

Workforce, World Going Mobile, Gartner Says

Written by Mike Buetow

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BARCELONA — The consumerization trend has hit IT as an unstoppable force, as 821 million smart devices (smartphones and tablets) will be purchased worldwide in 2012 and pass the billion mark in 2013, according to **Gartner**.

Smart devices will account for 70% of total devices sold in 2012, the research firm said.

“For most businesses smartphones and tablets will not entirely replace PCs, but the ubiquity of smartphones and the increasing popularity of tablets are changing the way businesses look at their device strategies and the way consumers embrace devices,” said Carolina Milanese, research vice president at Gartner.

Gartner analysts today discussed the directions in mobile device technologies and management approaches at Gartner Symposium/ITxpo 2012, taking place in Barcelona through Nov. 8.

“In 2016, two-thirds of the mobile workforce will own a smartphone, and 40% of the workforce will be mobile,” said Milanese. Tablets will be the key accelerator to mobility. Gartner estimates that in 2012 purchases of tablets by businesses will reach 13 million units and will more than triple by 2016, to reach 53 million units.

Smartphones have become truly pervasive in every aspect of an employee’s life. Gartner estimates that 56% of smartphones purchased by businesses in North America and Europe will be Android devices in 2016, up from 34% in 2012 and virtually no penetration in 2010.

“Today the wide range of brands and price points that the Android ecosystem is offering is winning over users. While Apple remains the heartbeat by which the market moves, Google has rapidly become its archrival,” said Milanese.

The increasing penetration of Android in the enterprise will continue to pose challenges for the IT department and the CIO to ensure that security and manageability remain a priority.

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However, Android and iOS-based devices will continue to increase their presence in the enterprise side-by-side and in most cases instead of RIM. “As businesses are looking for a multi-device strategy and a rich application portfolio it is clear that RIM has a huge challenge ahead in regaining its key presence in the enterprise,” said Milanese.

In the business market, Windows 8 will take the No. 3 position in the tablet market behind Apple and Android by 2016, with interest coming more from businesses than consumers. Tablets and convertibles will be the way into businesses for Windows 8. Gartner estimates that the share of Windows 8 tablets and ultramobiles in businesses will reach 39% in 2016.

Over the past year, we have seen consumer preferences shaping not only the vendors' landscape but also the way IT departments need to think about devices in the enterprise with BYOD becoming a part of the devices policy. “In just 12 months businesses have moved from resisting Apple to accepting its devices in the organization. CIOs who balance workers' passion for Apple with the needs of IT will reap surprising benefits and prepare the business for entry of other consumer-market vendor technologies, as this is just the beginning,” said Milanese.

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