

Smartphones: Personal or Corporate?

By Jose Ferreira, Forsythe

The advent of smartphone systems such as iPhone, Android and Blackberry Storm, which blend corporate and personal functions along with touch screen ease-of-use, has caused issues for enterprises now asked to support these devices. This has strained IT and security departments that were not prepared to handle them.

Beyond the technical issues around managing and securing these devices lay a fundamental question about enterprise mobility strategy: Are the smartphones that your employees buy – with which they want to access their potentially sensitive corporate data – to be considered corporate phones, or personal phones?

If they are considered personal phones, should software agents be installed or built-in functions be activated to:

- Allow encryption
- Be able to remotely wipe a lost smartphone
- Check for malicious software on websites and in downloads
- Determine if unauthorized data is being accessed, stored and leaked
- Determine who has liability if sensitive data is lost by the owner of the phone

If they are considered corporate phones, should standard security policy restrictions apply, such as restricting access to gambling and shopping sites, or restricting music and video downloads? Will employees be compensated for the purchase of the

phones? How will your exceptions be handled? Will executives abide by the same restrictions – the answer is typically no, and handling these exceptions will be a key strategy component.

This is just a small sampling of the Corporate Mobility Policy decisions to be made around smartphones. Categorizing smartphones as personal phones has many advantages, if you can secure them and train employees to understand how to handle them securely like corporate laptops. Categorizing smartphones as corporate phones will make some decisions easier, but the exception list will get long and your IT and security departments will get many requests and complaints on using smartphones for personal purposes. In the end, isn't that why they bought these phones in the first place?

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