

THE CONSUMERIZATION OF IT

As consumerization proves to be irreversible, and threatens to become an IT nightmare by increasing security risk, data loss and financial exposure, it's clear that a lack of strategy could prove devastating. The best approach to effectively managing a consumerized workforce is to embrace consumerization in order to unlock its benefits and reap its full business potential.

Trends show that new technology emerges first in the consumer market and then, after mass acceptance, is utilized by business organizations. The inevitable result of this pattern is that around the world, today's companies are facing what is proving to be the most disruptive technology trend of this decade: **Consumerization**.

We're seeing a new, tech-savvy wave of employee moving into the global workforce, while at the same time, personal devices and mobile data networks grow increasingly accessible, affordable and easy-to-use. Meanwhile, social networking applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter have become indispensable business tools for a rapidly growing number of organizations.

As the lines between personal and work life continue to blur, the business benefits of extending enterprise data and applications to mobile workers are already apparent. These benefits include business agility, increased productivity, improved customer satisfaction and higher rates of talent retention, to name just a few.

Recent studies conducted by Gartner, IDC and Forrester point out that nearly half of the U.S. workforce is already mobile and, as a result, are conducting business outside of their primary work place for more than 20% of their work week. Where once only a company's sales force might be found working outside the office in this manner, we now find that the typical mobile employee now includes "day-extenders" - those who check email from home before beginning their work-day - business travelers, field workers, telecommuters, road warriors and more.

As consumerization spreads, so do the boundaries of the workplace. In fact, it's fair to say that every consumerized employee is already an occasional "mobile worker" as the traditional idea of "the office" has been extended into homes, hotels, conference centers, airports, airplanes, trains and countless other commercial venues such as coffee shops and malls. Wireless technology now allows us to do business virtually anywhere.

In order to stay relevant, today's organizations must be agile and move at customer speed - as this is how their competitors are doing business. Now that consumer technology is readily available, easy-to-use and fast to deploy, a company's ability to compete depends on enabling its employees so they can be productive wherever they are, around the clock. However, this is not quite as easy as one might think. Consumerization comes with its own unique blend of strategic and operational challenges, as consumer technology is generally not as manageable and secure as required by the enterprise.

For example, in a typical consumerized environment, these new consumer technologies are rarely - if ever - deployed horizontally across the corporation as the result of a well thought IT plan. With the notable exception of specific initiatives driven by lines of business - i.e. sales automation or field services - the vast majority of the consumerization revolution is happening in the midst of complete anarchy.

More often than not, it is driven directly by the end-user who takes innovation into their own hands, outside the scope of centralized IT plans, often in contrast with IT mandated policies. The end-user buys their own device, procures their own service subscriptions, installs their own applications and eventually finds creative ways - more or less secure - to connect to the corporate network, access email, directory and various corporate assets such as customer records, product specifications, price lists and more.





In addition, most of these innovative products and services are procured directly by the employees at retail rates. While it may be true that employees pay out-of-pocket for their “personal” devices, more often than not they get some sort of company reimbursement in the form of stipend or expense allowance. As a result, the organization as a whole loses bargaining power, pays more for the same service and in return, receives lower or non-existent SLAs.

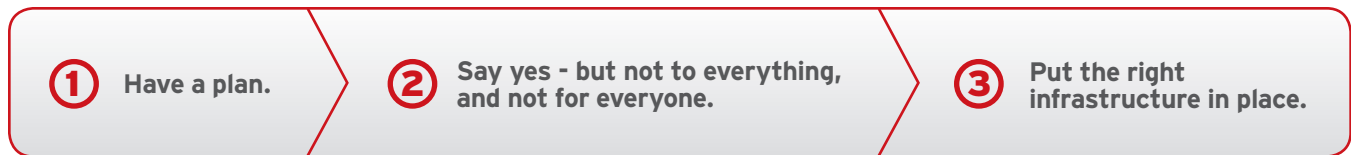
So, in the end, the true collective costs of consumerization get buried in expense reports, hidden from IT budget and control - Gartner refers to this as the “Black Budget”.

To make the matter worse, in addition to security risks and financial exposure, the consumerization of enterprise mobility represents a colossal management nightmare for IT. Contrary to many other IT procured devices and services, such as desktops or laptops, IT and Help Desk have little or no ability to support the multitude of disparate employee liable devices and applications that connect to corporate resources.

For example, it is not unusual for a global enterprise to have operations in dozens of countries around the world, each served by multiple wireless operators providing multiple new devices each month. On a global basis, the total number of mobile hardware and software configurations that IT and Help Desk must confront daily can easily grow into the hundreds.

So, how can organizations embrace consumer-driven innovation to unlock the business potential of consumerization?

We recommend following a simple, three step approach:



The first step is to take a thoughtful, strategic approach to consumerization and develop a cross-organizational plan. IT cannot do this in a vacuum and should certainly engage executives, line of business owners (marketing, sales, HR, product development) as well as customers, partners, and internal early adopters. While planning to adopt new consumer technology, IT managers should survey their most innovative users to discover what devices and applications they prefer and what they find most useful in their work activities. This way, IT can effectively pull from users’ experience, rather than pushing IT views to their base.

The second step is to develop a firm set of policies that clearly define what devices and applications are considered corporate-standard (fully supported by IT) vs. tolerated (jointly supported with the user) vs. unsupported (full user liability). In addition, IT will profile the global workforce based on relevant attributes such as role, line of business and location. IT will then map technologies to user profiles and define SLAs for each intersection.

The third step is to deploy appropriate IT tools specifically designed to secure and manage consumer technology in the enterprise. While some solutions have already materialized along the lines of specific product segments, no single vendor can provide one single solution covering all functional requirements across all platforms.

As vendors enter the consumerization space with solutions initially developed for adjacent product segments, most solutions tend to offer overlapping core functionality and to lack the cross-platform support critical to protect and manage the full spectrum of consumer technologies. Therefore, IT will have to integrate multiple offering across different product categories: security solutions for Internet content security, mobile antimalware and mobile data protection, Mobile Device Management tools for system provisioning and application management, and Telecom Expense Management providers for procurement, support and cost control of voice and data services.

In conclusion, in order to manage a workforce without limits, an organization should embrace consumerization and unlock its full business potential.

This requires a strategic approach, flexible policies and appropriate security and management tools.

Hear expert advice on why embracing consumerization is the best strategy in the new IT revolution.

 Watch the Video at www.us.trendmicro.com/us/trendwatch/consumerization/index.html