BYOD – just a trend or a symptom of something deeper?

Manish Sablok, Head of Marketing for CNE Europe at Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise, explains that Bring Your Own Device is just scratching the surface of employee engagement and raises six key questions that need asking when developing an enterprise BYOD programme.

Enterprise employees are, first and foremost, independent consumers. Sooner or later, the proliferation of powerful, portable, consumer devices that have improved personal communication is going to affect enterprise communications.

Manish Sablok, Head of Marketing for CNE Europe at Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise, says that Bring Your Own Device is all about letting the right people have the right access to the right applications at the right time. And that means managing information access and at the same time protecting corporate – and employee – assets.

Enterprises are at the 'Bring Your Own' (BYO) crossroads – BYO device, BYO network, BYO App, BYO cloud. The list goes on! The reign of the PC or laptop as the preferred work device has come to an end, creating a considerable challenge for enterprise CIOs and IT teams worldwide, both in terms of security issues and network access. And the risk is two-way – the risk of unauthorised access to sensitive information, both from an employer and employee perspective.   Bring Your Own – it's all about Employee Freedom It's all about enabling employee freedom across various touch points: freedom to choose their preferred device, their choice of network access, their choice of application and services to do their job. As a result, enterprise IT now needs to be able to look at giving the right people the right access to the right applications and – importantly – at the right time. This freedom can then result in improved collaboration and engagement, impacting overall employee and corporate productivity.

Embracing the Bring Your Own trend keeps employees engaged – and keeps them happy. Research published last year in the Harvard Business Review shows just how important 'The Happiness Dividend' is in building a more engaged workforce – their research showed that a happy and engaged workforce is capable of raising sales by 37%, productivity by 31%, and accuracy on tasks by 19%.

Enterprises need to find a way to embrace this trend to serve the communications needs of employees and leverage this paradigm shift to improve employee engagement. Increased agility for the enterprise and for the employee But combined with this need to allow employees the freedom to use their preferred devices, enterprises also need to be prepared against the security and network access issues that come with such a policy. What is required is a new enterprise network strategy that breaks free from corporate barriers to gain increased agility – for the enterprise and for the employee. Six key questions when developing an enterprise BYOD programme

1. Who owns the devices? Me, You or Both of us?

The best option when deciding who owns the device is to partially subsidise employees' device purchases. This can significantly boost morale and can encourage BYOD practices. Clearly a full subsidy approach may not be cost effective for a company, and no subsidy will lead to employee disengagement as a work tool.

2. What's the right policy? Do this or else?

Enterprises must establish a clear policy limiting the choice of devices for

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employees. But it's important to leave enough of a selection so that employees still feel like they have a choice. Equally, enterprises can produce a recipe for disaster if no policies are set in place when a BYOD adoption begins.

3. What's the employee's role? Use it or lose it?

Workshops are a great way to engage keen employees and educate those who aren't familiar with a BYOD policy. It can be helpful to provide BYOD guidelines to help employees make the right device selection for the role they do.

4. What's the impact on IT? Are they still them and us?

The best option when implementing a BYOD policy is to minimise the involvement of IT departments, without abandoning the workforce. By setting specific hours when IT will be available for assistance, or creating an internal site with FAQs, users have the support available when required, whilst still maintaining a centralised management solution for multiple devices.

5. How about applications? I want one of those!

Enterprises should make a list of applications which are OK and not OK for the workplace. The ultimate objective is to make sure that employee productivity is improved, so the process should ensure that the right people on the right devices can get to the resources they need.

6. How do we tackle security? How do we ensure we are all in this together?

Remember security is a two-way process protecting both companies and employees. Protect your network. Start with a network audit before any implementation of a BYOD policy and ensure your network access is protected by keeping BYOD and corporate-owned devices on separate virtual networks. This way you manage access to your business information and protect your employees personal data.

Network access control is a must-have for any BYOD enterprise, as security doesn't have to mean banning and compromising on productivity and employee engagement levels. By building a new network strategy based on these criteria, enterprises can truly leverage the BYOD trend to build improved freedom and mobility for employees, whilst ensuring enterprise communications and information are secure at all times.

BYOD brings the Personal Cloud in its trail

The Personal Cloud is a by-product of the BYOD trend and its associated freedom. Consumers are starting to realise that as employees, there is a benefit to having their personal clouds to support their professional lives on their chosen devices. They use these devices day-in, day-out in their personal lives in order to connect to the Internet and build personal clouds by selecting applications that enable them to improve their communications experience or personal productivity. Having developed this environment in the personal and social space, it should come as no surprise that employees would soon want to extend this into their work space. As a result, CIOs and IT departments need to now brace themselves for this new trend emerging as a by-product of BYOD.