

# The inevitable consumerisation of corporate IT

By Gianni Anchois

***What happens when the corporate world lags consumers technology adoption and savvy?***

The consumerisation of IT is one of the most powerful and clearest technology trends of the last 25 years or so. The issue for enterprises is that their own employees, through technology innovation, affordability and mass adoption, are becoming way more self-empowered than ever before. And in the course of it, they are making the corporate IT tools obsolete, irrelevant and ultimately useless.

We are clearly seeing a great blurring of the borders between professional users (pro-users) and consumers, giving birth to a new prosumer hybrid.

As consumers' personal devices are getting easier to use, cheaper and providing better performance and features, they are surpassing by far the typical tools corporate IT provides to its users.

### **A matter of choice ...**

Let's have a closer look at the technology in question:

- Consumers personal devices' (laptops, tablets, smart phones, apps, software suites) refresh cycle is happening much faster than in the enterprise space. Technology manufacturers are lowering prices and improving performance of their devices at a rate never seen before.
- They grow attached to and develop affection for their devices and technology. Their choices are largely made on an emotional level: passion for the technology itself, attachment for the brand and its value, admiration for the design, attraction to the status quo represented by owning such device.
- They choose what technology fits their needs, budget and lifestyle.
- Consumers spend more time with their devices and apps because they want to. They rely more on them for what they love to do. They are open to test new applications and uses, as long as the promise to enhance their lifestyle is there.
- They are inherently (still) more social than any enterprise user. Corporate social networks fail because the sense of belonging is not there. I can choose my friends, I cannot choose my colleagues (to a large extent). We use our beloved devices to enhance this sense of belonging and to express who we are and what we care for.
- Consumers have become accustomed to perform 1st level maintenance and simple upgrading duties on their own.

### **... versus no choice at all**

Conversely, pro-users:

- are given stuff with technical specifications established by others. Often they're under-equipped and lack state of the art technology. Other times they have great devices but are limited in their usability (typically because of security and enterprise policy restrictions).
- are at the mercy of what somebody else think is the best platform to equally enable every employee do their job. The ability to deploy resources that will fit everybody in a corporate environment is a fantasy: it just isn't possible. Standardisation of equipment, and the savings attached to it, is impossible to reconcile with specific needs of different users, department or functions, time-to-market and technical innovation rates.
- Enterprise software tools and applications are way too complex to configure and use (Siebel or SAP anyone?), and take forever to be deployed or updated. Nobody settles with using old and unnecessarily complex technology anymore.

### **The inevitable conclusion**

I believe that it's inevitable for Information Technology in the enterprise space to go through a radical shift, and it better be soon too.

The rules for IT adoption and deployment used to be established from the datacenter out to the periphery, with so called IT experts designing the infrastructure to enable the enterprise across the next three to five years.

This flow has now been fully reversed. Users decide what is best for them. Users and their devices set the priority agenda. Users recommend or even acquire the best technology of their choice, often at their own expenses. They experiment with new tools, often for free.

There is of course a set of risks attached to this trend.

To name a few:

- infrastructure governance complexity and cost
- end-to-end platform stability
- security policies and privacy assurance.

I would encourage CIOs and IT Managers to spend more time on these topics rather than purely looking at technology through the now distorted lens of the enterprise.

The companies that will understand and accept the changing rules of corporate IT are the ones that will be able to thrive on the innovation, lower cost of ownership and better performance provided by the new pro-sumers centered model.

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