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Device management: the highest IT priority is now more affordable

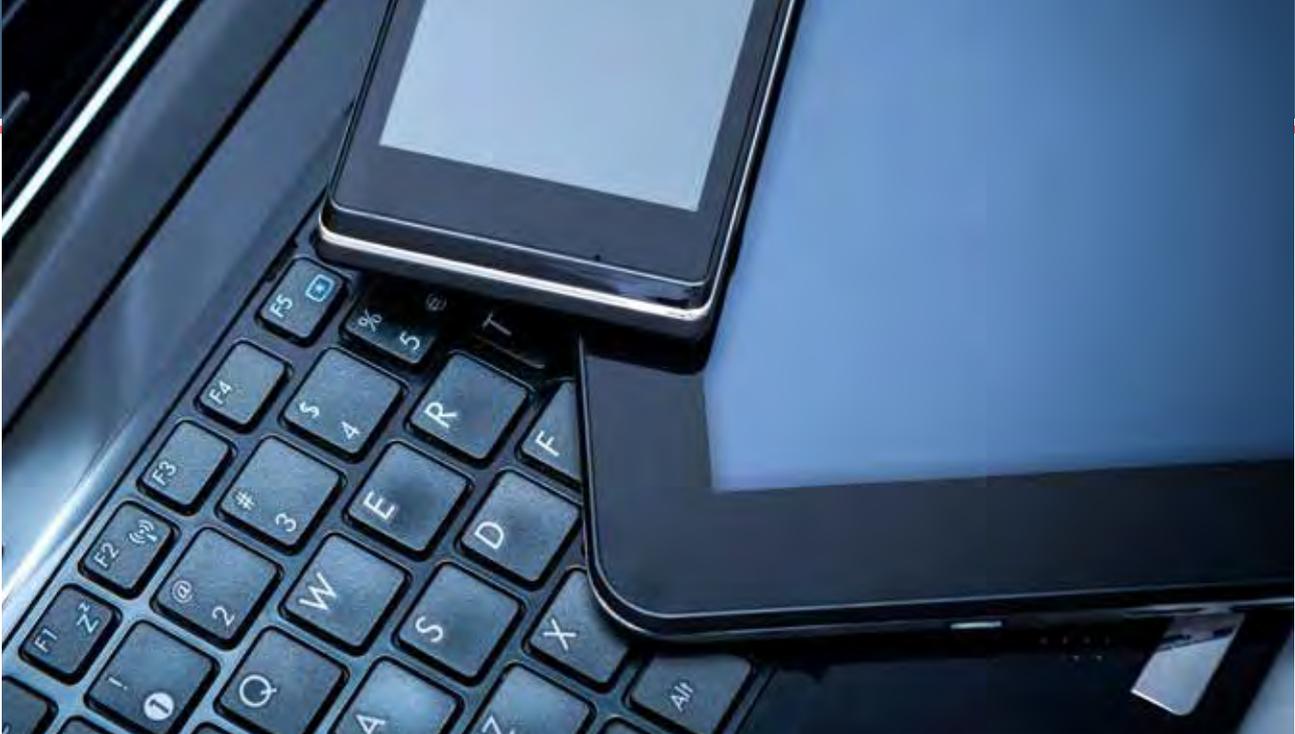


5 device-management software essentials



The need for mobile device management





Device management: the highest IT priority is now more affordable

Device management is probably the biggest IT need for many organisations and almost certainly the biggest opportunity for resellers and solutions providers.

While the explosion of mobile device usage opens up all manner of opportunities for organisations, it also creates a whole new range of issues – especially in terms of device management. Network-attached devices are no longer chained to desks. They're in people's pockets.

Smartphones, tablets and laptops may be the most obvious area of concern, but they're far from being the only one. Few, if any, infrastructures come from one vendor. Desktops, servers, routers, printers and many other devices populate the network. These all need managing too. It's true that many devices come with their own management tools, but this can still mean using dozens of tools to manage hundreds or thousands of devices.

The answer is universal device management: using a dedicated tool to manage everything. The problem is the cost, which has traditionally been prohibitive to all but larger companies. Yet even this hasn't stopped device management becoming a significant market.

When you combine all of these devices (into what's now often called the Internet of Things – IoT),

the managed services market will, according to Research and Markets, be worth a [staggering \\$79.6 billion USD by 2021](#) – and it's already valued at a not too shabby \$21.85 billion USD.

As smartphones and tablets become more widely adopted, including those within bring your own device (BYOD) policies, growing concerns about security and access to corporate data are expected to drive IT budgets upwards.

Interestingly, these figures are likely focused on growth within the typical current user base. When SMBs (organisations up to around a thousand people) are factored in, the market is even bigger still.

