

Why Consumerisation of IT is Fuelling the Adoption of Desktop Virtualisation



Client virtualisation can help IT managers bring a measure of control to an increasingly chaotic environment, while not stifling employee flexibility and innovation. By leveraging these emerging technology tools, IT managers can support user choice and better manage the essentials of consumerisation.

A decade ago, computers were used to 'get things done', IT made sure they operated properly, and the boundaries between work and life were distinct.

Since then, things have changed fundamentally – and rapidly.

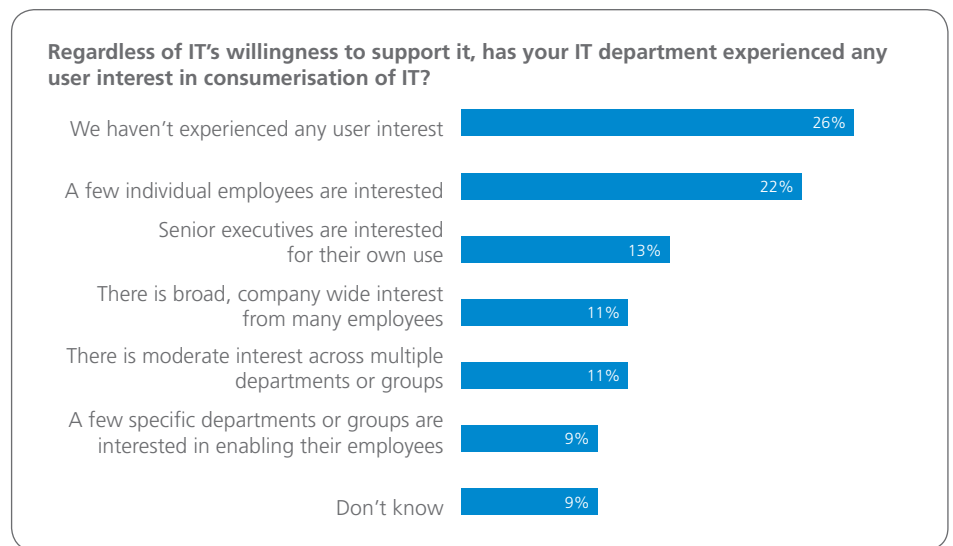
The era of 'one PC, one user' is gone forever. Today's employees expect to have immediate access to the information and applications necessary for them to perform their jobs, yet they typically take exception to having to use a specific device in order to obtain that information or having to request permission to access it. More and more, independently purchased devices such as tablets and smartphones are joining the ranks of corporate-issue PCs and laptops, within the corporate environment.

The Client Virtualisation Imperative, 2011, a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Dimension Data, indicates that two-thirds of organisations have experienced user interest in 'consumerisation of IT'.

Don't delay the inevitable

Today, businesses are realising not only the inevitability of integrating consumer-owned, handheld mobile devices into the workplace, but also their inherent potential for productivity. Employees are extremely inventive about how they put their consumer technologies to use in the workplace. Instead of blocking or restricting the use of mobile devices, forward-looking organisations are finding ways to allow the innovation inherent in the devices and the innovation spill-over of users to flow through and benefit the business.

Figure 1: Significant interest in the consumerisation of IT



The comments of one of the survey respondents, articulates this shift in behaviour:

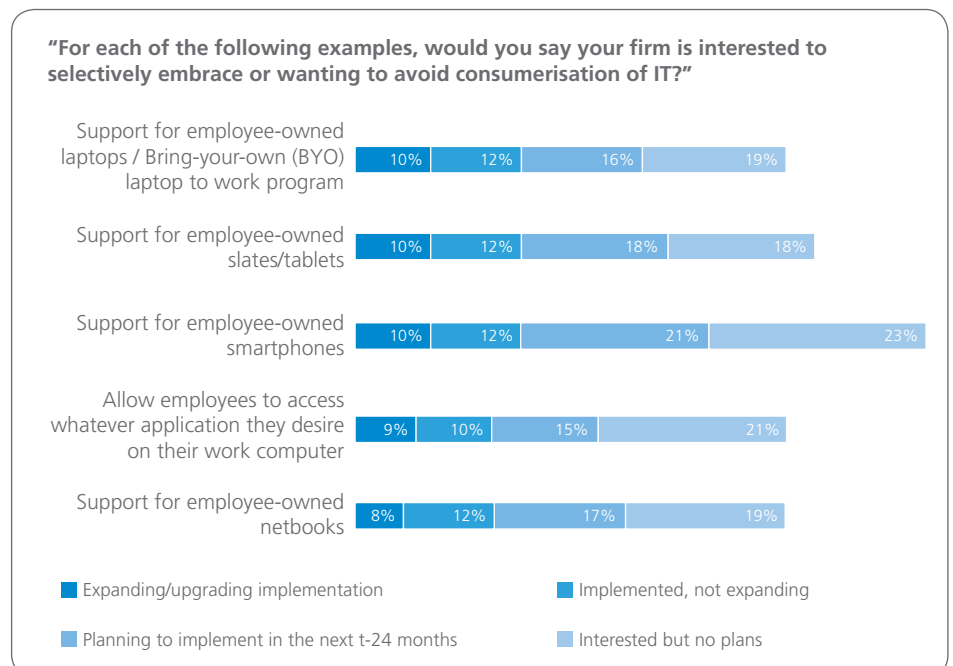
"Because of what's going on in the marketplace with the diversity of platforms and the demand on IT to support this continuum of devices, our vision is that we don't care what you use but these are the applications we'll provision you with and here's how you'll access them. We want to get to the device-agnostic point that we

