

CIOs May Learn to Find Value in the Consumerization of Enterprise IT

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Generational and cultural forces in the workplace – boosted by better network and processing technology – are challenging the traditional model of enterprise IT management. Corporate CIOs have, for the most part, built their enterprise networks on systems of standardized component hardware and software. There have been good reasons for taking this approach. It has given us management control over system performance and resource allocation. It has also allowed us to keep watch over enterprise IT security and data integrity. Standardized components have helped achieve economies of scale in both the acquisition of new systems as well as in ongoing operations and staffing.

As a result, CIOs have, for years, resisted letting users' personally-owned devices connect to the enterprise network. And, for years, this response made the most sense from an accountability and cost containment standpoint.

New rules, however, are underway. A new wave of knowledge workers – comprised of the Millennial Generation in their early 20s to post-Baby Boomers – are now accustomed to technology at work as well as at home.

Three major trends underscore the penetration of computing technology into daily lives:

- The relative price of computers has steadily dropped.
- The power and reliability of consumer computers has increased.
- The increasing availability of inexpensive broadband access has made the Internet a key element in both the work and recreational lives of consumers.

These developments are creating a need for CIOs to consider new practices to meet the changing expectations held by today's workforce. For example, supervisors are learning that 20-somethings are more likely to respond immediately to text messages than they are to e-mails – which are regarded by many new workers as a less urgent form of communication.

Moreover, globalism and the expectation of higher productivity – doing more with less – have given rise to the mobile workforce and employees who are expected to be on call around the clock. To help balance the scales, many enterprises have made significant changes to improve the quality of life for individual employees by supporting mobility and remote access. These organizations realize that giving people a voice in how they work provides a pay-off in terms of increased productivity and employee satisfaction.

Embracing IT Consumerization

Understanding the implications of these trends, and the changes that CIOs may have to make in response, requires some perspective. Ten years ago, CIOs pointed to glaring differences in quality between consumer- and business-grade computing hardware, services and support. These differences were cited as key reasons to own and control all aspects of enterprise technology. CIOs did not want to be responsible for providing help-desk and back-office support to users who were located off-site, using systems and networks that support staff were not trained or authorized to service.

The Web 2.0 Effect

Things are changing, transformed by new technology developments, emerging business models and a major techno-cultural shift in society. The Web 2.0 phenomenon – including the use of social networks, blogs, wikis and other relationship building applications – will have a huge impact on corporations. This will not only have an effect on how workers collaborate, but also on how key information resources are accessed. Users who attended college within the last five years are probably used to working with highly collaborative learning tools as a routine part of their coursework. Many contemporary users also read, respond to or even write their own blogs, and of course, participate in social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

At Alcatel-Lucent, we see a growing number of colleagues using Facebook to keep in touch, to solve problems and to exchange ideas about new technologies. Many of these employees are leveraging their knowledge of – and comfort with – social networking technologies to build virtual project teams. In fact, we believe the water cooler discussions are moving to Facebook, given more and more of our employees are part of global teams.

We're excited as well about other Web 2.0-inspired possibilities. We have seen how the wiki concept has helped companies build and refine corporate knowledge. In many ways, this concept is uncorking knowledge that used to be siloed in specific departments. The cross-fertilization of ideas among different departments scattered across the globe is creating innovative opportunities to explore and pursue.

Web 2.0 and personal productivity devices (like smart phones, PDAs and so on) are playing a major enabling role in our ability to integrate our *network, people, processes and collective knowledge* and thereby exemplify a "Dynamic Enterprise" (see our article in this issue entitled, *The Dynamic Enterprise – Leveraging 2.0 Applications*). With the consumerization of IT, we are making the collective knowledge available anywhere and anytime, regardless of end-user device.

An Opportunity to Focus the CIO Mission

The consumerization of enterprise IT infrastructure offers CIOs an opportunity to refocus efforts on building the best network and service provisioning systems. But it will also require a major shift in thinking. As a result, CIOs will have to develop enterprise strategies and policies based on listening to the technology needs of their end users rather than dictating what resources will be made available and how those resources will be used.

One example of this cultural shift may come in the form of supporting end-user devices that are owned by the worker rather than by the enterprise. While this may be a radical idea with serious security, compliance and operational risks, there could be a significant upside to exploring this trend. CIOs may be able to reallocate resources from laborious and expensive activities associated with equipping and supporting dedicated connectivity over a few meters of network infrastructure. This could free up budgets and staff to concentrate on the delivery of innovative IT services. To mitigate security risks, new technologies – such as the Alcatel-Lucent Non-stop Laptop Guardian – can be used to enforce enterprise standards of behavior in an automated fashion from a central facility. This particular technology, for instance, offers a reliable way to protect intellectual property and even erase sensitive information from a remote location if the device is lost or otherwise compromised.

From a technology refreshment perspective, employee-owned equipment could actually reduce cost and keep the enterprise in tune with the latest capabilities offered by the marketplace. Moreover, an employee-owned enterprise desktop/ laptop strategy could offer the opportunity to shift help-desk device support activities to the manufacturers of the equipment. This would free corporate support staff to focus on ensuring that enterprise applications are delivering on key performance requirements.

The Big Challenge: Keeping It Corporate

Much of the potential risk can be mitigated by developing appropriate policies and creating a culture of digital responsibility and etiquette that is vigilantly enforced in the organization. In addition to managing their own technical staffs, CIOs will need to coordinate closely with fellow senior managers and executives to develop policies and procedures that ensure social networking, collaborative and communications tools support company operations and objectives.

The Alcatel-Lucent IT team is very excited about the prospects of giving our workforce new ways to collaborate and communicate from anywhere and anytime so that they can develop tomorrow's telecommunications solutions. And as a company committed to the development of innovative technology, we realize we can't micromanage the creative process and expect to drive a lot of breakthroughs. Some of the ideas being generated by the consumerization of IT may offer the tools and concepts to optimize creativity while rationalizing the security and performance imperatives of a major multinational company. I believe that by exploring these opportunities, we can make sure our best minds are linked across oceans and time zones to collaborate and share ideas to deliver the results our customers demand. ●

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