisfaction with their jobs. As an

added benefit, when IT can accommodate individual needs, they shed the image of grumpy obstructionists and become respected partners and stakeholders in all aspects of the business.

In some cases, BYOD can also save the company money. This is not always the case and cost savings can't be a primary driver of BYOD initiatives. In many cases, in fact, BYOD may result in higher IT costs. However, if done right, improvements in productivity and employee retention should offset the costs associated with

- Management software
- Network upgrades
- Employee equipment allowances
- Security software and appliances
- Other non-hardware costs.

In addition, companies that begin allowing the use of personal devices will often still need to supply employees with standard computing hardware. Letting employees access corporate email and documents on their iPhones doesn't erase the need for them to have computers on their desks. It may, however, eliminate the need to carry and manage expensive corporate mobile contracts.

In the same way, BYOD may free IT staff from hardware concerns and allow them to focus on strategic initiatives like implementation of a new CRM system or business intelligence tools. The flipside is that IT staff may need to initially spend more time and energy on security and infrastructure to support BYOD initiatives. Long term, though, BYOD has the potential to increase productivity among IT staff as they can focus on adding value to the business instead of imaging desktops and installing software.

IT Budgets in a BYOD Scenario

Budgeting scenarios in BYOD will vary widely depending upon the degree of implementation. At the end of the day, though, the focus needs to be on empowering employees and ensuring that the technology they have (whether their own, supplied by IT, or purchased through some type of equipment allowance) maximizes productivity. It also needs to be compatible with mission-critical systems and other tools deployed across the enterprise. Thus, that rockstar developer who prefers to use Linux might still require licenses for Windows and Office to be run in a virtual machine on his computer to ensure that any documents he produces are 100% compatible with those of his coworkers. These sorts of hidden costs need to be teased out in any IT budget.

There are a few ways in which businesses often support BYOD from a budgetary perspective (this list is hardly all-inclusive but provides examples of the impact BYOD can have on IT budgets):

<table>
<tr><th>Employees…</th><th>Employers…</th></tr>
<tr><td>…supply their own equipment and software.
They handle software installs, maintenance, procurement, phone contracts, etc.
They may receive an allowance for equipment, reimbursements for some or all of their mobile equipment charges, and other subsidies provided by the company</td><td>…ensure that systems are in place to support this equipment and software
Direct hardware support is rare
May provide some volume-licensed software
May suggest or require certain parameters for hardware and software to ensure interoperability and compatibility across departments or teams</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">This works best for small companies with technically savvy employees; mission-critical systems will generally be cloud-based SaaS applications. These applications and overall infrastructure and/or strategic initiatives will be the major expenses on IT budgets. Subsidies and reimbursements will need to be budget lines as well.</td></tr>
<tr><td>…supply mobile equipment or other supplemental technology
Email, collaboration, and other services are in place to which personal devices can be easily connected
This might include anything from a personal laptop running a different OS than standard corporate issue Windows to a personal smartphone accessing the company's Exchange servers.</td><td>…supply primary computing resources and ensure that infrastructure is adequate to securely support outside equipment as needed
Provide hardware and software support for laptops, desktops, and other equipment supplied by the company
May subsidize mobile contracts or other employee purchases that are directly used for work purposes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">This scenario is one of the most common types of BYOD. IT may not realize significant cost savings but will generally get out of the business of managing mobile contracts or fielding requests for tablets and other devices. Any subsidies, as well as infrastructure upgrades, will impact the bottom line.</td></tr>
</table>

…select from a proscribed list of products from a set of vendors • Not technically BYOD; rather CYOD (Choose Your Own Device) • Often includes Mac/Windows choices or a choice of mobile devices • Still empowering users to find the tech that makes them the most productive but meets organization requirements	…handle procurement, deployment, and support of hardware and software • Allows organizations to leverage enterprise buying power and make moderate standardizations • Could include leased equipment • More predictable than reimbursements and subsidies
Google is just one of many companies to provide this level of choice to its employees. This approach will not save money, but budgets will be predictable and IT staff can retain greater degrees of control over the computing environment. This also provides easier opportunities to businesses to lease equipment, which reduces upfront acquisition costs and makes hardware a line item each year.	

Again, in some of these scenarios, IT stands to save some money, especially on short-term hardware acquisition. In most, though, IT may actually see increases in budget lines. However, budgeting needs to focus on ensuring that employees have the hardware and software with which they can be the most productive and do their jobs optimally, not on saving money.

Measuring Productivity Gains (or Losses) from BYOD

While we know anecdotally that BYOD initiatives can have a positive impact on morale and productivity, this can be hard to measure, especially in creative and development environments. Regardless of the challenges, IT needs to be able to assign some type of metric to productivity, however, to either justify the costs and effort associated with BYOD or to make a case that it isn't appropriate for a given organization. Metrics also allow for rational changes to a company's approach to BYOD.

So how do we know if employees are more productive? If BYOD can reduce IT budgets for a particular organization, this will be easy objective justification for empowering employees around hardware and software choice. In most cases, though, fairly subjective measures will be important to evaluating the return on investment in BYOD.

Subjective measures of productivity include:

- Feedback from employee evaluations
- Questionnaires on work habits and technology usage from end users
- Demonstrable and repeated use of personal technology
- In many cases, increased or faster achievement of goals and milestones (e.g., reaching sales quotas faster because a face-to-face meeting between a salesperson and client is more effective when they use a tablet to add visual elements to the meeting)

In the end, however, user self-report of perceived productivity improvements and overall job satisfaction may be the best measure. Six months into a BYOD initiative, the novelty of new devices and new processes will have receded and users will be able to provide valuable feedback and input. As organizations develop policies, strategies, and approaches to BYOD, engagement of the users who stand to benefit the most is critical. This is, after all, about shifting the focus of technology tools from IT to empowered end users.

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