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Employers Are Handicapping Corporate Productivity with Outdated Workplace Technology

One size fits all IT approach at odds with the way digital workplace is evolving

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K2 Advisory's research study, "Digital Workplace Choices: Preparing for the 2020 Workplace," reveals that UK employers are handicapping corporate productivity by failing to measure employee satisfaction of technology devices or whether they are even fit for business purpose. Most 'millennials' or 'echo boomers' in their 20s are more IT savvy than their Baby Boomer bosses, creating a generational divide of frustration around corporate devices issued to employees. Senior company management, boards of directors, as well as CIOs, are distancing themselves from workplace technology and tools. The majority of employers view 'strategic IT' as the large servers and enterprise IT infrastructure residing in their offices, rather than the small technology devices in employees' hands. In doing so, they are not only hindering employee productivity, but also missing opportunities to make their own organisations more competitive.

Of the 65% of organisations that carry out employee satisfaction surveys, only about half bother to measure employee satisfaction with their technology devices, despite the dependence on devices and their importance in improving productivity. The report also highlights how home-working and a culture of presenteeism stemming from 'always connected' personal IT devices are redefining traditional departmental functions and responsibilities. In a third of organisations, HR rather than IT is now acting as the key decision maker on policies and training. With the 'Crackberry' culture impacting the health of workers, employees are ignoring rules about using their own phones, netbooks and laptops, and successful marketing campaigns challenging the 'locked down' approach to blocking social media sites at work, IT needs to increase collaboration with HR and Marketing in response to the changing workplace environment.

The author of the research, Dr Katy Ring, Director, K2 Advisory, commented, "It's almost become accepted that corporate laptops and mobile phones are standard issue clunky, outdated pieces of equipment. New styles of working mean new rules. IT should be consulting HR about specific job profiles and take a much more cross-functional and collaborative approach. The one size fits all approach to IT and personal IT devices is at odds with the way the digital workplace is evolving. In many cases, employees know more than their bosses about what they need. The focus needs to be on end user productivity rather than a 'use what you are given' approach. As a result, we will see the emergence of more 'digital allowances' with employers giving staff a set amount of money to purchase a digital device, in the same way a company car allowance operates. Whilst budgetary constraints will always be a key consideration, there is also a significant opportunity for CIOs to drive fundamental change across the organisation through both strategy and leadership."

The lack of knowledge in the way workplaces are adopting and exploiting technologies also extends to social media interaction. K2 Advisory's research shows that 82% of marketers intend to increase their use of social media within marketing campaigns. However, around half of respondents feel the IT department does not provide the necessary technology to enable them to fully exploit social media for marketing purposes. In fact, just under half of UK organisations have no official policy regarding the use of social media sites.

Regardless of the type of workforce an organisation has, a key technology investment will be the migration to desktop virtualisation. Many businesses are already withdrawing from large iconic office buildings because of cost and changing working practices. The workplace of tomorrow will be more decentralised than it is today

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in terms of both physical locations and the notions of enterprise control and management structures. It will be more focused on supporting and respecting the individual holistically, moving away from the Industrial Age view of personal life and work life forming distinct and different roles. As the length of working life extends, organisations will have to support different generations of users from the 'echo boomers' to the 'baby boomers' in their 60s and possibly beyond.

*** K2 Advisory's research findings are based on 228 responses from HR, Marketing and Customer Engagement professionals across multiple private and public sectors in the UK conducted in May and June 2010.**

About K2 Advisory - www.k2advisory.com

K2 Advisory provides research and advice to C-level executives that have responsibility for, or influence over, budgetary decisions for significant technology investments.

Its analysts use a unique Horizon Scanning methodology, and draw on 30 years of experience advising the CIO community, to help organisations develop strategies for possible future market scenarios.

Its approach to analysis is underpinned by its links into the professional networks run by parent company, Sift Media. These form a core part of K2's eco-system of professionals and senior executives, which includes CFOs, HR Directors, Marketing Directors, Procurement Officers and of course, CIOs.

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