

BYOD Doesn't Have To Complicate Printing

As you help your customers address their mobile management challenges, don't underestimate the importance of enabling users to print from their mobile devices.

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There's no denying that the "bring your own device," or BYOD, trend is here and, with Aberdeen Group reporting that 75% of organizations allow employees to use their own mobile devices for work, it's not going anywhere.

While most agree that mobile devices provide many benefits, printing from tablets and smartphones still presents a challenge for many business users. Now, with so many businesses formally adopting BYOD policies, it has become critically important that they provide employees with a consistent printing experience across all platforms.

Initially companies were insistent on employees using a corporate-sponsored mobile device — making mobile printing a relatively easy problem to solve because emailing a document to the printer was an acceptable solution. With the intelligence and diversity of today's mobile devices, providing support for printing has grown a bit more complicated and user expectations are higher. The biggest challenges that IT departments face when trying to enable printing capabilities through a mobile device can be broken down into three areas:

User Experience — Mobile devices often provide an excellent consumer experience but fail to "wow" at the business level. When an employee wants to print a document from their laptop or desktop computer it is as simple as clicking the print icon. However, many tablet and smartphone operating systems aren't designed with printing in mind so that ease of use can be difficult to emulate.

Device Access — An IT department may be responsible for supporting many mobile devices. Add in multiple operating systems and the number of printers a user needs access to, and IT has their work cut out for them. Providing access to the net-

work is just the first step. The bigger challenge is how to find, connect, and send information to the user's printer of choice.

Output Fidelity — Perhaps the most important aspect of any type of printing is whether or not what the user is seeing on their screen matches what they pick up at the printer. For mobile printing, this means that the document must be accurately converted to a data stream the printer can understand, otherwise the printed copy won't match the soft copy.

Despite these challenges, supporting the needs of a mobile workforce can be a simple and secure process that doesn't lead to out of control spending.

One way IT departments can ease mobile print pain is by utilizing mobile print applications that enable users to print directly to any printer on the company network from a Wi-Fi or 3G/4G connected smartphone or tablet.

More advanced solutions give users "print from anywhere" — at their desk, in a meeting room, break area, or from the road — capabilities by connecting the mobile device to the corporate "print cloud." Print jobs are securely held in a cloud queue until the user is ready to release their documents on any enabled device in the network. Streamlining the printing process through the cloud helps businesses save time and money by giving

users access to the most efficient printer and eliminating unwanted output.

Though catching on fast, BYOD is still a relatively new concept. As more companies start to embrace it, IT departments will need to face the associated printing challenges head on. If not, there's a good chance they'll end up spending unnecessary budget dollars on a solution that frustrates their users and doesn't align with their corporate cost savings initiatives. ●



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