Risky business: is your IT securing #GenMobile?

By Matthew Barker   1 Jul 2015

A guy named Ben once said, "When you're finished changing, you're finished." It's a great maxim for living life, but it's just as relevant to how you approach corporate data security and how workers' expectations have shifted in the era of anywhere, anytime internet connections.

Back in the bad old days, employees had to change the way they worked to fit the tech supplied to them by their corporate IT department. But no more.

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As a result, business tech now moves to the beat of a new drum: the always-on generation, #GenMobile. Today's younger employees, the mobile-natives, are changing the way companies operate by behaving in ways that have far-reaching implications for corporate network security. But this shift is much more than just a case of 'we're always connected'. It's about the availability of new (and often free) web-based tools and apps that rival the functionality and power of anything your company can provide. It's a complete behavioural and attitudinal change of direction.

You might be a #GenMobile'r yourself - you might have adapted, consciously or not, to dipping in and out of work comms at pretty much any time of the day and paying less and less attention to the old 9-to-5 edict. But to younger generations, this isn't something new - it's business as usual. They've never known any other way. And crucially, that means they won't change (hint: you might have to).

This is where Aruba Network's report, "Securing #GenMobile: Is your business running the risk?" helps us paint a picture of #GenMobile - who they are, how they behave and **how their three most striking working habits could affect your business**.

Super-productive, super-effective

Let's start with the positives: the survey found that #GenMobile are productive. Seriously productive. They get stuff done and they do it well, using all the tools they can get their hands on. Their innate familiarity with tech means they are self-empowered to power through their to-do lists. Consumer tech is driving this change: 51% say that mobile technologies enable them to be more productive and engaged at work.

Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration

A huge part of this uptick in productivity is a new culture of sharing and collaboration. #GenMobile is really good at this. There's a chance your company already has some kind of collaboration tool in place or in development, so you don't need to be reminded how useful sharing and working together can be.

Passwords? Don't even...

Yet this is where the story takes a darker turn. This self-empowered, 'get things done' attitude means security concerns take a backseat. A fact illustrated by rising levels of security agnosticism: security ranked a lowly fifth in workplace tech priorities for the #GenMobile workforce.

Furthermore, more than half (56%) of employees will disobey their boss to get something done and over three-quarters are happy to perform self-service IT. #GenMobile thinks nothing of going rogue when it comes to tech.

Risky business

Creativity, collaboration and sharing all bring valuable advantages, but there's clear evidence it breeds risk. Six out of ten of those asked are happy to let others regularly (at least once a month) use their work smartphones while a fifth don't have passwords on their mobile devices at all. Despite all of this, there's no question firms need to nurture creativity and be sure not to stifle #GenMobile's openness, innovation and collaboration, while at the same time minimise the risk of data and information loss.

Managing #GenMobile

Simply put, you can't. However, given #GenMobile's benefits, accepting some small degree of risk is good - but only if you and your organisation can understand and plan for the security risks these behaviours bring with them.

"When you're finished changing, you're finished." It was Benjamin Franklin who said that. He was a man who, like #GenMobile, liked to keep on moving towards the next challenge. Old Ben never stopped changing. If you're not sure if you've adapted to #GenMobile's expectations, or if you think you might be unaware of the risks, then this quick and easy risk assessment tool will uncover exactly where you need to focus your efforts.

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