


iPads in the Workplace



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Pros, Cons
& Considerations
by Jim Karpen

Mike Golz knows a bit about iPads in the workplace, given that he's a Chief Information Officer (CIO) at a company that has distributed over 25,000 to employees.

Golz says the CIOs he talks to are either already distributing iPads to employees or are planning to do so. "I have yet to meet a CIO who says this isn't important to him," he says. And he has some solid advice for how to do it right. If you're thinking of introducing iPads into your business or organization, we offer here five considerations to keep in mind. We'll also take a look at the pros and cons of taking this step.

#1: Identify an Obvious Need

Golz is CIO of the Americas for SAP AG, a software corporation with over 65,000 employees. What's a major challenge they face for which the iPad is a good solution?

SAP provides software services to organizations worldwide with its large sales staff. That means that at any one time, they could be closing on a large number of contracts to provide these services. It's imperative that SAP closely track their sales so they can be sure to have the necessary personnel.

That's where the iPad comes in. As their salespeople travel and meet with prospective clients, they record the details of each meeting, including the likelihood that the client will contract with SAP for services. SAP is able to analyze that data in real time and make forecasts on that basis. Golz said it's much better than in the past, when salespeople had to wait until they were back at their computers to update this critical information.

Another example of an obvious solution comes from David Harouche, founder and president of Multimedia Plus, which has developed an iPad app for retailers called QuizScore. The company's clients include Coach, J. Crew, Burberry, Ralph Lauren, Sephora, and many other well-known brands.



Software corporation SAP AG is able to make personnel forecasts based on real-time data from salespeople using iPads.

Harouche says a major challenge of retailers is making sure their employees are thoroughly familiar with their products. In the past, that involved creating a host of printed materials. But now the industry's knowledge packets are migrating to the iPad. Product knowledge materials include images, styles, and information about product features and collections available in the store. He says one client saved over \$300,000 in printing costs alone. That's a no-brainer.

"iPads have allowed businesses, especially retailers, the ability to adapt to technology in a cost-efficient manner," says Harouche. "Most consumers expect associates to know more about products than they do, so not having a well-trained staff can be potentially detrimental for sales. iPads are cost effective and they empower associates, with the right tools, to be highly effective."

Harouche says that, according to research, by 2015 more than 2.7 million tablets per year will be purchased by the retail and hospitality industry.

How do you identify the obvious need? Golz says if you're thinking of introducing the iPad into your company, consider those who travel a lot as part of their work. He says to follow them. See what they're doing, and consider how they might do it on an iPad. Then begin with a pilot project to see if the iPad provides extra value, and grow from there.

#2: Have a Mobile Device Management (MDM) Plan

So let's say you've identified an obvious need and are ready to begin the process of implementation. What's the first step? Golz says it's essential to have an MDM plan. In other words, don't even think of handing out iPads until you've thoroughly prepared for their use in the workplace, especially if you're planning to give out a large number of them.

A top consideration is security. You can't afford to put your company's information at risk. SAP has a range of security policies in place, including mandating password protection and mechanisms such as single-signon that make it more expedient to use a password. They also use digital certificates on the iPad to authenticate the user and help maintain data integrity.

And should a device fall into the wrong hands, as happened to Golz himself when he lost his iPad on an airplane, you'll need to be sure that the iPad can be wiped remotely.

Golz notes that you also need to plan how company-related resources will be put on the iPads. If you have your own proprietary enterprise apps, you'll need your own app store. If you'll be distributing demo material for the iPads, you'll need to figure out the mechanism for that.



Keeping a company's sensitive information secure is always a priority when providing employees with iPads.

Of course, another important facet of device management is making sure your employees use their iPads appropriately. You don't want them playing games or spending a lot of time on social media sites. Golz says that at SAP, personal responsibility is an important part of the mix, and employees are given relevant security policies and guidelines. They have to sign a consent form in which they agree to specific dos and don'ts related to security and personal use of the iPad.

#3: Pay Attention to Employee Demographics and Function

If you invest in iPads, you want the result to be greater productivity. And to achieve that, you'll need to factor in who will be using the devices.

According to Jack Smith, who is with the large recruiting firm Sanford Rose Associates and who works with many major companies, if your company relies on attracting top young technical talent, you don't really have a choice—they expect to be using the latest tools. In fact, he says, these devices have essentially become an extension of the workers themselves.

Golz agrees. "This is a device that people have come to expect," he says. "It's a factor that matters to people."

He gives an example of a CIO of a large company that offers a consulting business. The employees have a very short average tenure of two to three years, due to the nature of the industry. This CIO realized that his company could save a lot of money if he could extend that tenure by even just a couple months. So in order to make employment there more attractive, he realized he had to let his employees use mobile devices and have the freedom of working from home. Golz says that mobile devices can be an incentive, and that young talent expects to have the freedom to work from wherever they want.

On the other hand, mobile devices aren't right for other people. Smith says if a company has a normal workforce that's not geared to technology, then an iPad may not be the best solution. He cites the example of two large companies he's worked with who have chosen to give their employees BlackBerry devices rather than smartphones or iPads. Those companies realized an iPad could be a novelty—and a distraction—and that what the employees needed most was simply a communication device. Hence, the BlackBerrys.



According to recruiting firm Sanford Rose Associates, some companies offer iPads as an additional perk to attract young technical talent.

