How Apple is transforming the enterprise and why it matters
The evolution of the digital workplace is gathering pace. It’s changing the way most of us work and interact with colleagues, organisations and wider society. The technologies that enable us to work smarter are key to our individual success as well as the success of our businesses. That’s why we focus on what we call ‘Digital Me’ – each individual has the tools they need to succeed.

Which is exactly why examining Apple’s growing presence in the enterprise is important. The reality is that many employees want to use Apple devices and apps for work, and ensuring that they can is important for overall morale, the attraction and retention of talent and, of course, productivity.

Apple puts it best itself: “The most powerful products for business are the ones that people already love to use.” In this Insight Guide you’ll find focused opinions from Computacenter experts on why it pays to take Apple seriously as an enterprise player. They discuss how adopting the Apple ecosystem can benefit your organisation in terms of employee satisfaction, productivity, efficiency and cost effectiveness. It’s a viable choice for any organisation, whatever sector you’re in.

The Guide confronts some of the common misconceptions which are still associated with the Apple brand within the corporate sphere. Apple devices are serious business tools for all kinds of roles and functions across all sectors, public and private. It’s no longer the preserve of niche professionals in areas like the media or other creative industries.

Apple is serious about the enterprise and so is Computacenter. We believe that Apple’s technology can be leveraged to achieve a range of business advantages.

See what you think of the different opinions expressed in this Insight Guide. We hope it helps you see Apple in a new and enterprising light.

Apple is serious about the enterprise and so is Computacenter.
APPLE IN ENTERPRISE: 
TIME TO GO BEYOND THE MYTHS

BY PAUL BRAY
CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST – END USER SERVICES AND DIGITAL WORKPLACE

“...APPLE’S SERIOUS ENTERPRISE POWER ENABLES AN ORGANISATION’S LEADERS TO ‘THINK DIFFERENT’ ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY THEY PROVIDE ACROSS THEIR DEPARTMENTS AND FUNCTIONS, AND HOW THEY EMPOWER THEIR EMPLOYEES.”
Paul Bray has been around long enough to know that myths are usually spurious and, with the right approach to thinking through the pros and cons of any ecosystem, they are also easily debunked.

Apple has changed the world. That’s a bold claim, but it’s true. Apple technology has changed the way we live our daily lives; at home, at work, and on the move. It did it, principally, through their revolutionary smartphone – the iPhone, which set off a mobility revolution that, in truth, we’re still coming to terms with.

The key to understanding Apple’s rapidly evolving role in the modern enterprise is to go beyond the myths about the technology being focused on creative industries. Paul is eager to emphasise that, in fact, Apple is far more widely used across all sectors. And adopting the brand is an opportunity that transcends a mere choice of Apple: “What we’re really talking about is thinking differently about your enterprise, your people and the way you do business.”

And the point is an important one. Apple has been a significant player in the development of the modern enterprise throughout its history.

The Mac was, after all, rapidly adopted by business users in a wide range of sectors after its launch in 1984. It became a significant technology in creative fields and has remained important to them ever since.

**Apple has always been serious about the enterprise**

The advent of the iPod changed the way we consumed music, then the iPhone changed personal communications and the iPad transformed everyday browsing. All were a huge success with consumers. “But, it was still growing in importance within the enterprise, especially at executive level,” says Paul. “Apple became an empowering brand – you were both cool and productive. The turnkey approach to updates every year when the next version of macOS was released created a smooth, intuitive relationship between user and device.

The software got updated as a matter of routine (which we now call ‘Evergreen IT’) and each time there was something new, which added to the platform’s desirability. And, of course, there were the apps. Thousands of them.

“Apple has always been a serious enterprise player and is now more serious than ever. And that’s because they know that many employees of organisations in all sectors (and of all shapes and sizes) want to use Apple devices and apps for work.”

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Paul continues:

“The ‘evergreen’ idea is now mainstream. And Apple have been working with all the big application developers to ensure that leading class apps work on the Apple platform just as seamlessly and intuitively as a native app would. Apple’s insistence on design that makes the user happy has paid off. It’s set the benchmark for all apps. That’s a benefit to business.”

