

ESG Brief

Why Employees Should Use Fewer Devices in 2020

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Having to support an increasing number of devices per employee is leading to a situation that is not sustainable for businesses and IT organizations. The high number of devices that average employees are bringing into the workplace for business purposes strains existing IT and security strategies, which are not designed to handle this level of complexity. When employees are enabled to complete more of their business tasks with a single device, they benefit from a consistent experience across all workflows and communication channels.

Device Proliferation Spins Out of Control

Gadget-hungry consumers and the rapid pace of innovation in the device market have created numerous challenges for businesses, as they attempt to balance user experience, productivity, and security, a balance most have yet to strike. The increasing number of devices that each user is bringing into the workplace for business purposes puts additional strain on existing IT and security strategies, which are not designed to handle this level of complexity. ESG research has shown that:

- 70% of all workers expect to be productive from anywhere (at the office, at home, or while traveling).
- 57% of all workers expect to be able to perform the majority of their job functions from any device (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.).
- 54% of all workers expect to be able to use the same device (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) for both business and personal tasks.¹

Top Ten Considerations Driving Device Consolidation

Employees expect to be able to work anywhere, on any device, business-issued or personal, and this has led to an unsustainable increase in the number of devices that IT organizations are attempting to support. However, by enabling

¹ Source: ESG Master Survey Results, 2019 Digital Work Trends Survey, to be published.

employees to use fewer devices to complete the same crucial tasks, organizations have the opportunity to improve their device strategies while still arming their employees with a frictionless work experience. These improvements include:

1. **Security:** Device proliferation has expanded the security perimeter that IT and security pros need to protect. Fewer devices on the network allows organizations to provide more consistent protection and mitigate risk and uncertainty.
2. **Cloud-hosted workspaces:** When a workspace is hosted in the cloud, it is centrally managed and secured. This allows users to access that workspace from anywhere on any device and businesses to also tap into the intelligence of the cloud providers to further crank up security, review insights into user behavior, and simplify the update process.
3. **Sustainability initiatives:** Consuming and disposing of devices at the current rapid pace is unsustainable not just for businesses but also for the planet. Device manufacturers and businesses need to step up and enable employees to use fewer devices to help reduce waste and support environmentally responsible behaviors.
4. **User experience and productivity:** Startup time during login, constantly entering passwords for different applications, and navigating file repositories are common activities that can consume an enormous amount of time on a daily basis. The more devices a user has, the more productivity can be impacted as the user attempts to perform common tasks on different devices.
5. **IT management:** Device management has been a thorn in the side of IT for many years. Seemingly simple tasks like asset management can be daunting and inaccurate, security policy management across all devices can be difficult, and patching can be a nightmare for many organizations. Enabling employees to use fewer devices can help IT regain control and ultimately deliver a better user experience.
6. **Innovation:** Devices undergo technology innovations at different paces. When an employee uses devices from different generations, their experience is bound to be different across those devices, with some features supported on certain devices but not others, leaving them at a disadvantage.
7. **Seamless switching:** Switching between devices saps user time and productivity. Startup times, security policies, and authentication processes can be very inconsistent across devices, and can quickly impact users' productivity and experience, leading to frustration and unsatisfied employees.
8. **Quicker and simpler file access:** One of the most common user tasks that can become confusing and unmanageable across devices is file management. Files may be saved and accessed locally, in the cloud, and on removable storage devices, leading to confusion as users try to access files from different devices without any consistency. Additionally, these files are likely not adequately protected and backed up.
9. **Streamlined collaboration:** Communication and collaboration channels are rapidly evolving and can differ vastly from device to device. This may lead users to miss time-sensitive conversations, delay responses, or simply miss out on being kept in the loop based on the device they happen to be using at any given time. Enabling employees to collaborate using fewer devices simplifies and consolidates communication methods.
10. **Consolidated notifications:** Application notifications from email, approval systems, and collaboration platforms can be very helpful but can also be distractions when they come in from multiple devices. Employees can glean valuable insight from a notification stream, but can get easily bogged down when they are forced to deal with and respond to duplicate (and sometimes not critical) notifications across devices.

The Bigger Truth

Users may have a variety of reasons to use multiple devices in corporate settings, such as differing screen size and application support, but it is unreasonable to think that we can continue to operate like this. Today, an employee can use a single device to connect to multiple screens and systems, depending on the tasks they are performing at the time. They may use traditional input devices such as a keyboard and a mouse or incorporate new innovations like touch, voice, and motion. The point is they only need one device to connect to a variety of input peripherals and different display sizes and configurations. They can use the same devices to connect in their cars, in their offices, in coffee shops, at home, with customers, etc., while IT gains back predictable control of these fewer devices. At the same time, employees are able to remain productive and connect in the way that best suits their working style, with an experience that remains consistent across all tasks and communication channels.

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