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Jim Boomer • May. 28, 2012

Employees are bringing the mobile devices they've purchased with their own money into the workplace and asking to connect them to company data. This growing trend is referred to as BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) or the consumerization of IT and is one that deserves your attention. It is rapidly replacing the days of the IT department selecting and requiring the type of device the organization issues and supports. Many firms are now allowing employees to purchase the smartphone or tablet of their choice and access firm data. While BYOD does create some unique challenges for

firms and their IT departments, it also opens up some good benefits for both the

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important to them that they have a choice.

- ***Employees already know how to use it*** – A lot of the burden is actually taken off of IT for support, maintenance and troubleshooting because employees are using the devices in their personal lives as well. They're much more willing to spend their own time figuring out how it works for personal tasks than work related endeavors. Often times, this tinkering leads to better trained end-users on the business side, as well.
- ***The firm avoids owning hardware and ongoing mobile contracts*** – The employees own the devices and usually set up the service in their own names. This eliminates the need for IT to manage an inventory of mobile devices as employees come and go. More importantly, the firm doesn't have to manage the ongoing contracts.
- ***The equipment can go with the employee if they leave and the data can be wiped*** – When employees do leave, BYOD makes the departure much cleaner. You simply wipe the company data from the device and the employee keeps the phone or tablet. They can restore or keep all their personal data and move on to their next destination. This is a much smoother transition for all parties involved.
- ***Employees are more productive*** – When employees can use their own devices, they are more mobile and see an increase in efficiency and productivity. According to an iPass survey of 1100 mobile workers, "employees who use mobile devices for both work and personal issues put in 240 more hours per year than those who do not."

Challenges

While there are many benefits to BYOD, it doesn't come without its challenges. The good news is that IT departments are figuring out ways to overcome these challenges rather than using them as excuses to resist the BYOD trend.

- ***Security is easier to manage on company owned devices*** – Obviously, it's easier to manage security issues when the devices and environment is controlled by IT. The

devices can be locked down and IT's primary concern is not about balancing the

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specifically addresses it. For more information on the survey results you can read my April 11, 2012, blog post on CPAPracticeAdvisor.com.

So what can you do to ensure you are prepared for BYOD? Start by doing your homework. Make sure you understand the pros and cons of BYOD and read as much as you can on the topic. Once you've educated yourself, make sure that you have a written mobile device policy that covers BYOD.

The policy should cover things such as the systems that can be accessed, whether/when a device can be remote wiped and how much employees will be reimbursed for the device and data plan. Finally, make sure you communicate and train employees on the policy. After all, it's worthless if no one knows about it.

Technology

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