

Foreword

The advent of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies in both the public and private sectors is being fuelled by the tidal wave of personal devices now owned by employees which are often more expensive and sophisticated than those provided by the employer. Devices purchased and paid for by organisations for use by employees are now often of older specification than expected and are lacking in features and applications desired in the fast-moving technology marketplace. Once considered a privilege, work devices such as mobile phones and laptops are often seen as a second choice compared with personally selected and upgraded devices chosen by consumers. The ability of employers to keep up with these rapid changes in specification and demand is also inflamed by the fact that device orders often have to be made in batches rather than on individual requests. This means that all too often, work device upgrades are slower than expected, leaving the employer one step behind employee expectations.

In this febrile climate of technology change, it is logical that employers look towards new ways of capitalising on the rapid purchasing the latest devices by staff and integrating this purchase into the working environment. If a member of staff prefers their personal HTC One M8 phone for personal calls and social media interactions compared with their company Apple iPhone 4, then why not optimise the preferred device to accept work emails and agree a billing process for this?

It is on this simple example that the case for BYOD implementations in the public sector, and particularly local government, should be made. With significant budget cuts and the need to reduce overheads without compromising services, the case for activating employee devices is overwhelming.

This report examines current BYOD schemes in operation across several major London Boroughs and calls for a bolder, more proactive approach from IT decision-makers to push through personal device schemes in in the workplace wherever possible. BYOD is already providing successful in many private businesses, and the UK public sector must follow this example.

Steven George-Hilley, director of technology, Parliament Street

Introduction

In Britain, local government organisations are being tested heavily due to a mixture of funding reductions and the expectation from taxpayers for services to continue at a high standard. With local government expected to deliver savings of £20billion by next year, the current 2.9% 2014-15¹ funding reductions are putting increased pressure on already over stretched town halls.

Local government organisations will therefore need to learn to operate in a more commercial frame of mind to maximise revenues and to ensure efficiency can be delivered through every service lines, including in the back office.

Investment in new technology to improve public services is the obvious choice to make these savings. But with numerous examples of well-meaning councils findings themselves splashed across the newspaper headlines for investment in technology, where can they start? Manchester Council was heavily criticised for spending £190,000 on nearly 500 iPads over the last three years² whilst Shropshire Council came under fire for spending £360,000 on iPads³. In an age of austerity, such headlines do not sit well with the taxpaying public, regardless of the overall savings such devices could bring to the annual Council budget in the long term.

¹ BBC News – Council Spending Cuts Revealed <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25429562>

² Manchester Evening News – Council spends £190,000 on iPads <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/manchester-council-spends-190000-nearly-7014156>

³ Mirror – Shropshire Council Spends £360,000 on iPads <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/hard-up-shropshire-council-spends-360000-2115230>

An Obvious Solution

With spending on new devices for the purposes of long term Council savings coming under increasing scrutiny from taxpayers, purchasing large batches of tablet computers is becoming near impossible. In this challenging environment, public sector IT decision-makers should look again at exploring a Bring Your Own Device Policy to shift the onus of purchasing onto the worker, and helping reduce the need for batch buying of expensive items.

There are of course several barriers to the adoption of BYOD schemes, including security concerns, the management and implementation of such initiatives and the employee awareness factor for consideration. These schemes cannot suddenly be announced to the workforce, the necessary protocols, procedures and training need to take place, all of which require a great deal of planning in advance of implementation.

The trend towards BYOD adoption is not one merely focussed around the public sector and employees, with Gartner predicting that by 2017 half of employers will require employees to supply their own devices in the workplace⁴. Our current research shows that public sector organisations would find it impossible to meet such a deadline for activating half the workforce on a BYOD scheme. In many cases, schemes are in such early stages of development with so little volume of devices that there would have to be a monumental surge in employees using their own mobiles and tablets in the workplace before this level of operational activity has been achieved.