don't care from what device or location you connect. I don't know if we'll get there in the next few years, but that's the primary reason we're exploring client virtualisation."

(CIO, public sector organisation)

The Forrester study indicates that organisations are increasingly considering 'bring your own device' (BYOD) strategies that encompass smartphones, slates, and even laptops, as a tactic to better deliver to end users' expectations.

Figure 2: Support for Employee-Owned Devices is Growing



However, what's also clear is that, while many organisations are experiencing interest in BYOD programmes, the relative adoption and implementation of these programmes is still in the early stages as IT and business navigate the most effective way in which to embrace consumer technologies within corporate boundaries.

For the desktop team, these trends and expectations usher in a host of new considerations and challenges. Given the relentless flow of employee-owned devices across the corporate threshold, is it possible to strike a balance between enablement and flexibility on the one hand, and the business' demands for control and security on the other?

The Forrester study suggests that desktop virtualisation is increasingly being recognised as a tool to assist in overcoming these challenges. Organisations across all industries and geographies are prioritising their investment in desktop virtualisation – 40% of organisations view investing in and/or implementing desktop and application virtualisation as a 'high priority', while 12% deem this an area of 'critical priority' over the next 12 to 24 months.

How does desktop virtualisation help?

With the traditional desktop, the applications, operating system and user data are all 'tied' to a specific piece of hardware. Virtualisation breaks the bonds between these elements into isolated layers, enabling IT administrators to change, update and deploy each component independently, leading to improved response time and greater agility. Regardless of users' devices or geographic locations, they may log onto the corporate network, and the virtual desktop infrastructure management tools will assemble their virtual desktop on demand, based on each user's specific profile. What's more, the desktop can be modified at any time, based on any changes to user's requirements. If appropriate, IT teams can also allow users to provision applications independently, on a self-service basis.

Desktop virtualisation focuses on what's being delivered, as opposed to the device to which it's delivered. Through centralisation of user settings and data, organisations can abstract the actual PC that's being used and make all relevant data and settings available on any authorised device. So your end users enjoy the same rich desktop experience, but with the added ability to access that computing environment from a multitude of devices and access points in the office, from an Internet kiosk, at home or on the road.

Not only can users log on where they want but, should they encounter any desktop-related problems, they can continue working on another machine with minimal interruption.

The appeal of desktop virtualisation to businesses seeking to facilitate the use of employee-owned mobile devices need not be spelled out. Greater flexibility and choice equals more empowered, satisfied users. Desktop virtualisation can also address seemingly 'soft' issues, (many of which are nevertheless very important to tech-savvy users) such as improving the 'look and feel' of the desktop, to more critical aspects, such as expediting the process of obtaining assistance from the service desk.

Striking a balance

Increasingly, businesses are realising that resisting the consumerisation wave is an exercise in futility. Now is the time to evaluate how best to grant your employees access to business technology that helps them do their jobs, while containing costs and ensuring the appropriate level of end-user support and security. Thanks to desktop virtualisation, IT teams finally have an actionable tool that enables them to strike this delicate balance.

About the The Client Virtualisation Imperative Report, 2011:

The Client Virtualisation Imperative, 2011, is a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Dimension Data. In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 546 organisations, across all industries in Australia, Belgium and Luxembourg, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States to evaluate the adoption of desktop and application virtualisation and the desktop transformation journey on which organisations are embarking. Survey participants included decision-makers in managerial roles and above for enterprise companies (1,000+ employees in developed economies and 500+ employees in developing economies). The study commenced in July 2011 and was completed in August 2011.

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