Setting smartphones aside, we currently don't have an accurate assessment of the types of devices IoT may ultimately embrace. Lots of the publicity around IoT focuses on consumer devices such as fridges, heating systems, security devices and so on. Who's to say what IoT devices business will want to manage? Everything from photocopiers to fleet cars is possible.

For static and mobile devices, device

management has already moved from being useful to essential. In the future, not managing devices in some way or another will be unthinkable.

For resellers and solutions providers, device management and mobile device management (often called mobility device management) is perhaps their greatest opportunity for significant growth and sales in the next few years.

There are two main opportunities. The first is with large companies that typically have some form of device management. For them, the issue is cost, as many solutions are expensive – and rack up additional costs when new types of devices are added. Or, they may be tied to a specific vendor's hardware. Neither of these shackles is desirable. However, moving isn't easy, so they'll need to transition to a new solution carefully, even if the benefits are compelling.

The second opportunity is with those companies who haven't yet embraced device management – typically SMBs/SMEs.

This isn't a small market. Small- and medium-enterprises (SMEs) account for about 90% percent of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide, says the [International Finance Corporation](#) of the World Bank Group. According to the [World Bank](#), in emerging economies, SMBs employ around 45% of the workforce and contribute up to 33% of national income.

The opportunity can't be overstated. These businesses need a device-management solution – especially one that includes mobile devices. They may not have the deep pockets of bigger businesses, but they have the same requirements, concerns and fears – and the potential for device-management adoption is huge. They will, at some point, adopt device management. It's up to resellers and solutions providers to decide if they want to be part of this significant market, or if they want to step aside and let their competitors help their customers.

5 device-management software essentials

Organisations expect a lot from device-management software – but (features apart) some things are more important than others. Here are five things that we feel are essential.

1: Fits your business now, ready for your business tomorrow

A key concern for organisations adopting any new tool – let alone one that will potentially be used to manage every device across the enterprise – is that the business doesn't have to change how it works. If your business is organised in one way, you don't need the hassle of organising it in a different way just to fit in with a new tool. A good device-



management suite will let you organise things in a way that makes sense to you. It also fits right into your current infrastructure – you shouldn't need to start buying specific brands of desktop, laptop, mobile or whatever. Indeed, because most infrastructures today are heterogeneous (that big fancy IT word for 'we use lots of different stuff'), the need to manage pretty much any brand of device is a must.

Following on from this, you also don't want to be boxed into making strategic decisions based on your device-management platform. That would definitely be a case of the tail wagging the dog. So, a device-management suite needs to be ready to cope with whatever's around the corner – new devices or new operating systems, for example.

Organisations want something that fits in now with what they use today, and won't stop them using something different tomorrow.

2: Manage everything, using one tool

Technology moves at a rapid pace at the best of times. The increasingly wide range of equipment – desktops, mobiles, tablets, routers, servers and more – needs to be managed, audited, updated and so on. While some equipment comes with its own management tool or browser-based interface, some don't. In any event, managing different devices with different tools isn't just a pain: it's inefficient and ineffective.

Understandably, we've seen the rise of device-management suites, aiming to simplify the process. However, there is still often a need for separate tools (or additional licences for the same tools) for mobile devices, desktops and servers.

While using fewer tools makes device management better, it's still far from ideal. What's needed is a single tool that can manage pretty much everything, perhaps apart from certain aspects of some specialised or esoteric devices.

And then there's the question of management tasks. This isn't just about sending updates to devices, after all. Organisations also need to manage inventory, restrict access to information, applications and e-mails, remote-wipe potentially compromised devices and so on. Whether that's a Windows, iOS or Android device, all of these things and more should be possible from the same interface.

A key caveat is that moving to a single tool shouldn't be fraught with compromise. The tool

should do everything you'd expect of those tools which are focused on one type of device, but all from one interface. Not only does this make life simpler now, it also provides freedom in the future: as long as a device is running a mainstream OS, then it should be supported.

Organisations want to manage any device, any mainstream operating system, anywhere – using one tool.