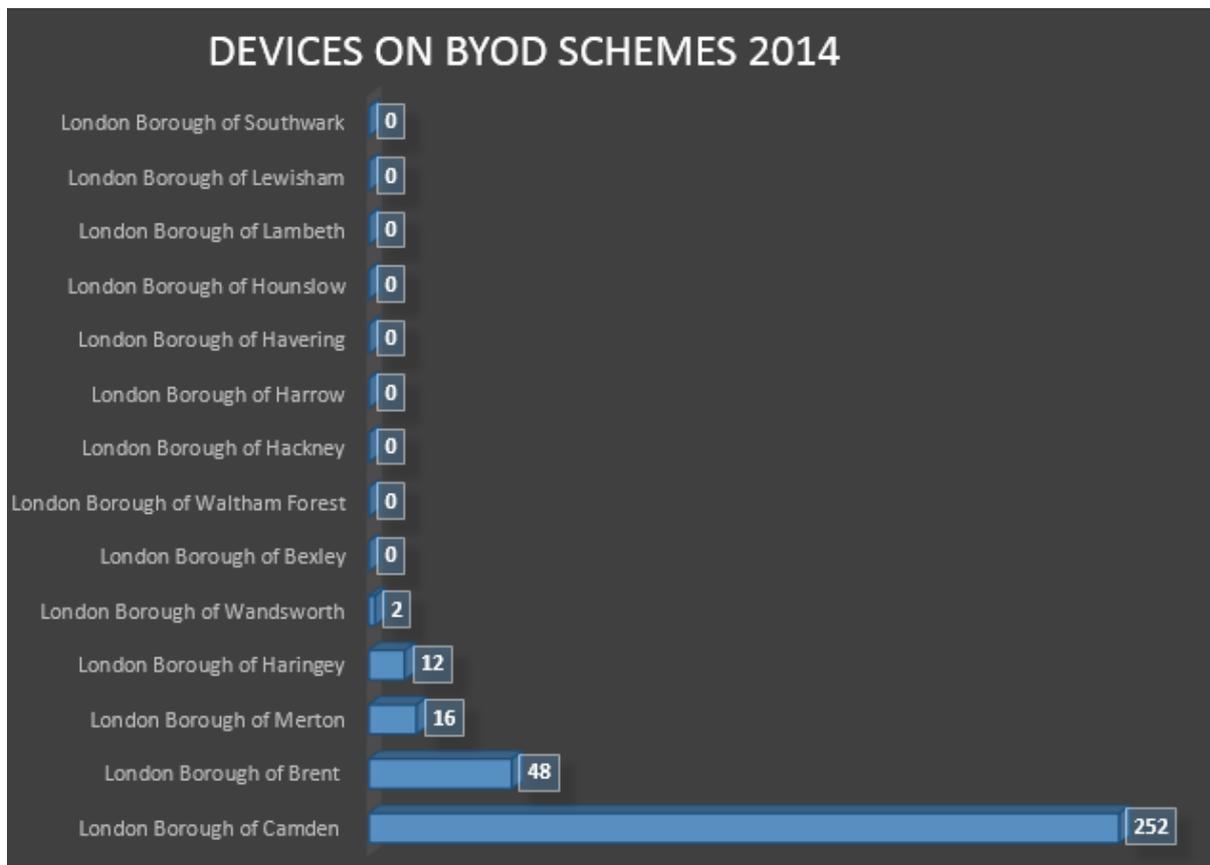
The current situation does however allow for a new generation of big thinking IT strategists to lead by example and introduce such schemes. The era of cautious technology implementations is rapidly coming to an end, as CIOs and IT managers are now turned to for strategies that will transform the workforce and deliver solid financial savings to the organisation.

⁴ Gartner Report – BYOD in 2017 <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/2466615>

Where are we now?

In order to fully examine the extent to which successful BYOD initiatives have been implemented in local government, Parliament Street conducted a survey of adoption amongst London boroughs.

The data below is reflective of those Councils which responded to our requests, made under the Freedom of Information Act. In some cases, where no policy was in place, this has been recorded as '0' because a response was provided. Those that did not respond have not been included in the table.



Of the 14 London borough councils which responded, only five had BYOD schemes. In terms of volume, Camden Council led the way with 252 personal devices activated on the network, the lowest was Wandsworth Council with just two devices listed. Even though Camden Council has achieved the highest volume of activation on the network, this figure represents only about 4 per cent of the workforce using the BYOD scheme. Camden devices were at 252 in 2014, 74 in 2012 and 171 in 2013. Apple iPhones were the most popular with 132 of the devices in use by Council employees.

Conclusions

Despite the overwhelming case for BYOD schemes in local government, London borough councils have made a pitiful effort to explore and implement these important initiatives. BYOD as a policy either does not exist or has so little engagement it renders the purpose of having it meaningless.

Local government organisations need to change their approach to BYOD initiatives and begin planning for the long term. The first step is to recognise that the current system on employer-purchased devices is not sustainable, is financially or culturally within the workplace. The second step is to develop a clear roll-out plan, incorporating security measures to keep data secure and protect the integrity of the organisation. The third and final step is to educate employees about the benefits of BYOD so that they can be more proactive and engaged with the scheme.

Recommendations

- Local government organisations in London and the rest of the UK should explore the viability and long term financial benefits of investing in BYOD initiatives
- Councils should factor in planned reduction in personal IT devices such as tablets and laptops and shift the onus onto employees to provide preferred devices where possible
- These programmes must meet the necessary security standards and organisations should collaborate and share best practice with each other
- BYOD must become a key ambition for all organisations tasked with making savings and if possible be used by at least 50% of the workforce in the next five years
- The British public sector is crying out for visionary IT leadership, we need to see bold initiatives that are designed to set trends in central and local government
- The next generation of IT talent should seize the moment and implement BYOD with confidence to set an example of other organisations

About Parliament Street

Parliament Street is one of the UK's leading think tanks. The organisation produces research, thought leadership and hosts debates on the big issues facing Britain and the rest of the world. www.parliamentstreet.org