Beyond BYOD: The Shift to People-Centric IT

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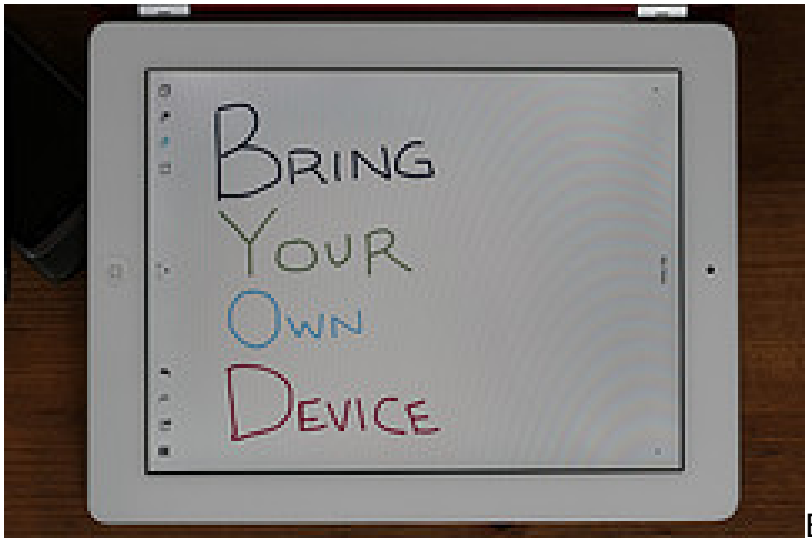

BYOD ("Bring Your Own Device") is probably the most visible net result of the consumerization of IT trend we are now seeing in Information Technology. But there have been some other significant technology shifts emerging from this consumerization trend that have not been making the same big headlines as BYOD has. Not only are these other trends remaking IT itself but they can also potentially act as a guide to figuring out which enterprise IT vendors have a better shot at emerging as leaders in their markets and disrupting incumbents. In this post I am going to explore a few of these emerging technology shifts caused by the consumerization of IT and their corresponding impact.

It is becoming clear that this "BYO" phenomena is dramatically impacting all elements of IT, not just devices. End users and departments for some time now have been BYO-ing Applications ("BYOA") in the form of deployments of Salesforce.com [1], Google [2] Apps, etc., as well as business-oriented social networking apps such as Yammer (recently acquired by Microsoft [3]) and Jive (a recent IPO). And these same users and departments are also even BYO-ing Servers ("BYOS") by independently spinning up servers outside the firewall on Amazon and Rackspace. They have also been BYO-ing files ("BYOF") and documents by using Box and Dropbox. The point is users and departments don't want to wait for IT to get around to giving them an app, a server or a file share. In other words, just like consumers buy something for themselves on Amazon and check to have it ship to them immediately, users inside an organizations now want IT-related things on-demand and will whip out their personal credit card and expense it.

This consumerization trend has also been a significant undercurrent for some of the hottest enterprise tech IPOs over the last few years. In the traditional staid systems and network management market, traditionally dominated by the "Big 4" of Systems Management [4] (HP, IBM [5], CA and BMC), SolarWinds has gone public and is growing like hotcakes. Why? One reason is that SolarWinds has historically

focused its products on the individual IT practitioner and is winning them over with products designed for them. Again many of the IT guys themselves are just whipping out the credit card and buying SolarWinds products vs. going through the normal lengthy IT procurement process that has historically marked IT purchases.

Take a look at Splunk as well. Yes Big Data is hot. But one of the reasons that Splunk is growing like hotcakes is because its solution is easy for individuals or departments to use to quickly mine their data vs. having those users waiting for corporate IT to get around to doing that for them. The point is that these vendors are focusing on the individual people who need their job done vs. traditional enterprise software sales that focused on selling high to a CIO or VP of IT.

Consumerization of IT is also expanding the use of IT within organizations. Historically IT has primarily been about automating the white collar worker's desk circa 1970 (think of the classic "inbox" and "outbox" on a white collar worker's desk becoming digitized via an email system, typewriters being replaced by PCs running Microsoft Office, etc.). But now IT services are further expanding to all users within an organization. Many users that historically may have not had computing devices, such as nurses and retail sales folks, are now being given access to devices and applications to drive new productivities. Analysts such as Peter Christy at the Internet Research Group refer to this as an inversion of enterprise IT from a business system-centric to a people-centric structure. Where the emphasis historically for IT was on core business systems, today's focus is on people and making them more productive and collaborative. Peter documents [6] in the table below some of the changes consumerization is causing:

	15 years ago	
Enterprise IT systems	Just core processes	
Application users	A few transaction experts	
Access device	Deskside PC	
Access location	Your desk	
Application usage modality	Specific data entry and access	Or
Devices used	One – your PC	
Security risk	Limited – access by specific individuals, from known locations for predictable purposes	V

The last example of the less heralded impact of the rise of consumerization of IT is that IT security is becoming much more about protecting and managing identity vs. the classic security focus of protecting the perimeter. If corporate IT no longer owns the endpoint because of BYOD and they no longer own the app and server because of BYOA and BYOS, then corporate IT better step up and own who (i.e. which digital identities) can access what in this new cloud-y and mobile-y environment.

Otherwise they are going to have some serious security and compliance issues on their hands.

At the same time the concept of identity is changing as well. Before identity was about how to best manage your users' IDs and passwords and grant them access to systems and applications. Now identity is also about needing to know a user's location (e.g. don't allow access if the user's location is outside where he normally accesses apps from) and their devices (e.g. only allow access for this user from these specific trusted devices that are associated with this user). And ironically the consumerization of IT trend that dramatically elevates the significance of identity will itself transform identity with users wanting to take their own personal accounts (i.e. Bring Your Own Identity aka BYOI) and utilizing those vs. corporate issued logins.

So in the end BYOD is just the tip of the iceberg of a greater trend of consumerization happening today. It will force IT organizations to focus first on the people within their organization and making them more productive and collaborative vs. the traditional IT organization focus on backend business systems. And enterprise IT startup companies who are best riding this people-centric wave in their respective markets will have a better shot at breaking out than vendors who are more backend and business system centric.

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