

BYOA: the only way is app



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Applying yourself

As employees' IT habits continue to evolve way beyond the Wintel hegemony, Sam Trendall sympathises with the plight of CIOs



You have to feel for IT managers. In the modern enterprise IT landscape they increasingly find themselves in a role not dissimilar to that of a football referee: ignored when things are ticking along without incident, castigated on the all-too-common occasions when they are perceived to have got something wrong.

Employees — from the boardroom to the post room and everything in between — have never been more tech savvy. And, for the first time, the IT they use at work may well be inferior to what they have at home.

Workers have become accustomed to a winning combination of mobility and computing power in the smartphones and tablets they use in their personal life. Consequently, many find it infuriating to be asked to work with dusty monitors and keyboards attached to creaking desktops, or lug around laptops that weigh as much as a small child.

And it is not just in the hardware world that workers' personal IT

has moved beyond that of their employers. With the exception of some parts of the media industry that are Apple strangleholds, and a handful of Linux diehards, the corporate environment still runs on Microsoft, complemented by the usual suspects of the enterprise software market: Oracle, CA, and SAP, to name a few.

Rewind 10 years and the same could be said of the majority of the personal computing world. But today's workforce is far more diversified when it comes to their software habits outside of work. A random sample of employees would likely throw up a lot of Android users, a good chunk of Apple enthusiasts, and a small band of committed Windowsophiles.

Workers are also used to a world where applications or apps (and, as we will find out, there is a distinction to be made here) are bought and used in a way that is on-demand, hosted, and flexible.

However IT chiefs manage the effects of these cultural changes, they are sure to rely on the expertise of the resellers and IT services providers that have served them well in the on-premise licensing environment. Channel firms may do well to apply themselves to applications in the coming months and years.

■ Sam Trendall is special projects editor at CRN.

Securing the mobile enterprise

Services providers can play an invaluable role in enabling businesses to realise the benefits of enterprise mobility while avoiding the pitfalls, argues Darren Briscoe



In today's business world there is an expectation from employees that mobile and tablet devices are as accessible as those on the desktop and moving from one to another is a seamless process.

In order for organisations to successfully transition their IT systems onto a secure mobile platform, IT departments must design and build a solution that

can deliver mobile application access while adhering to corporate information security guidelines. By introducing business apps and empowering users to access those through tablet and smartphone devices, organisations instantly increase the productivity of their workforce through aligning their IT strategy with the business needs of their employees.

As users move outside the corporate network, data goes with them, increasing concerns related to corporate security as well as data, privacy and regulatory compliance. The lack of suitable tools for managing access of remote and personal devices can

lead to network security breaches, loss of customer or enterprise data, and theft of corporate intellectual data. Desktop and app virtualisation provide solutions that enable IT departments to securely deliver, manage, and protect data. This approach ensures servers, applications, and storage resources all remain centralised, safeguarding all data within a secure datacentre environment.

As with many technology projects, data protection or backup is often treated as an afterthought. From a data recovery perspective, managed backup services can deliver significant benefits to an organisation. These services contain a high level of functionality by empowering the user with a range of self-service restore capabilities that can even be filtered down to individual documents or files.

By mobilising users through business apps, virtualisation and managed backup services, organisations increase capacity and drive efficiencies while releasing IT departments from the burden of day-to-day issues, so they can focus more of their time on ensuring the IT strategy is in line with the ever-changing needs of the business. Comms-care delivers backup, virtualisation and business app-based services and solutions to thousands of users on behalf of our channel partners.

■ Darren Briscoe is technical director at Comms-care.





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Mind the app?

With users well accustomed to app-store models of procurement and consumption, Sam Trendall examines how the channel can help enterprises make the right software decisions

A handful of answers spring to mind when asking the question 'what effect do apps have on the enterprise?'. It might be that half your accounts payable team waste many a morning trying to better each other's top score on Angry Birds. Or maybe Pete in marketing regularly drains your bandwidth streaming Bruce Springsteen live albums on Spotify.

But for enterprise IT decision makers, the impact of app store-style models of creating, procuring and consuming IT is becoming far bigger and more significant than that. The bring-your-own-device (BYOD) phenomenon may have represented the first great wave of consumerisation, but people's attachment to their tablets and smartphones does not begin and end with touchscreens, kickstands, and the novelty of having a computer that fits in your handbag, or even your pocket.

The changes to the client computing environment caused by the pervasion of mobile devices are even more radical for the software world than they are for hardware. Tablet and smartphone users are now used to a different way of buying and using software, one that is flexible, scalable, on-demand, and hosted; gone are the days of trudging back from PC World with installation discs.

So what does the consumerisation of software mean for enterprises and the VARs and IT services firms that serve them?

The Consumerisation of IT in the Enterprise report from IDG suggests that businesses are already some way along in facilitating employees' use of apps and app store-style models of procuring software. Some 56 per cent of survey respondents create apps for employees, with the figure rising to 60 per cent for the creation of apps for customers. Although IDG notes that "most organisations are dealing with [consumerisation] in a reactive way".

