BYOD and IT Service Management: what is the likely impact?

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Introduction

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Bring your own device (**BYOD**) is a business strategy of employees bringing personally owned mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops to their place of work and using those devices to access privileged company resources. BYOD can also be extended to people working remotely using their own mobile devices and privately purchased desktops.

BYOD is becoming a contentious topic for employers, employees and IT departments alike. Wikipedia recently quoted that roughly 90% of employees are already using their own technology in at least a limited capacity at their workplace.

It is widely accepted that BYOD is inevitable for organisations. With the sheer choice of new technologies on the market, and with these devices becoming more powerful and `plentiful`, a growing number of employees will start to favour these devices over those traditionally provided by their employer.

For IT departments it raises a number of challenges. For example, is the existing network and infrastructure ready to support an increase/surge in local wireless traffic, and how will they manage security issues?

Another key consideration, is will each individual be provided with an allowance for maintaining their own devices in the same manner as having a car allowance? More so, does each individual have the experience to look after and maintain their devices to the level required to conduct their job?

The BYOD revolution has the potential to underpin huge gains in productivity, mobility and cost savings, and all of this using devices purchased directly by the employees (with or without an allowance). Some employers believe that BYOD may help employees to be more productive as it provides greater flexibility and makes them an attractive employer to the `younger generation`.

In terms of productivity, if BYOD is used at a simple level, e.g. employees being able to access email and their calendar on the train to work, many employers will be eager to offer this where possible, as it will enable employees to be more productive, however is this admitting that the conventional equipment provided by that organisation is not fit for purpose?

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There are however many concerns with BYOD, and the potentially negative effects it could bring if not planned for and adopted effectively. The biggest and most well publicised concern for senior IT figures is data security and the risk of corporate data being lost on an employee leaving the organisation. Having appropriate flexibility at the same time maintaining adequate control is the way forward for organisations, but it raises the question whether employees sign and accept a BYOD user policy which may restrict personal use of their own devices?
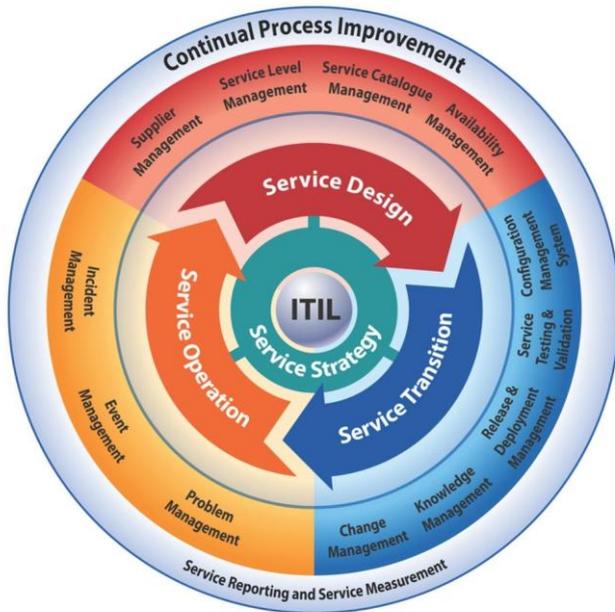
Over a number of years, ITIL has become the de facto standard used by the majority of organisations to ensure that IT service quality is delivered to the business and its users.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some of the challenges that IT Service Management will face when an organisation adopts a BYOD policy.

The paper will start by summarising a recent research poll conducted into BYOD, participants' votes and opinions, industry challenges, why IT Service Management processes and BYOD have to be planned together, and why `immature` processes may make BYOD a hindrance as opposed to a benefit.

Current views:

We conducted a poll that was completed by a random sample of 94 participants. Participants had the choice of three responses, with the ability to add comments to elaborate on their choice.

The question was "Is BYOD (bring your own device to work) currently a beneficial next step for IT services and the wider business?"

The choices:

1. Not yet, but we will be forced to in the future
2. No, it is too risky
3. Yes, it is the way IT is heading

Although only conducted with a relatively small sample of participants it yielded some really interesting results and individual comments

A vast proportion of the voters are Service Management professionals, who have knowledge of and have worked with IT Service Management, and running an IT service based upon ITIL/IT Service Management best practice. Business users also had the opportunity to participate and respond.