#4: Protect Your Investment

Chuck Sweeney, a vice president at Securranty, which offers mobile hardware management solutions, says iPads are attractive to employers because they can increase productivity, give competitive advantages, lower operating costs, and help drive growth.

But there are risks. There's the security risk to corporate data, which was touched on above, and the financial risk of investing in mobile hardware. An MDM plan (see Rule #2) addresses the security risk and entails important policies, such as a secure configuration for each device, password administration, data encryption, and remote data wipe.

There's also the risk of damaged, lost, or stolen devices. And for that, Sweeney suggests a mobile hardware management (MHM) plan, which picks up where MDM solutions leave off.

"An MHM solution protects the employer's budget by providing a controllable and predictable cost to cover the repair and replacement of any malfunctioning, damaged, lost, or stolen mobile device," he says.

Some MHM providers will also perform a Department of Defense-compliant secure data wipe on all devices returned for repair, which adds a critical layer of security to corporate data. He says the best MHM solution not only controls costs and improves data security, but also provides the support needed to track and report on all mobile assets.

#5: Consider Company Size

The suggestions above seem crucial, but obviously part of making the decision to provide employees with iPads depends on the size of your company. If your company is small, it may not be appropriate because of the investment entailed in implementing them. SAP's Golz says an easy way to start is by implementing a BYOD (bring your own device) policy. Some employees may already have their own iPad. You can look around to see if there are any apps that might help them increase productivity or help save time and money.



Small companies may simply let employees bring their own iPads to use for work purposes.

For example, Denise Bennerson, who is president of Homeland Collections Portrait Gallery and who has owned several small businesses, finds the iPad useful for employees to hold meetings via Skype (and record them so they don't forget what a customer said) or use note-taking apps such as **Notability** (\$2.99). She also finds iPads useful for taking pictures (of items that need to be repaired, for example) and incorporating the photos into her notes. And, of course, she finds it helpful for setting dates and alerts and making notes in the calendar.

These are simple applications that can initially be implemented via BYOD. Then, if it seems warranted, your company could try a pilot project and distribute some iPads.

Pros & Cons of Giving iPads to Employees



Pro: Greater Productivity

Golz says having mobile devices has become a priority for most companies, because of the immediate productivity gains. If nothing else, people come to depend on these devices "to fill in the gaps of the day," he says. Often you find yourself waiting, and having a mobile device in hand makes it convenient to check on things while you wait.



He also cites the wide range of business scenarios in which an iPad can enhance productivity, from retail employees having product information at the point of sale to factory workers and maintenance personnel having immediate access to equipment information and maintenance records, as well as the ability to maintain those records on the fly.

Jack Smith of Sanford Ross says that the increased mobility means you don't need to be at your desk, giving you the freedom to access work files anywhere at any time.

Young engineers, he says, are in the habit of working day and night, and iPads help them be productive wherever they are. He feels tech companies have an intense need for mobile devices because of this increase in productivity and that Millennials in particular know how to make these devices productive.



Con: Distraction

However, Smith says one of the biggest risks is that an iPad can become a distraction via gaming or time spent on social networking sites. The iPad then becomes a productivity drain. Or an iPad could even be a vehicle for saying bad things about the company on a social networking site.

Pro: Attracting Young Talent

Despite the possible downside of an iPad being a time-waster, Smith says it's worth the risk, especially if you're trying to attract young talent. "If companies don't offer these devices, they won't attract the kind of people they want," he says. If your company is innovative and has deeply integrated the use of iPads, it will help attract the young whiz kids. "Under the right circumstances, a company would be foolish not to provide iPads," he says.

Con: Security Risk

The biggest downside for some companies is the security risk. That includes illicit access to sensitive data that may be stored on the iPad or illicit access to a company's network via a lost or stolen iPad. Golz says for his company it's crucial that security measures are in place, such as the requirement of a strong password and the use of a digital certificate for network access. Plus, SAP has the ability to lock out a device at any time, to shut off access to it, and to wipe it remotely.

Pro: Saving Money

In many cases, the cost savings are simple and self-evident, such as the earlier example of a company saving \$300,000 on printing costs. Another example is American Airlines, which decided last year to let pilots use iPads for flight manuals and charts rather than make them carry flight bags that contain up to 40 lbs. of printed materials. This not only reduced the single biggest source of pilot injuries—carrying those heavy materials—but also saved \$1 million a year in printing costs and fuel costs, thanks to the planes being 39 lbs. lighter.


An additional example is Guerbet, a diagnostic imaging company that uses an app called **SlideShark** (free) for disseminating product marketing materials and messaging. They find that it has dramatically reduced production expenses and increased the currency of their materials, and it has meshed well with their "green" initiative of being 100 percent paper free in their promotional materials.

Con: Wasting Money

Denise Bennerson, the small business owner mentioned earlier, notes that there is a significant cost to setting up any new tool, in addition to the expense of the iPads themselves. And, she says, some employees don't like to work on the iPad. Plus there's a learning curve. Also, it takes time to keep up with the constant evolution of the technology, such as the

latest version of iOS, and the apps themselves, which often need to be updated. In a small company, she notes, employees will have to learn to do the updating and to keep themselves abreast of the changes. This all takes time and is a cost that may not be worth the investment.

Worth the Risk?

These, then, are some of the considerations you should keep in mind if you want to give an iPad to each one of your employees. You can save money and be more productive, but it takes thoughtful planning to effectively use iPads in the workplace. 



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