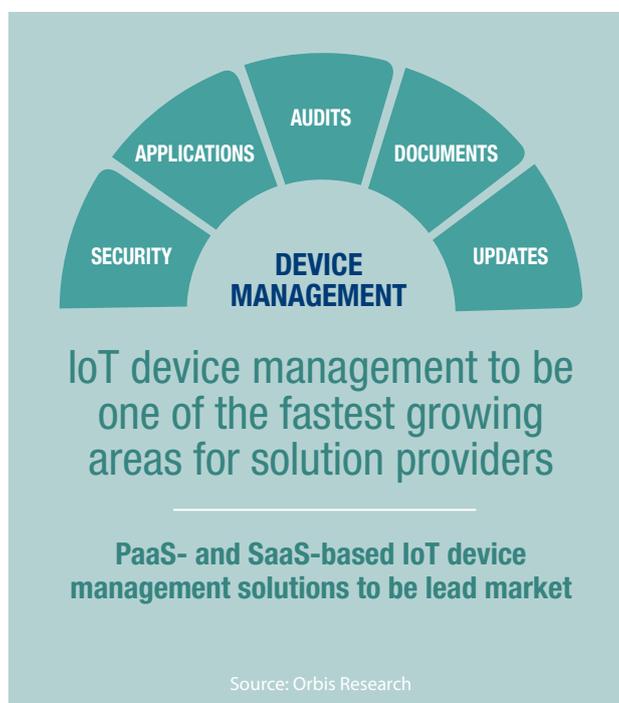
3: Unleash mobile, don't restrain it

The move towards mobile computing has been seismic – and the journey has only just begun. According to a survey in the USA, UK and Australia by [Gartner](#), more than half of employees are still using 'corporate-issued desktop PCs' while only 23% are given smartphones by their employers.

However, 39% of employees are using a smartphone, tablet or phablet which they own for work – so the real adoption rate is higher. What we're seeing is an employee preference for mobile devices pulling against a corporate inertia in terms of deployment. In many respects, this is holding business back. Mikako Kitagawa, principal research analyst at Gartner, says that, "It comes as something of a surprise that corporate usage of smartphones

and tablets is not as high as PCs, even when the use of personally owned devices is taken into account. While it's true that the cost of providing mobile devices can quickly escalate, proper usage of mobile devices can increase productivity, which can easily justify the extra costs."

The move to mobile devices is inevitable. Organisations need to confidently solve device-management issues such as security, information control and so on. From a device-management perspective, it's not really true that mobile devices are 'more complex' or 'more difficult' to accommodate – rather that there are a greater number of considerations, and that the technology is moving more quickly. But the bottom line is



that computing is going mobile – and the most successful businesses will exploit this. Device-management software needs to handle both static and mobile devices, preferably within a single product – opening up the possibilities of a mobile workforce, not chaining people unnecessarily to desks.

Organisations

need the benefits of having a mobile workforce and moving to more mobile devices – device management should be a key enabler, not a limiter.

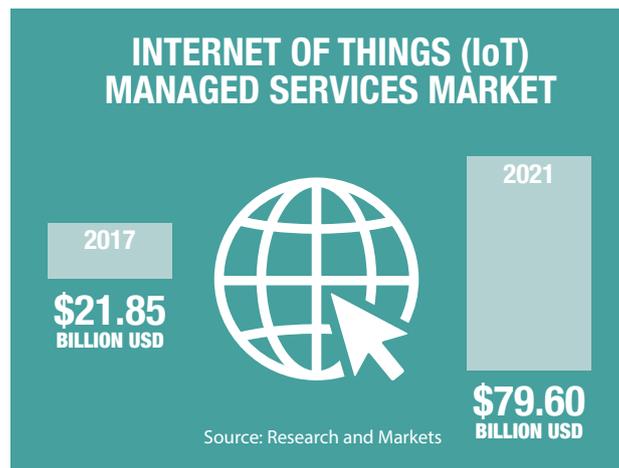
4: Your hardware, their hardware

Device-management software needs to accommodate both corporate-owned devices and bring your own device (BYOD) strategies. The ideal endgame for many people is that they only carry one device – and that's the one which they prefer. Although initially at odds with the way many organisations manage technology, BYOD initiatives have typically been successful, popular and a whole lot less painful than expected. Of course, when you're mixing personal and corporate data, e-mails and applications, the issues are very real and have to be taken seriously. So, good device management needs to deal with this reality, giving IT teams the confidence that they can manage an employee's device as easily as they can manage one of their own – imposing restrictions where needed and letting employees do their own thing when they're at home or not on work time.

Device-management software should embrace every device, including employees' own – delivering the same level of control, regardless of ownership.

5: Manageable costs

Perhaps the number one concern for organisations adopting or changing a device-management strategy is that of cost. It isn't just that device management needs to be affordable (although it does), device-management costs should be understandable, logical and transparent. Organisations really want to know what they are



getting into – for example, many software vendors offer only a subscription-based model; this initially seems cheap but can not only grow to become a burden, but also an inescapable treadmill. Plus, there's the cost of add-ons: a base product, with additional costs for this, that and the other. This initially appears to provide choice, but the

reality is that the base product is seldom adequate and customers realistically need the notionally premium products just to get by.

Whether an organisation chooses software as a service or a one-off purchase is down to that organisation's needs: the important thing is that costs are simple, can be confidently calculated and the device-management platform will remain good value when needs change or the organisation grows.

The shift to mobile devices isn't a cost-reducer, as tablets and smartphones are typically replaced more frequently than desktops – and at a higher cost. With IT budgets typically stagnant in real terms, organisations are understandably seeking to do more with less. So, the budget to manage these mobile devices (and other devices) is often squeezed from somewhere else, so cost remains an issue – and device management is moving towards being a commodity.

