CAUTION: Mobile Devices Ahead

ASK “WHY?”

Ask “Why?”: Define Your Purpose

The very first time you hear the words “mobile device”, ask “Why?” Before making a move, you need to know the specific need that is being addressed - and you need to make sure other decision makers are aware too. “Because everyone else is doing it” is NOT a reason. Have this discussion with leadership right away – it’s the single greatest indicator of success or failure. Make it clear and make it in writing.

Possible (Good) Reasons for a Mobile Device Initiative:

- Electronic Textbooks – Switching from physical to digital media to save money
- Mobility – Do today’s classrooms and curriculum demand something more agile?
- BYOD – They’re bringing them anyway, right? Time to manage them.
- PC Replacement – It’s time to swap out the old towers, why not try something new?
- Power/Cost Savings – Reduce costs by cutting electricity bills and costly towers(?)
- Online Testing – new equipment to support the testing trend of the future

Design: Research Mobile Solutions to Meet Your Needs

Once you’ve identified the purpose behind your push (and only then) you can start checking out technology. Don’t just grab the first shiny apple you come to (that’s apple not Apple) and assume it’s the best fit. And don’t stop with the device itself – a successful mobile device initiative goes deep into your technology infrastructure. Failure to recognize and plan for that can spell disaster.
Design Aspects to Consider:

- **Device Selection** – Find a device that fits your needs: tablet, Chromebook, laptop, etc. If possible, get demo units and set them up on your network so you can test for pitfalls.
- **Coverage** – Are you looking for a full 1:1 initiative or will mobile labs satisfy?
- **Bandwidth** - Can your network handle the increased traffic? Include WiFi and remote sites. Think volume, especially if you’re going 1:1.
- **Management** - Mobile Device Management (MDM) is very easy to overlook and still in its infancy. How will you manage devices, enforce policy settings and install software?
- **Infrastructure** – Can the equipment on your network handle these devices? Think switches, routers, servers and the rest.
- **Funding** - Add it all up; include initial cost of your devices, network upgrades, MDM solutions, licensing, repair costs and spares.
- **Sustainability** – Once you’ve made the initial buy-in, will you have the necessary funding and staff to keep mobile devices functional in the long run?
- **Written Policies** - Mobile devices require an entirely new and separate policy to effectively manage. Get it in writing and get it approved by the school board early on.
- **Communication & Collaboration**: Keep all of your decision makers (admins, school board, etc.) involved at this stage. Informed leaders help you make good decisions.

**Implement: Manage Your Rollout, Don’t Mangle It**

All the careful preparation in the world can still fail you if you don’t release with purpose. Have a plan and stick with it.

Implementation Aspects to Consider:

- **Pilot Project** – Set up a small scale, real world implementation and let it run in the wild before a mass rollout. Get enough devices to estimate bandwidth, user experience, etc.
- **Capacity Planning** – Be prepared to scale your deployment up as appropriate. Know your limits in how many you can handle and what it takes to add more.
- **Training** – Make a schedule for teaching techs, teachers, staff and students. Start early. Mobile devices seem deceptively easy to use, but don’t assume everyone is ready… especially staff.
- **Documentation** – Have procedures in writing and available when units hit the system, from troubleshooting to loading apps to connecting to the network.
- **Written Policies** – Make sure users have read and signed them before they get their device.
- **Communication** – Especially critical at this stage, make sure staff, students, admins and other users are aware of the rollout and its implications before, during and after it happens.
**Manage: Mobile Devices in the Wild**

Once your initiative is off the ground and running free, don’t let it get away from you. Since they’re mobile, devices like these tend to bring unforeseen and unpleasant consequences. Stay involved and stay connected in the daily ops.

**Daily Operations Issues to Consider:**

- **Support** – Monitor the amount of contact your techs are spending on mobile devices. Make sure they’re not taking over the help desk but that users are getting what they need.
- **Security** – New vulnerabilities come with the mobile territory. Watch the news and how your users are using their devices for possible security and safety issues.
- **Policy Enforcement** – How do you know policy is being enforced to keep your network and equipment safe? Spot checks and regular reminders will help prevent trouble.
- **Inventory** – Have an efficient way to track units. Know who has what and watch for users trading equipment.
- **Capacity Planning** – Don’t forget to keep an eye on growth. Know your limits in how many mobile devices you can handle and what it takes to add more.

**Assess and Improve: Keeping Mobile Devices Mobile**

Your mobile device initiative is a success – congrats! Now you want to keep it that way. Continue evaluating and asking questions about how the service is performing and how it can be improved. Make the changes and look for new opportunities.

**Assessment/Improvement Issues to Consider:**

- **Gather Data** - Have a way to gather targeted use data, such as bandwidth tracking, repair expenses, software costs and what users are doing with their devices.
- **Review Cycle** – Put a yearly review on your calendar of the data you’re collecting and share the results with decision makers. Keep them in the loop.
- **Adapt** – Be prepared to modify the plan as new mobile devices come onto the market or as needs change. Keep asking “Why?” and making sure the answer fits.

**Questions and Comments? Contact the ESD105 Technology Focus Group!**

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