



**FREEFORM
DYNAMICS**

Inside Track Research Note

Devices, recruitment and staff retention

Be prepared to offer flexibility

February 2015

In a nutshell

About this Inside Track

The research upon which this Inside Track is based was independently designed and analysed by Freeform Dynamics Ltd. Data was gathered via an online survey executed in collaboration with a mainstream IT news site. 660 responses were gathered from business and IT professionals across a range of industry sectors, geographies and organisation sizes. The study was sponsored by VMware.

The equipment, software and services employees are expected or permitted to use can have a significant impact on whether they feel good or not.

Some say it's not possible to recruit and retain good staff nowadays unless you offer them the latest desirable devices or allow them to use their own equipment for work. While such claims are somewhat exaggerated, research suggests that the technology used in the workplace can play a role in staff recruitment and retention, even if only to a limited degree. But this is not the only consideration; the 'feel good' factor can also impact ongoing employee productivity. Paying particular attention to user preferences and allowing for flexibility therefore makes increasing sense when reviewing your future end user computing needs.

Technology today is implicitly linked to the all-important 'feel good' factor

On the whole, employees work better, contribute more and are more likely to stay with you for longer if they feel comfortable and empowered in their jobs. This fundamental principle has been around for years and is broadly accepted in management circles, particularly in relation to professional workers. From a business perspective, making people feel good essentially boosts ongoing productivity, while simultaneously reducing recruitment costs.

Nowadays, with technology being such an integral part of the work environment, the equipment, software and services employees are expected or permitted to use can have a significant impact on whether they feel good or not. Battling with old, inadequate or inflexible technology can be very stressful, distracting and demoralising. Having the right technology, particularly if it aligns with your personal preferences, makes you feel much more in control, and according to many, can even be quite inspiring.

Sentiments such as these come through in the feedback received during a recent research study looking at the evolution of end user computing in business, as illustrated by the following participant comments:

"It's about increased productivity, either by better and faster access to systems or through employees being happier with the devices they are using."

"Allowing people to use the technology that suits them is an essential enabler of business productivity."

"Innovation is a priority for growth, and flexibility in tools enables that innovation."

Of course many also warn against the dangers of pandering, and others highlight that the feel good factor shouldn't be created at the expense of appropriate cost and risk management. It's a complex topic and the debates will surely rage on for some time to come. In the meantime, let's get to back recruiting and retaining staff.

Device-related policy is playing more of a role in attracting and keeping good people

During the research, we found the discussion of devices in the context of recruitment and retention to be quite emotive, with a whole range of opinions emerging:

“Our most recent hire quizzed us in an interview on what equipment he was going to be provided with when starting a role with us.”

“We do a lot of recruiting, and I've yet to see a person not take an offer because of a lack of BYOD.”

“I'm no longer willing to deal with locked down corporate laptops and provide any company I work for with a simple choice: Either you provide me with a decent Mac, or I bring my own, otherwise I'll go work somewhere else.”

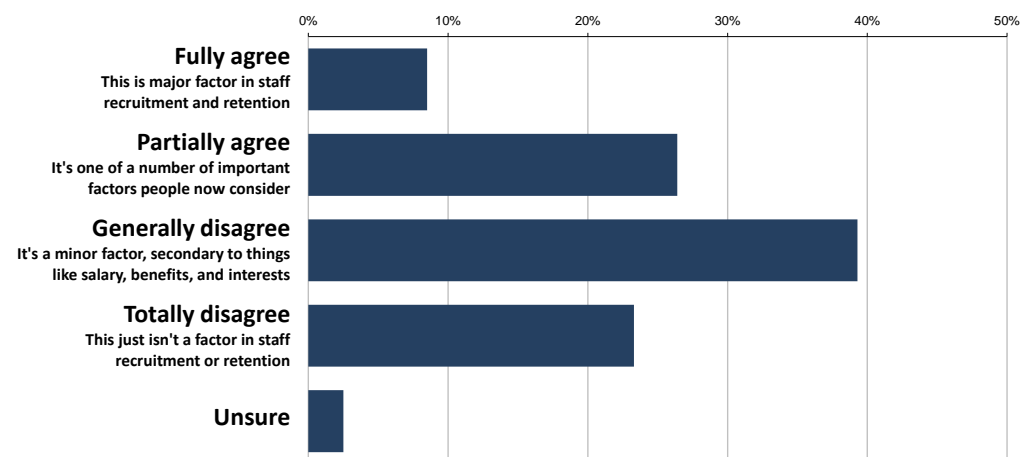
“If you need to offer somebody a new toy to attract them, they are likely to leave you for somebody else with a newer one.”

Less than a quarter of study participants totally reject the notion that device-related considerations have any influence at all on staff recruitment and retention.

Beyond gathering comments of this nature, we also explored the question in a more structured manner. The hypothesis was put forward that ‘offering the latest desirable devices and/or a BYOD programme is becoming necessary to retain and recruit good staff’, and respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with this. While the distribution of responses is generally biased towards the ‘disagree’ end of the scale, almost one in ten fully agree with the hypothesis, with a further quarter partially agreeing on the basis that device policy is now one of a number of important factors impacting employee behaviour (Figure 1).

Figure 1

On a specific point, some argue that offering the latest desirable devices and/or a BYOD programme is becoming necessary to recruit and retain good staff. What’s your own view on this?



Looking at this chart the other way around, it is noteworthy that less than a quarter of study participants totally reject the notion that device-related considerations have any influence at all on staff recruitment and retention. This tells us that for most organisations, the question is not whether the influence exists, but how strong it is.

Looking forward, it will become increasingly more difficult to hold back the rising tide of employee influence.

Technology to both deliver and manage the end user aspects of IT has advanced considerably.

To put this into perspective, just think to yourself what the responses presented above would have looked like if the question were asked five years ago, or even three years ago. We don't have that trending data available, but most of us can probably think of a time in the not too distant past when this whole discussion would have seemed very strange. Things have moved, and continue to move, very quickly in this area.

Prepare for flexibility and keep your options open

Looking forward, it will become increasingly more difficult to hold back the rising tide of employee influence, and some will see this as a problem that needs to be managed. Bearing in mind the link between productivity, contribution and the feel good factor, however, it might be better to think of the forces in action here as a positive influence:

“The real business value of allowing individual users to use personal/preferred devices is the affect it has on the business/operations. Supporting more devices makes the company more agile, innovative and productive, not the user. The same organization that can respond to changes quickly in their workforce's needs and the trends influencing them, can probably respond more quickly to changes in the market generally.”

Fortunately, technology to both deliver and manage the end user aspects of IT has advanced considerably, so it is now possible to re-engineer your environment to cope with the way in which demands are evolving. But be aware there are no magic bullets out there in terms of solutions you can just plug in and switch on to provide everything that's needed. You therefore need to be prepared to allocate the time, effort and investment necessary to define requirements then select and implement appropriate products, services and techniques.

For more details on this, and some of the other issues and opportunities in this highly important area of IT, we would encourage you to download the full research report entitled “The Politics and Practicalities of End User Computing” available from the Freeform Dynamics website (www.freeformdynamics.com).

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