Another consideration is that many device-management tools are priced for the larger enterprise, so smaller companies (such as SMBs, perhaps up to a thousand employees – which, let's face it, isn't that small) feel they are out of reach. Affordability means different things to different organisations, but a decent device-management suite should be affordable to almost all.

Organisations always need to save costs and device management is no exception. They need simple, understandable pricing – they're building a business, need to budget and need to plan.

March of the mobile

The drive towards mobile computing is one of the biggest IT changes organisations have faced – and it's not optional.



There's no doubt that people love their smartphones. Around 3.2 billion people had a smartphone subscription in 2015, according to the [Ericsson Mobility Report](#). To put this in perspective, according to Geoba.se the world's population is estimated at around 7.4 billion people. Smartphone adoption is expected to grow to around 6.3 billion by 2021.

But quoting big numbers can make it harder, not easier, to grasp the magnitude of the shift from desktop to mobile. Perhaps a more accessible statistic is that over half of all Internet traffic now comes from mobile devices, around 17% of which are tablets (source: Eloqua). Almost half of people use their mobile as their first point of search (source: Google) and around a third of people only read e-mails on mobile devices (source: Informz).

Within business, smartphones are driving a lot of change. Employees are no longer tied to desks and can potentially access everything from e-mail to presentations on a device they hold in their hand. Since people want a smartphone that's their

choice, bring your own device (BYOD) strategies have become an acceptable, indeed logical, route to corporate smartphone use.

Since BYOD only works for some organisations, and smartphones can't do quite everything, we're seeing device manufacturers moving towards far more capable single devices. Recent innovations, such as [HP's Elite x3](#) and Apple's patent to build a laptop around the [iPhone](#), show that we're close to a smartphone being the only device a business user would need. Microsoft – not exactly winning in the smartphone or tablet market – is actually well positioned with Windows 10, which provides

a better universal code base than Android or iOS.

This is, of course, good news – employees would need only one device instead of two or three, plugging their phone into a 'dumb terminal', turning it into a full computer when needed. Neat.

But as organisations require mobile devices to do more, concerns understandably grow. Mobiles are far more easily stolen or lost. Corporate data has to be protected. The solution



is EMM – Enterprise Mobility Management.

EMM provides a high level of control over mobile devices, regardless of where they are. For example, a solid EMM system will provide:

- the ability to manage OS and application updates remotely.
- an easy way to remote-wipe compromised devices.
- accurate device auditing.
- ring-fencing of corporate applications and personal applications.
- tight access control over corporate data and documents.
- the means to restrict website browsing access.
- management of e-mail settings, data, policies and clients.

And that's just for starters. EMM software has to provide at least the same functionality as similar LAN-based tools, but do this wherever the smartphone or tablet happens to be.

Bigger businesses have been the first to embrace EMM. It's no surprise that the mobile device-management market is expected to grow from [2016's \\$1.69 billion USD to \\$5.32 billion USD in 2021](#), according to Markets and Markets.

Mobile device management is an essential tool for any business that uses smartphones and tablets. There's simply too much at stake to leave these devices unmanaged – otherwise, updates take a vast amount of time, devices may be unsecured if not updated and company data is at risk.

Although not the first smartphone by any



means, the iPhone – just ten years ago – kick-started a revolutionary move away from desktops to mobile devices.

Today, smartphones are recognised as being absolutely essential business tools. In the future, that one device may be the only computing device that many organisations need, though perhaps augmented by an external screen and keyboard when the person is at a desk.

It's unlikely that desktop computers will ever entirely die – but it's looking inevitable that, for

many, a single, portable device is all that's needed. We already have the devices, we already have the software to run on them. The only step needed for organisations to fully embrace a mobile strategy is to adopt an enterprise mobility management tool.

That step isn't so hard. Traditionally, EMM tools – aimed at the largest companies – have been very expensive (and some have pricing structures so complex that they are almost unfathomable), but new software, such as VXL's Fusion EMM, can cost far less, while offering at least the equivalent power. As smartphones move towards being commodity products, so EMM tools must inevitably follow suit. VXL's Fusion EMM handles every device (both static and mobile, including desktops, servers, routers and more) from within a single interface.

The future of business computing is mobile – and enterprise mobility management will make that future not just a reality, but a secure and safe reality.

About VXL Software

VXL Software is a global leader in the creation of software, including:

- the industry's most affordable, powerful, unified endpoint-management software, Fusion EMM.
- highly effective PC repurposing software, CloudDesktop, which extends the life of PCs by converting them into fully functional thin clients.
- a comprehensive digital signage solution, Illumineye DS Suite.

VXL's thin clients

VXL also manufactures the world's widest and most advanced line-up of desktop thin clients and zero clients, which offers something at every performance level and for almost every use.

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