Overall, the responses were as follows:

Votes
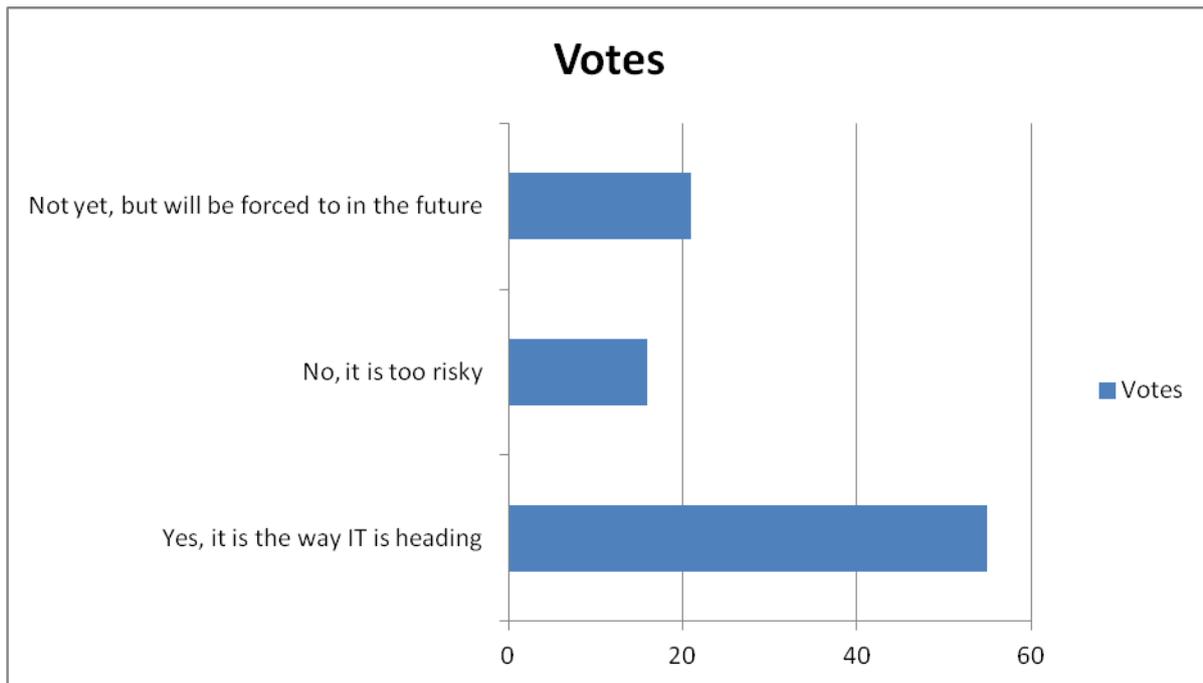
22 (23%) voted for not yet, but will be forced to in the future

16 (17%) voted no, it is too risky

56 people (60%) voted for yes, it is the way IT is heading

Participants also made some very interesting and insightful comments about BYOD and their opinions on it. Below are some of the comments made on the poll:

"There are some real business issues at play here as well; 1) You can increase productivity through enabling more connectivity from more things, allowing the blend of the work/life balance only benefits the employee and employer, an extra 10 mins productivity sat on train working on a smart phone is 10 minutes you might not have got before! 2) Tomorrow's workforce are very used to working with freedom and without constrain, if companies do not offer BYOD services and an increase general flexible working, you won't be an employer of choice!"

"As an IT professional myself, BYOD is simply the way it's going to go. Not because I want it to, but because technology is so ubiquitous that there's no stopping it. I like that it provides the USER more flexibility and familiarity to better produce. However, as an ADMIN, I dislike it because I am basically being forced to service somebody's personal device (and all the peculiarities that come with that)"

"It's shameful! Companies are exploiting the ubiquity of electronic devices, and framing it as an advantage for employees. It's shameful and manipulative and no one should fall for it. If companies have a need for workers to use PDAs, mobile phones and tablets, they ought furnish those devices to employees. The alternative would for employees to submit monthly invoices to the company for rental of their personal devices at market rates"

"It's not a good idea for either party. The law is vague too as the owner of the device has an expectation of privacy regarding its contents yet the employer may have rights to the contents created on the job"

"It's a scam to get employees to pay for their own tools, on the specious grounds of promoting choice and individuality. And it will work, even though it's logically impossible to be individual through technology. More than enough people will buy the scam for it to succeed."

"I assumed that Laptops are still existing and more flexible than tablets. I would have voted in favor of BYOD; if employers would have had sponsored them (i.e. sustaining hardware and software)."

Initial analysis:

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The results and comments from the survey leans toward the fact that BYOD cannot be ignored and is the way that IT is heading. However, it is not currently universally accepted as either a positive or negative strategy as there are so many factors to consider before going down the BYOD route.

It is generally accepted that for the employee and the employer alike, BYOD has a number of benefits. Employees can use their own devices remotely, which will enable greater flexibility and productivity, e.g. the ability to log onto their corporate email accounts for example, and check their diaries for a particular day. The perceived benefits will tempt many organisations to explore the BYOD angle to at least a limited degree.

