Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Work/Life Balance

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INTRODUCTION

Advancements in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized existing stationary office computers and replaced them employee-owned high-performance, low-cost smart devices. This new Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) workplace arrangement permits employees to use their device at work, providing them with the freedom to work productively while remaining in touch with friends and family. Given the flexibility of BYOD, employees can utilize their Internet connectivity and software applications for a variety of activities.

On the negative side, BYOD can lead to privacy and security threats to proprietary and confidential information. Companies are aware of these issues and generally take precaution to prevent risk and liabilities while maintaining a sense of autonomy and productivity in the workplace. To cultivate organizational and individual psycho-socio-technical balance, the purpose of this article is to understand positive and negative consequences of BYOD and propose a research framework for productive BYOD behaviors.

BACKGROUND

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) occurs when employees use their own smart devices (e.g., laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.) to perform work and personal tasks, supported by organizational information and communication technologies (ICTs) policies. BYOD can lead to positive and negative effects in the workplace. Although employees may be aware of the legal and ethical consequences when using corporate-owned devices for non-work-related activities, they generally feel that BYOD provides a perceived sense of personal freedom leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

This perception can benefit the workplace in several ways. First, productivity gains can be achieved anywhere and anytime. Smart devices are constantly connected to organizational network infrastructure, bringing a new dimension to intra and inter-organizational communications, enhancing corporate data sharing and social networking. Second, these smart devices provide linkages to a massive source of information—the Internet. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) empowers employees to obtain new knowledge and skills related to their current tasks and responsibilities. Third, organizations can reduce the costs of purchasing and servicing workplace computers and infrastructures. Lastly, BYOD can be psychologically liberating for employees, allowing them to engage in playful or leisure activities while at work.

Organizations must be willing to invest in wireless network infrastructures and information systems security. Investing in wireless networks is based on the assumption that employees may bring more than one device to work. With countless varieties of current and innovative smart devices, the existing wireless infrastructure may not be adequate to keep up with unanticipated network traffic demands. An effective BYOD policy must address wireless security concerns. Without the policy, negative or unintended behaviors can lead to costly, unforeseen consequences. Table 1 summarizes the benefits and drawbacks of BYOD.

To avoid possible negative consequences, organizations seek different preventive and deterrent strategies. First of all, companies can limit certain assessable information and sanction certain mobile applications to satisfy organizational security requirements. Secondly, companies can educate or train employees on appropriate usage and on how to secure personal data using various forms of data protection tactics. Thirdly, companies must establish an effective BYOD usage policy and clearly communicate the guiding principle to employees. An effective policy may include

Table 1. Benefits and potential risks of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

Benefits	Drawbacks
● Formal and informal learning ● Information sharing ● Job autonomy, creativity, motivation and satisfaction ● Real-time collaboration and communication ● Social networking, bonding and relationship building ● Stress reduction ● Work/life balance	● Extended IT policies and protocols ● Legal liability ● Loss of trade secrets ● Loss of confidential information and reputation ● Cost of maintaining additional infrastructures and services ● Productivity loss ● Wasted network bandwidth; degraded or disruptive network service ● Workplace deviant and illegal behaviors

- Security protocols for information sharing and archival

- Levels of corporate technical support for smart devices

- Lists of approved corporate carriers and safety-related applications

- Audits of data repository and smart devices

- Procedures for remote access procedure for lost or stolen devices

- Procedures for the installation of network monitoring and filtering software

These strategies can be effective, but they can hinder job autonomy, job satisfaction and work/life balance. In order to provide a contextual understanding of this balance, the existing empirical studies provide directions to the future research of BYOD.

TYPES OF BYOD BEHAVIORS

In general, BYOD behavior can be classified as *utilitarian*, *hedonic*, or *pathological* depending on the consequences of user behavior. Each classification has a direct influence on social, technological, and psychological situations of individuals and organizations. Since the empirical studies of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are evolving and interdisciplinary in nature, the determinants and consequences of each classification require an extensive research.

Utilitarian BYOD behavior provides a productive view of BYOD usage. Research on information technology adoption, information systems success factors, and technology-task fit all contribute to increased productive workplace behavior. Studies in

this area include creating positive employees' attitude, establishing organizational/social usage norms, and lowering the psychological barriers to BYOD adoption. Ideally, BYOD usage increases productivity and performance at work because employees are familiar with their own device and are always "connected" through corporate information systems, regardless of time zone and geographical location. Research finds that employee productivity increases with the use of work-related Internet activities.

Personal BYOD behavior involves hedonic, leisure or recreational usages. Research defines these types of activities as *workplace leisure behavior* (Lebbon & Hurley, 2012). Engaging in workplace leisure behaviors lead to increased motivation and productivity. Typically, workplace leisure activities should not exceed 10-15% of the total working hours.

Some personal Internet usage can be considered normal workplace activities (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2012). However, excessive usage can lead to *cyberloafing* (Lim, 2002) and violates corporate Internet Usage Policy (IUP). Applying Ivarsson and Larsson's (2012, p. 74-76), employees should be allowed to engage in non-work-related BYOD activities in the situations that warrant:

- Excessive workload that can affect one's health
- Break time or downtime
- Sufficient productivity
- Creativity
- Multitasking
- Concerns for others' health and safety
- Impact on internal workload and productivity
- Impact on external constituents, e.g., customers, clients, suppliers, etc.

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