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BYOD is not a choice anymore

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IT departments need to realise BYOD is happening and implement proper strategies going forward.

Bring your own device (BYOD) is a reality that companies need to accept. This was the consensus of a panel of experts speaking on the topic at the NetEvents Press and Analyst Summit in Rome, Italy.

Panel moderator and IDC senior research analyst, Elena Szolgayova, said a recent IDC survey found that in Europe there is fear associated with the BYOD concept. Respondents indicated they are afraid of not being able to control devices from their IT departments and are worried about potential **data** leakages. They are also concerned about user privacy and **accessing** personal information, and the fact they don't really know how much BYOD programmes will cost.

One of the panellists, Riccardo Canetta – who is MobileIron regional director for Italy, Turkey and Greece – said BYOD is not a choice in the hands of the IT departments anymore, it is something that is already happening.



"I find it quite strange that the IT departments say they fear BYOD because they are afraid of losing control. It's actually vice versa. If they don't do it, if they don't implement an appropriate BYOD plan, then that's when they start losing control," according to Canetta. "Keeping control and organising and enabling services on the user devices is the new IT. BYOD is a lot about allowing end-users to use the device they already have and that they prefer. I think it's going to be really interesting to see how this is going to **evolve**, but in the end it's really in the hands of the IT department to realise the change is happening. And this is what we are trying to do, helping them embrace the change and implement proper BYOD strategies going forward."

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Paola Maria Pernigotti, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise's head of marketing for South Europe, Middle East and Africa, agreed BYOD is not something companies or vendors can prevent and pointed out BYOD is a consumer-driven transformation.

Multiple applications

"There are a number of opportunities companies can leverage with BYOD. First of all, it's enhancing mobility within the company. Second, it is saving money because in the end we are using the device owned by the employee. Third, we can benefit as a company through the easiness of usage, thanks to the fact that it's a known device and people are happy to use on their own device both applications coming from the company and their own applications at the same time. And we must not forget that we are extending our working time to 24 hours and this, from the company perspective, is still a benefit," she said.

IDC numbers say that by the end of this year, the number of mobile workers in Europe will exceed 40% and in the next five years it's going to be over 65%.

"When employees started to bring devices to the company and use them for work purposes, the only possible reaction was to introduce BYOD programmes to manage these devices and the applications and security and all the related stuff," said Szolgayova.

Pernigotti said BYOD is useful for specific verticals like education.

"Universities and high schools can really benefit from the fact that the students take their own tablets and they can get lessons and content on your university and university services, etc. The university can also gain more customers, which are more students, because it's really up to date and offering more services than others."

She said the same is true for hospitality, where a personal phone can give guests access to all the hotel's services and even go as far as the phone becoming the visitor's room key.

Security worries

Despite all of the opportunities, security is still a key worry for the implementation of BYOD programmes.

Dean Bublely, analyst and founder of Disruptive Analysis, said many layers of security are going to be important for BYOD to succeed, but flexibility is also key.

"I think it's going to be a real challenge as well from what's called 'the gig economy' where people have multiple jobs, multiple employers and they are self-employed. The problem comes from whether all of those companies' and employers' security systems can coexist on the same device."

Canetta is of the view that getting in the way of user experience with too many security hoops to jump through can also be dangerous.

"[Employees] will embrace the BYOD programme if you offer them something more, in a secure way, but security also needs to be as transparent as possible to the end-user. Because if you try to give them something that's too secure, you actually get in the way of their user experience."

He said this gives users a reason to bypass security and leads to breaches and information leaks. He used the example of former US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, who was exposed for using a personal e-mail address to conduct US state department business – with her defence being it was a matter of [convenience](#).

"Irrespective of what Ms Clinton may or may not have done, there are people who can and should be forced to use particular devices and particularly sometimes for safety reasons. If you are a policeman or work in the fire service, even if you are really annoyed with the slow tetra network on your intercom, that's got resiliency and disaster protection built into it. You can't just say I'm going to use my iPhone to do a Google search on the person I want to arrest," said Bublely.

Bublely said there will need to be more capable networks that can deal with users choosing their own communications tools and apps.

"A good example is Slack. A lot of people are starting to use Slack at departmental level for collaboration because they like the user experience. And I think you are also starting to see end-users perhaps choosing their own conferencing services. It's been very common for

employees to use Skype irrespective of company policies – and Skype and a few other services are very good in getting around firewalls," said Bublely.

Canetta added companies can run into issues if they force their workforce to use a specific platform on their devices that employees don't like. He says if firms demand employees only use certain e-mail services on their devices, workers may decide not to read their corporate e-mail at home.

"The right way is to enable other services through internal apps," said Canetta.

"We also need to remember it's the end-user that takes the decision of what he actually wants to use," he concluded.