

How Consumer IT Trends Are Affecting Your Operations

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It's 2014, and that means there are a handful of ways you could be perusing this and any other sentences on your reading queue, daily to-do list, etc. While it's certainly possible you printed it out, it's far more likely that you're viewing it on your desktop or laptop or, increasingly from smaller mobile devices like tablets or even your smartphone, perhaps with your window for your favorite game app temporarily minimized.

It's a multi-tasking world and the line between work and personal activities is becoming fuzzier and fuzzier. Technology is at least partly to blame. More and more of our everyday activities have incorporated interactive displays, live feeds and Internet accessibility, and, in addition to changing the way we relate to each other and navigate the consumer market, it's having a noticeable effect toward enterprise operations. In this post, we'll take a look at how the "consumerization" of IT is having a significant affect both in how enterprise manufacturing technology is designed, and how organizations are restructuring their IT policies - particularly with respect to device and data access, as well as user experiences.

The Rise of "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) Corporate IT Policies

Over the past four or five years, consumer technology has evolved considerably and become increasingly pervasive in our daily routines, particularly in allowing us access to information on the go. This pervasive consumer technology has formed habits and expectations on the part of users that have extended into their professional lives, namely the use of personal mobile consumer devices in a professional setting. And this is why one of the larger trends rolling upward from the consumer market is the advancement and acceptance of IT strategies that embrace the use of these personal mobile devices. Known as a "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) policy and varying widely in acceptance and reach, workers are allowed to use their personal devices and erase (or at least blur) that line between work and play.

According to a study by [IDG Enterprise](#), [1] which surveyed over 1,100 respondents, 12 percent of which were in the manufacturing sector, corporate IT support for personal mobile devices is expected to increase significantly in the next 12 to 18 months, from 43 percent to 55 percent for tablets, and 52 percent to 55 percent for smartphones. And while this may be welcome news for tech-savvy workers, it's a trend that has complicated things for CIOs and CTOs.

BYOD initiatives have forced more detailed policies on how corporate data can be shared, investments in emerging mobile device management (MDM) solutions, and the purchasing of secure file sharing services. Enterprises have had to weigh factors

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such as device ownership, tiered data credentials, remote data wiping, on-site/off-site access, and others into a comprehensive strategy that allows for more worker flexibility while preventing disastrous data breaches. To meet this need, software vendors are beginning to develop hybrid enterprise-standard and consumer-standard hardware that supports the type of detailed data accessibility architectures that enterprises require in keeping data secure.

Though this data security is a real concern, large enterprises with BYOD policies are already reporting that they see increased levels of user satisfaction, productivity and collaboration from these initiatives.

The “Gamification” of IT

Consumer tastes and expectations are having a significant effect in the design of user experiences and their stated purpose. Increasingly, software vendors are creating user interfaces that mirror the experience of realistic video games, using 3D visual displays, avatars and competitive/scoring elements.

Referred to as “gamification,” these software applications are aimed at encouraging action and participation across different team collaborators. Gamification of manufacturing applications holds the promise to increase employee engagement, motivation, and productivity, as well as attract younger people to the field of manufacturing by appealing to their interests in video games and competition.

This trend has already manifested itself in training purposes, as Schneider Electric (Invensys) has used 3D gaming technology in its plant simulation offerings to enable customers to teach new hires how to safely operate oil and petrochemical refineries for the past few years. Siemens has released Plantville, a “gamified” program aimed at teaching manufacturing processes and technologies to young people and new hires. Others speculate that gamification will be instrumental in shifting the public perception of manufacturing in the U.S. to one of exciting, rewarding work with expanding opportunities.

Strategies and Best Practices for Optimizing Manufacturing Operations

While the full potential of BYOD and gamified solutions is still down the road, it's clear that these trends of consumerized IT applications will continue across both manufacturing and the broader enterprise IT landscape at large. Software manufacturers and end-users alike will only continue to devise newer and more involved ways of incorporating the most practical and popular functionalities of what is happening in today's consumer market.

For more information on how to leverage the latest manufacturing technology trends to the fullest and, click for a free download of [LNS Research Manufacturing Operations Management Best Practices Guide](#) [2].

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