



Riding a New Wave of Change

The tail wags the dog as IT comes to grips with consumerization

Camille and her smartphone were inseparable at college. She loaded the device with her contacts, her calendar, social networking applications for staying in touch with her friends and a search engine app for finding stores and restaurants. When she graduated, she couldn't imagine starting her new job at a major national insurance company without it, so she brought it with her.

Jason is a claims adjuster for that same insurance company. He's always on the road, and he has been a laptop user for many years. But whether inspecting collision or storm damage, he's usually on his feet, not sitting at a desk sipping a latte. When his wife gave him a tablet PC for his birthday, it became much more than a personal gadget. Thanks to its size, weight and networking capabilities, he found it a much better tool than his old laptop for his work out in the field. They didn't plan on it, but Camille and Jason are leading the wave of what's being called the consumerization of IT. They want to use the devices, applications and online services they like in order to do their work. It's making people such as Camille and Jason happier and more productive. But where does it leave the corporate IT department?

■ WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN FOR IT?

Brian is the insurance company's IT director, and he has been going in new directions of his own. He's in the midst of testing cloud-based applications and services. He also sees the opportunity for big savings, thanks to new desktop and application virtualization technologies.

Brian also knows that Camille and Jason want to combine business and personal computing tasks on a single device. Not that long ago, he would have sent out a memo saying that employees were to use only approved applications and services on approved devices, for work only, or IT would not support them. But things are changing. The fact is, Brian likes to use the same consumer technologies that Camille and Jason are finding so valuable. He understands that choice in personal computing devices, applications and services at work is shifting from IT to the user, empowering a passionate, competitive, innovative and more efficient workforce. So Brian is finding a way to say yes to his users.

Brian knows that saying yes won't mean forgetting about his responsibilities as an IT professional, so he is coming up with a

plan to build a new, worker-focused enterprise IT architecture in a responsible way—by ensuring security and meeting the demands of regulatory compliance while supporting the needs of users such as Camille and Jason. Here's how:

Assess and understand. All types of workers are different from each other, so they are likely to use different devices, applications and services in different ways. Take mobile workers, for example. They are away from their office most of the time and are usually equipped with a laptop PC and a smartphone. Further, mobile workers at different companies differ from each other: Some travel internationally, whereas others move only between different regional offices. So there's no single way of handling mobile workers and the consumer technologies they want to use that will be effective at all times for all companies. Pay attention to the unique way mobile workers approach their tasks at your company, and approach the other types of workers with the same open-mindedness.

Consider the essentials. Start thinking about how to manage data, devices and applications while maintaining security:

Control access to sensitive data – Data is the lifeblood of any company; your job is to guard it and enable access only for those who are authorized.

Manage backup-and-restore – Make sure no data is lost even if disaster strikes.

Deliver business applications – From standard productivity software to industry-specific applications, your job is to make sure all workers get the tools they need in order to get their work done on the device they choose, wherever they happen to be.

Support compliance and reporting – Make sure that ever-increasing regulatory obligations are met without disrupting the normal flow of work.

Establish ownership – Make it clear who's responsible for intellectual property, hardware and software fixes and security.

Explore enabling technologies. Many IT professionals are finding desktop virtualization and cloud computing to be essential tools for responsibly embracing consumer technologies in the enterprise. These tools are particularly well suited to supporting various end user devices while managing the essentials discussed above.

Update organizational policies. The new style of computing—social networking and cloud applications in particular—calls for the involvement of corporate depart-

ments beyond IT. Your organization's legal, finance and human resources departments will have to be on board. Understanding that your approach can't be to control everything, you will need to manage risks through corporate policies as well as technology.

Pilot and adopt. When you test the new technologies, start small and then grow. Make sure you measure the project's success, plan for continuous improvement and ensure that the project drives business value.

■ TAKING CONTROL

Brian started by accepting a new workplace reality. Instead of merely reacting, he's leading by launching pilots for social networking applications, including a location-based service his company's agents are using to track down important customers. And he's making sure his people have the networking capabilities they need, including 4G wireless broadband.

Whatever industry your company is in, chances are that people like Camille and Jason are making it go. They want to work anywhere they happen to be, on the road, at headquarters or in a home office at any hour of the day or night—and on weekends. They're OK with blurring the line between their professional and personal lives. And they want to use a single computing device or smartphone for both. The time has come to seize the moment—to responsibly embrace the blending of consumer and corporate information technology to take productivity and job satisfaction to higher levels than ever.

For additional information on this topic, see:
www.windows.com/path-to-yes

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