Blurred lines

Darren Briscoe, technical director at Comms-care, believes that consumer software usage and procurement models will increasingly influence B2B deployments, with the rise of hosted desktop services for individuals playing a key role. But enterprises and the channel

firms that work with them first need to address the thorny issue of where an app ends and an application begins.

"A key consideration is: are there blurred lines between what is an app and what is an application, and is this an area of confusion?" states Briscoe. "And when people say virtual desktop, hosted desktop, or desktop-as-a-service, do they mean the same thing?"

"Following BYOD, the next evolution is consumer virtual desktops being available and giving life to more hosted services. But it is very much the case that an app and an application are not the same."

One popular definition has it that an app performs a single function, while an application brings together a range of functions into one programme.

Mark Armstrong, EMEA vice president at Progress, claims that there is not theoretically any difference between an app and an application.

"Typically, however, applications are broad and functionally rich, whereas an app is intended to provide a solution at the point of need," he says. "We all download lots of apps but that is because the app is very specific to a particular feature."

Mark Keepax, senior vice president at ASG Software Solutions, echoes this sentiment.

"In a business sense, an app is designed for a single purpose, and that is functionality, coupled with a flexible and innovative user interface," he explains. "On the opposite side is an application that can handle a range of functions."

The term "BYOD" was reportedly coined in 2005, and it is now five years since Intel became the first known example of a company implementing a BYOD policy. As the concept approaches its 10th birthday, is user demand creating a little sister: buy-your-own-apps (BYOA)? Briscoe from Comms-care believes that users' familiarity with and fondness for the on-demand models they use for their personal mobile devices will lead them to expect a similar experience in the workplace. →



“People want a hassle-free OpEx model, and my prediction is that businesses will invest in applications and services in much the same way as we buy a mobile phone contract that comes with a bunch of services,” he says.

David Rosewell, head of mobile business solutions at Fujitsu, agrees that the software environment will start mirroring the hardware world in terms of employees bringing increased expectations into the workplace.

“Users are getting more and more demanding based upon their experiences with consumer technology, which started with ‘instant-on’ intuitive devices, such as smartphones and tablets, and has been extended to include the ‘instantly available’ personalised app environment,” he adds. “This is putting pressure on CIOs as users experience frustration with the inflexible corporate world of the enterprise application which is viewed as being slow moving and cumbersome, with one size fitting nobody.”

Phil Turner, EMEA vice president at Okta, claims that the enterprise software world differs from its consumer counterpart in that it has not historically put user experience at the core of the development process.

“In order to drive change within the enterprise software environment, businesses need to adopt an entirely new way of thinking about software development and large-scale technology projects,” he says. “They also need to look towards consumer counterparts for guidance on how to put the user first and build technology second.”

Developing market

Of course, users can demand mobility and flexibility until they are blue in face, but enterprises need to run on enterprise-grade software; for corporate CIOs, man cannot live on Angry Birds alone.

Without developers creating apps to truly compete against – or at least complement – the incumbent market giants, the BYOA dream will never become a reality. Signs that the European software market may be producing start-ups capable of taking on the US giants are promising.

The recent *EU Software Cluster Benchmark* report from German market watchers Fraunhofer and Software Cluster picked out 15 “clusters” across Europe where innovation is rife and growth is high. London was nominated as the second-highest performing of these regions, behind the area of Germany containing Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Rheinhessen-Pfalz, and Saarland.

Also featured in the top five are the Etelä-Suomi region of Finland covering the Helsinki area; the Paris-centred Île-de-France area in France; and Lombardia, covering Milan and the surrounding area. Also in the top 10 is the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire region. The report claims that privacy concerns shadowing US firms in light of the NSA revelations will be one factor in European players wresting momentum away from their transatlantic rivals in the coming years.

Research from Gigaom reveals that the European app development market is already a big revenue-generator for the region, and is growing quickly. Last year EU-based app developers enjoyed cumulative sales of €17.5bn, with this figure projected to swell to €63bn (£52bn) over the next five years.

A total of one million people currently make a living as app developers across the EU, Gigaom claims, with a further 800,000



employed in the wider “app economy” in roles such as marketing and support. By 2018 there is forecast to be some 2.8 million people earning a crust as developers, with a further two million growing the total EU app economy to an industry that employs 4.8 million people across the region.

Based in central London, with offices in Bristol and Düsseldorf and a US outpost in New York, Mubaloo is one company aiming to contribute to the projected stellar growth of the EU software industry.

The firm has developed more than 200 business apps, with director for mobile strategy Gemma Coles picking out an app for student accommodation provider Unite which helped manage building maintenance as a particularly successful example.

“But we see that no two briefs are the same – every company has different pain points,” adds Coles. “The big traditional enterprise software vendors have been trying to move their platforms on to mobile, but they have not really thought about usability. The giants are going to have to become more useable and more digestible, and they really have to work out how they personalise and customise.”

