Looking through the glass on Windows 8

By Rudi Greyling   23 Jul 2013

With the clamour surrounding the Windows 8 launch settled down, the question on many business decision makers' lips is how this innovative new operating system can be harnessed for their organisation.

Historically, many companies have often waited a year or two before upgrading to a new version of Windows, however, this was before the mobile explosion hit us. Mobility has already changed the way in which businesses operate, but with the release of Windows 8 - and its focus on combing the mobile and desktop computing experience - this process of mobility redesigning the workplace will only accelerate.

We recently conducted a global survey of nearly 600 C-level executives and IT decision-makers in 19 countries to find out how the workforce is changing in the new era of mobility. More than half (54%) report the majority of their employees use smartphones for basic work tasks such as reading email, viewing online documents and managing calendar invitations. More than six in ten companies (61%) reported that the majority of their employees use personal computing devices in the workplace, with one third saying that employees now use tablets for simple work related tasks. Notably, companies are seeing this shift and turning it into an advantage, 20% of companies have changed four or more business processes to take advantage of the increased productivity and business opportunities offered by mobility.

High expectations

Tech savvy employees have high expectations regarding how they should be able to work, demanding swift and simple access to systems and data from anywhere, anytime and on any device. But how can companies ensure they are deploying Windows 8 for the right reasons? Answering just a few simple questions can shed light into the process and ensure the decisions are made for the right reasons.

1. How do I ensure Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is secure?
As BYOD continues to transform business, the biggest challenge many companies face with their customers and employees is how to securely support new devices entering the workplace. How, for example, can they take business applications and transfer these onto their employees' mobile devices, such as iPads or BlackBerrys? Aside from offering much better manageability and infrastructure, Windows 8 solves key security problems by bringing enterprise strength security measures and built-in anti-virus software. Other safety applications, provided by Windows 8, include Bitlocker, the new UEFI secure replacement for BIOS boot loaders, and the VPN alternative DirectAccess.

2. How do I manage my mobile workforce?
Until now, we at Avanade have seen that most companies use third party mobile device management solutions, but

Windows 8 is changing all of this. Windows 8 fully supports mobile device management. It allows companies to lock the device down, bring it under control and facilitate the deployment of enterprise-wide applications.

3. How do I build user-friendly enterprise apps?

Once you have received your new Windows 8 device, the first thing you will want to do is make the most of the applications. It's crucial, therefore, to use experienced User Experience (UX) designers and information architects who are able to work out the process flow with you, and create wireframes and mock-ups that deliver an integrated, connected application.

4. How do I simplify SharePoint integration?

Another big challenge for businesses today is connecting different mobile devices to SharePoint. To simplify this process, Windows 8 comes with all software and tools needed to integrate with SharePoint, ensuring efficient and easy access. You'll also receive the benefits of offline document editing through MS Office.

5. How do I regain control over employee devices?

Regaining control is ultimately about getting more of a handle on which devices your employees are using. The first step is implementing mobile device management. After that, if you can influence your employee's choice of platforms by offering great line of business (LOB) applications, this will in turn influence your employees' choice when buying a consumer device of their own.

6. How do I encourage mobile Customer Relationship Management (CRM) adoption?

Deploying CRM onto mobile devices via Windows 8 allows your sales team in the field to be more productive and efficient, improving their data accuracy. This means your sales team has the ability to be out and about with customers capturing data, and selling more products by harnessing greater insight from this data. And this is something we are seeing more and more. As businesses redesign work processes which align with mobility and integrate more complex functionality onto mobile devices, they are seeing a positive impact on sales, thanks to greater understanding and productivity.

7. How do I deliver a smoother Virtual Desktop Infrastructure experience?

If you have introduced VDI into your business then you already have the benefits of delivering applications and desktop operating systems through virtual infrastructure. Windows 8 offers multi-touch support, so you can deliver powerful, modern Windows UI applications through a VDI infrastructure.

8. How do I make my enterprise truly mobile?

Windows 8 facilitates a wide choice of devices, some with keyboards, some with flip screens and some with digitiser pens all running on the same Windows 8 platform giving the user the same experience. But that alone does not make an enterprise truly mobile. It is only by combining all the elements I have touched on above; security, manageability, CRM etc. that you can fully push your business to the very forefront of the mobility surge. You have to redesign the way in which your business runs.

Windows 8 has created new options with which companies can empower their employees to do their jobs in the way they want to and provide consumers the experience they want, when they want it and on any device. The potential benefits are clear; the onus is now on the companies to conduct the proper evaluation of their resources and change policy and protocol to allow for a more flexible way of working.

Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

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