BYOD Recommendations

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce

Product choice and robust competition in technology are good for consumers. The "consumerization of IT" and "BYOD" programs have given many corporate counsel more choice in the tools they use. However, many of us haven't had the opportunity to study the available options and, as a result, stick to what we know best. This often means continuing to accept whatever IT historically has provided, especially because we are lucky enough to live in a time when those are mostly "good enough."

But I have spent way too much time testing the various options. In this column, I'm going to briefly give you my recommendations for the devices and/or programs you get to use.

Mobile Hardware and OS — In the United States, there are basically four mobile hardware contenders worth mentioning: Samsung, Microsoft, Apple, and Google. Here's my take on each:

Despite Samsung's Note 7 debacle, the company makes some excellent smartphones and tablets. However, Samsung tries too hard to distinguish its lineup from other Android manufacturers, and has customized its interface in a way that loses some of Android's best features. Samsung devices also suffer from more build inconsistencies than the others do, so I would not recommend them for most people.

Regretfully, Microsoft smartphones never managed to gain much traction. Their Surface tablets,

however, are very popular among hardcore Windows users, and Microsoft has been doing a great job lately at iteration. I would keep an eye on them.

IPhones and iPads have been my own primary mobile devices since 2009. If you're not a "geek," iPhones/iPads are probably your best choice. They are designed to be simple enough for people of all ages, and are relatively difficult to screw up. They also have the best overall build quality and repair record.

If you *are* a geek, I recommend either the new Google Pixel or the iPhone. Although Google is a relatively new entrant into the hardware manufacturing business, the new Pixel is a very impressive smartphone — and the purest expression of the Android. Preference for the iPhone or the Pixel will most likely hinge on issues such as how strongly you prefer better privacy and security (iPhone), more customization (Pixel), better apps (iPhone), and better AI (Pixel). In general, I would recommend the iPhone for all but the most savvy geeks.

Desktops, laptops, and operating systems — I've been using a PC at work and Macs off and on at home for more than 30 years.

Windows 10 is the first version of Windows since 95 that I've really liked. However, I still prefer MacOS. Independent studies have shown that Macs require significantly less support, and I would love to tell anyone who is interested about the many varieties of superior software available on the device — including MS Office.

But if you do want to go with a Windows PC, I highly recommend the newest Surface Book. It's a little heavy, but the build quality is excellent. Microsoft's attempt to create a hybrid tablet/laptop with a detachable tablet screen is interesting and largely successful.

Office suites — I've been using MS Office for a long time and this is one instance where familiarity does not breed contempt. However, I have also used and like Apple's iWorks and the Google Docs apps quite a bit. Each of the three have a unique set of strengths and weaknesses.

Mail apps — Gmail and Outlook are running neck and neck. Outlook offers better privacy, a more professional appearance, and better integration with MS Office. Gmail, however, offers better search, spam filters, and rules. Apple Mail comes in a pretty distant second.

Presentation apps — I think Keynote still beats PowerPoint by a substantial margin. It is more feature rich and is made to help both expert and novice presenters create far more effective presentations.

Spreadsheet apps — Numbers is more stylish and works best for light users, Google is best for collaboration, and Excel is best for power users.

Unfortunately I have once again run out of space, but if anyone is interested in more detail about any of these or other such choices, please let me know.

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