Coles advises individuals hoping to forge a career in the software development world to manage their expectations a little, and take a pragmatic approach to monetising their skills and ideas. She stresses the “importance of connecting younger developers with people who have business experience, commercial experience, and marketing experience”.

Projected total app downloads



“There is the Angry Birds example, which everyone tries to emulate. But the reality is [developer Rovio] failed hundreds of times before that. Internal developers have to be prepared for that,” says Coles.

Manchester-based mobile technology specialist Apadmi has developed more than 100 apps and server solutions for clients. Business development manager Matt Hunt reveals that a lot of his company’s work lies in laying the right groundwork for companies to get the most out of mobile and apps.

“A lot of enterprise solutions are not really designed with the right look and feel; they need to think a little more strategically and be a bit more joined up,” he says. “They know they want to do it, but the problem they have is that their systems are not able to support it. A lot of our work goes into working with customers upfront to get them in the right shape for mobile. We want to stop them making bad decisions and getting three months into a project and realising ‘this is not achievable’. It is not just a case of having an app, it is a case of ‘why do we need an app?’, and ‘what should that app be?’.”

What’s in store?

Data from Gartner reveals that almost 102.1 billion apps were downloaded globally last year. Only nine per cent of these were paid for, although a not inconsiderable total of \$7.14bn (£4.26bn) was spent on these. In 2017 the analyst predicts that 268.7 billion apps will be downloaded, but the percentage of paid-for apps will narrow to just 5.5 per cent.

Gartner predicts that by 2017, one in four enterprises will run an app store for staff to access approved business apps. The implementation of these stores will be driven by the continued proliferation of mobile devices and increased adoption of mobile device management (MDM) solutions. The creation and use of enterprise app stores will create a “more diverse and competitive automated software process requiring less procurement intervention”, the analyst believes.

But not everyone is convinced that a BYOA revolution is on the way. Tony Lock, programme director at analyst Freeform Dynamics, claims the suggestions that users are feverishly clamouring for a different way of using enterprise software — and that their employers are consequently implementing corporate app stores — are “west-coast myths”.

“Some of these people [perpetuating these ideas] have their own agendas to drive,” he says. “If you ask users what they need, they tend to say ‘absolutely everything’. But most enterprises have a good idea what applications people actually need and use. Most companies do not see a need for enterprise app stores at the moment.”



But others see a wealth of opportunity for the channel, particularly in terms of consultancy and professional services. Briscoe from Comms-care urges VARs to ensure they can call on the right skills to create sales opportunities.

“The first thing is you need to engage some high-level expertise and work out with clients ‘is that solution right?’,” he says. “To do that initial business assessment you need to do a proper solution design, and that requires a lot of expertise.”

Jim Lehane, director at Espion, believes that ensuring the correct security foundations are in place could be a fruitful area for channel firms. “As information security moves higher up the corporate agenda, CIOs will take a strategic risk-based approach to managing devices, applications and non-enterprise software,” he says. “This approach will require mobile application security testing technologies for BYOD strategies that offer assurances and mitigate risks.”

Matt Davies, director of product marketing at Splunk, points to the model of being a “cloud service broker”, able to operate in a hybrid world, as a potential money-spinner for VARs.

“The cloud service broker is typically a role adopted by a large IT department or possibly a reseller or service provider — a telco, systems integrator, or consultancy organisation,” he explains. “A cloud service broker combines the right infrastructure, software, and services regardless of cloud or on-premise deployment.”

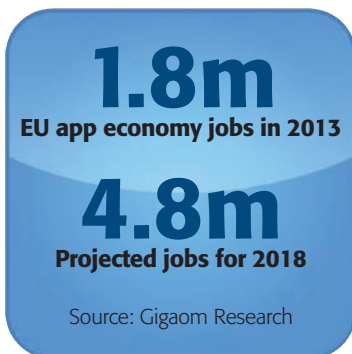
Martin Callinan, country manager at IT asset management specialist Express Metrix, cites compliance as a key area for channel.

“App-style models of software consumption open up various opportunities for the channel, in particular around services such as planning, managing, implementing, and modelling,” he says. “For example, the channel can provide services on how to support apps stores and ensure that they are legal and compliant, helping businesses choose which apps to include within their own model.”

Briscoe concludes that, in offering a complete service and support package that is flexible and scalable — including backup and disaster recovery — channel firms have the chance to make themselves indispensable to clients.

“Once resellers are hosting and managing a lot of customers’ data and backup services, their disentangling from that engagement will be very difficult — most of these services come with three-year contracts,” he says.

“For resellers, it makes a customer very sticky.”



TOP FIVE PAID APPS ON iTUNES ON 28 FEBRUARY 2014

- 1 Card Wars
- 2 Threes!
- 3 Minecraft – Pocket
- 4 Heads Up!
- 5 Afterlight (pictured)