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// COMMENT / HAZEM ALLAHHA

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Hazem Allahha Prepare for BYOD



“ In the GCC, BYOD is increasingly popular

Hazem Allahha,
director of
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International



The Bring-Your-Own-Device revolution has arrived. It's not being televised, instead it's being forwarded on email, live-tweeted, and shared through the cloud. And the trend is growing faster than anyone expected.

Bring-Your-Own-Device policies enable employees to work from the convenience of their own mobile devices, enhancing productivity and employee satisfaction. In the GCC, BYOD is increasingly popular. Sixty two per cent of the region's IT professionals say their companies allow them to connect their personal mobile devices to company networks, according to a 2012 survey by GBM.

BYOD started from the ground up, with many employees bringing their own devices to work starting in 2011. CIOs were skeptical and predicted that by 2013, less than 20% of company devices would be owned by employees, according to Gartner's 2011 global survey of CIOs.

Now, only two years later, opinions have swung in the opposite direction. In Gartner's 2013 survey, CIOs predict that by 2016, 38% of companies will stop providing devices to workers, and

by 2017 half of all companies will require employees to bring their own devices.

Often we think of BYOD being popular at large enterprises with thousands of employees who access the company's networks from their laptops, tablets, and smartphones. But BYOD is especially helpful in enabling small- and medium-sized enterprises to operate like larger enterprises.

Smaller businesses can cut IT costs for hardware, and move IT systems to the cloud for around-the-clock access on mobile devices.

This past year has seen growth in companies using apps to enable employees to access HR services from their mobile devices, delivering benefits for companies of all sizes. In order to bring the greatest benefit to their employees, companies need to integrate their communications networks, which will enhance collaboration, workflow, and decision-making.

Despite these benefits, at the top of every IT manager's to-do list must be network security.

Employee-owned devices are slated to be compromised by malware at more than twice the rate of corporate-owned devices through 2014, according to Gartner's 2013 survey.

Data leaks of sensitive information can also have disastrous results, from social media updates on not-yet-completed contracts, to proprietary data being disclosed on mobile apps.

We are partnering with IBM to help the Middle East's companies develop integrated strategies for mobile devices and use of the cloud and social media, and securely encrypt their networks with VPNs.

As more employees bring their devices to work, and as cyber attacks in the Middle East region increase at unprecedented rates, companies that do not take action to secure devices within the next 12 months face dire consequences, for their bottom line, their corporate intellectual property, and for their overall employee productivity. ●