For the employer the perceived benefits will need to be carefully balanced against the challenges that BYOD will bring. Whilst flexibility is a benefit it will need to be balanced against control and governance.

The impact on IT Service Management

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BYOD raises a number of new challenges for IT Service Management, but this is just part of the on-going development of new technology, increased mobility, interoperability and integration. To ensure that a BYOD strategy is successful there are a number of considerations that need to be identified and addressed, including:

How changes to existing and new policies, processes and procedures will be designed, communicated and policed to ensure BYOD works to both the benefit of employees and employers.

IT Service Management will need to be involved at the initial stage of a BYOD strategy to ensure all risks and issues downstream of the decision to proceed down this route are identified, logged and addressed and adequate funding or obtained to support a BYOD strategy.

BYOD has to be a decision taken for genuine business reasons and to ensure that it delivers the required benefits. Members of the IT team should be involved throughout the process to raise any risks and issues, and support the strategy if a decision is made to proceed with BYOD.

From a Service Design perspective, considerations have to be made regarding how new and existing services are designed to run in a virtual desktop on a variety of devices from iPhones to laptops, both on-site and off-site ensuring adequate levels of availability, capacity, continuity and security.

Adequate service levels for service operation will need to be negotiated and agreed to ensure that there are no points of disagreement.

Other considerations for Service Design will be around the design of security policies, designing how access rights will be managed, configuration data managed, designing procedures for dealing with data leakage issues, and dealing with lost or stolen devices.

From a Service Transition perspective, you will need to consider how services can be tested and deployed across a plethora of BYOD devices to ensure functionality is achieved and delivered. Ensuring that all of the necessary security features around the tracing and disabling of systems and data protection for lost devices are tested to ensure they work effectively.

From a Service Operation perspective, if an employee's personal device fails, what data does the Service Desk need to log, who undertakes initial diagnosis, what if there is a compatibility issue, if there is a device error and troubleshooting is required, who will the user go to in order to fix the problem? Will it fall under the remit of the IT department, and if so, will the technicians have the relevant experience to fix the issue? Not likely, or will the user be expected to call their telephone/device supplier which may result in a lengthy wait and resolution process? Will employees and organisations be willing to invest in this risk, and sign an agreement agreeing to this?

In terms of costs associated with the Service Desk and BYOD, an ineffective BYOD strategy could prove to be very expensive for organisations, counteracting any initial cost savings.

Calls or tickets generated as the result of use of unknown technology will be more time consuming and therefore more expensive to resolve than those attached to known company owned and issued technologies.

Best Practice for BYOD and IT Service Management

BYOD has the potential to expose a number of inadequacies in an organisation's delivery and support processes, and to create a `gap` between the business and IT if not managed correctly and sensitively. It is not a strategy that can or should be rushed into because it is the `flavour of the month`. It is without doubt that BYOD adds yet another layer of complexity to an already complicated infrastructure; it therefore needs to be carefully planned and executed to ensure that everyone benefits.

Photo Credit: blakespot - http://www.flickr.com/photos/blakespot/4773693893/

Many organisations currently have an immature IT Service Management system and processes. If an organisation introduces BYOD on the back of immature processes and procedures, this will only serve to exposing and harshly highlighting the gaps in an organisation's IT Service Management capability.

BYOD does not have to be a complicated undertaking if planned and executed appropriately. However, to enable the benefits that BYOD can bring, the answer is relatively simple:

1) Identify a BYOD strategy that is suitable for your organisation to introduce in a controlled and sensible manner. Plan it well.

2) Consider the maturity of your Service Management processes, and how they need to be improved or changed to underpin a BYOD strategy

3) Improve your processes to the required level of maturity to support BYOD

4) Implement your BYOD strategy

5) Review and improve

Processes based on ITIL/IT Service Management best practice that are carefully adapted and developed to suit an organisation's strategic objectives will greatly reduce any risks associated with BYOD, and unlock the benefits that BYOD can bring.

An organisation has basically two choices when approaching this subject: to support BYOD by ensuring that its ITSM processes and procedures are at the required level of maturity and operation, or suffer service disruption by introducing BYOD when current Service Management process maturity is low.

A bit about the author

For over 10 years, Purple Griffon has been enabling IT departments in a number of organisations to underpin business performance through improved Service Management processes and capabilities.

If you want to know more about our consultancy approach, how we have helped other organisations to achieve their objectives, and how we can support you to achieve yours, don't hesitate to contact us on 0800 033 7480 or email consultancyservices@purplegriffon.com.