Enabling mobility within your organization: Choosing and implementing the right device

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The mobile device market is a crowded space, largely dominated by Apple iPhones and Google Android devices, with Research in Motion’s BlackBerry and Microsoft Windows phones also among the major platforms. Users choose their device for a multitude of reasons, from simple preferences to carrier options and more flexibility in operating the device. It is important to understand the differences between available products and to choose the best solution for your organization.

Every organization has different drivers, and you must choose the best devices that fit your strategy. Some organizations want to look at the emerging technology, while some are concerned with security or standardization with existing devices. Ultimately, you want a device that enables you to communicate better and work more efficiently.

Top mobile device manufacturers

The iPhone revolutionized the mobile device market, encouraging increased mobility and capabilities to work anywhere at any time. However, in recent years, Android phones have provided significant competition, surpassing Apple and controlling a larger percentage of the market as of August 2012 (52.6 percent for Android compared to 34.3 percent for Apple)\(^1\). BlackBerry controlled 8.3 percent, followed by Windows at 3.6 percent. However, from a manufacturing standpoint, Apple produces the majority of smartphones in the United States, controlling 34 percent of the market.\(^2\) Within the Android space, Samsung leads the way among manufacturers producing 17 percent of all phones in the country, followed by HTC and Motorola with 14 and 11 percent, respectively. BlackBerry comprises 9 percent of devices, while HTC (2.9 percent) produced the majority of Windows Mobile devices. With the recent release of the Windows 8 operating system, Nokia has increased their manufacturing of Windows devices.

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Differences between available products

There are many variables that differentiate devices, from the screen size to the operating system, but the most important consideration is getting the connectivity you require at the right price. Determine what product and platform are going to help you better conduct business in an efficient manner.

The Android platform is an open source technology, inherently offering more flexibility and opportunities for customization than the Apple operating system. Windows and Blackberry also have standard operating systems with limited flexibility. Android's flexibility is attractive for many businesses, but is a detractor for others. Some prefer the standardization that comes with Apple, Windows and Blackberry rather than allowing employees to customize Android devices. That openness can result in problems with reliability if employees make the wrong adjustments.

In some cases, a choice is dictated by what devices work best in conjunction with company or personal computers or networks. With the release of the Windows 8 operating system, Microsoft devices have shown strong integration with related PCs, calendars and email systems. Apple, Android and BlackBerry each have applications that sync this data, but Windows 8 phones operate on the same platform that many users utilize in the office.

Challenges when choosing a device

When is the right time? Will another better device be coming?
Many organizations struggle with determining the right time to buy phones for their employees, fearing that another better device may be right around the corner. Device manufacturers have done a great job of marketing and creating demand for their new products. But the latest and greatest technology may not present the best business value. It is not practical to buy a new car every year when a new model comes out, but many people behave that way with mobile devices.

Some businesses only want to buy the latest gadget. However, it is important to consider that a new device isn't always the best, especially when you're managing, tens, hundreds or even thousands of users. Problems are typical with early releases of any technology, and they can be difficult to manage with a large amount of users. You don't want to implement antiquated technology, but you do want to make sure that you're adopting technology that is stable and you can use.

What additional value are you going to get from a new device?
Organizations feel compelled to buy new devices as soon as they become available, but if they do not provide greater capabilities or efficiency, new investments may not be wise. Make sure that a new device improves your processes before making a purchase.

Do you want a device that is different from others?
The predominant debate in the marketplace is Apple vs. Android. People tend to get emotionally invested in what type of phone they prefer or a specific manufacturer, but the determining factor should be how the device can enable your organization. Evaluate devices based on which best integrates into your business, fits from a cost perspective and helps drive business.
**Carrier concerns**

Decisions are often based on the choice of carrier, as some offer better coverage in different parts of the country and frequently provide discounts for company-wide implementation. Analyze potential carrier networks to ensure that they fit your needs for your local area and any projected travel.

When evaluating available options, the number one concern should be cost. The goal should be to invest in better devices and provide increased functionality through mobility, resulting in increased efficiency. Some smartphones are very inexpensive, yet the majority of users are utilizing more costly devices. The decision is about more than just finances; the functionality and capabilities must also align with your goals.

Before choosing a mobile device for your organization, you must undergo a careful analysis of the available devices and carriers, as well as how operating systems integrate with your current platforms and network. The process should not be seen as a popularity contest; it should be about evaluating options from a business perspective and how they can enable you to accomplish your goals. An advisor with experience designing mobility strategies for each manufacturer and platform can help develop a plan that increases your efficiency and business capabilities.