And the big point is that Apple’s serious enterprise power enables an organisation’s leaders to ‘think different’ about the technology they provide across their departments and functions, and how they empower their employees. “Giving people choice makes them happy,” says Paul, “Workplace psychologists have been saying that since the 1920s! When you feel that you are being listened to, given the choice to either use your own device, or the device of your choice, with the apps you’re comfortable with, then you are more productive. This means the business achieves a better return on their investment in both the person and the technology, delivered through higher productivity, more innovation and higher staff retention levels. Simply, you attract the right talent, and you keep it.”

Think about the opportunity

So, the technology isn’t the point? “Yes, it is. The technology delivers the right experience. The experience that users like and want. So, providing the ability to choose that technology and experience which Apple delivers across the enterprise helps businesses engage their people more.” says Paul.

Paul sums up the idea with a single word: opportunity. “Apple is completely available to all industries. There are no major barriers to using Apple for any function. The idea that Macs are for creatives doesn’t stack up. Apple has devices and apps for everything from engineering to retail to energy, healthcare, and, yes, creative media.”

“It’s a leap of thinking we need to encourage,” Paul states boldly, “It’s also obvious. When people bring their own devices, many of them are Apple. When they resort to shadow IT, it’s often Apple’s apps [or those available from their App Store] they use. So, why not bring Apple into the mainstream. Give the user the choice.

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The ‘evergreen’ world means that if they’re used to Microsoft Office apps they can just as easily use them on a Mac as they can on a Windows 10 device. All the tech giants are talking to each other now!”

Paul believes that mindsets are changing. The focus on buying desktops or laptops or proprietary handsets in bulk for the cheapest price is fading fast. Technology is so vital to the effectiveness of workers that trying to empower them on the cheap just doesn’t pay dividends in the long term. “That commodity driven approach is over. Now people are looking at more premium technology because it boosts user productivity and wellbeing. And the Apple environment is the benchmark for intuitive performance – it’s always been at the heart of Apple’s design ethos. And it works.”

Choice not dominance

So, is Apple after dominance in the enterprise market? “No, but it’s now a very valid choice. Whatever data points or surveys you may read, Apple is under-indexed in enterprise adoption when you compare it to the consumer market. To achieve parity there would be a huge shift, but not one that is unassailable by any stretch of the imagination. Then add in the mobility opportunity, where Apple is ubiquitous, and you can see how relevant Apple is and will be to the enterprise market. What is key is to address the misconceptions and perceived blockers to Apple being a viable proposition in business contexts.”

Paul cites the move to the cloud and ‘Everything-as-a-Service’ as well as the ‘evergreen’ ecosystem which supports it. Add the fact that more and more Millennials (some of the biggest users of Apple products) are joining the workforce (within a few years they will represent half of all workers) and Macs, iPads and iPhones will naturally rise in importance. “A business has to stay ahead of those trends,” says Paul, “Attracting and retaining the right talent has always been important, but it’s becoming more so as the economy changes.”

Apple also represents a financial opportunity. “Their products are perceived as being more expensive than most others. That’s inhibited some enterprises in terms of adopting Apple, but there’s growing evidence that the technology makes good financial sense. Not only are users more productive, but the cost of ownership is lower, and residual values higher. Some of the world’s largest corporations are actually saving money by moving to Apple.”

So, the message is; put Apple technology in your catalogue and you’re done, right? “No, you can’t just put more on your catalogue. Again, ‘Think different’ – reduce the barriers to adopting Apple products, make it easy to integrate the products with apps and with all other devices. We’re not talking about offering two different worlds and you have to choose one of them: it’s an integrated, interoperable world of choice and productivity.”

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APPLE: THE PEOPLE’S CHOICE

“Take a look at what’s happening now in your organisation; how many people are using Apple products already? Why are they using them? Are they BYOD or provided by you? What does their use mean? Does it show that there’s a need that you are not meeting at a corporate level? Doing that research will help you uncover ways to boost productivity and employee satisfaction.”

We help organisations purchase the right technology...

And then what? “Computacenter, as an Apple Authorised Enterprise Reseller, can create a platform that enables the complete Apple experience from choosing the technology to supporting it and securing it. That’s what our Device-as-a-Service, Employee Choice, and Mobility offerings deliver. We help organisations purchase the right technology, so they can deliver the best choices for their people. They get what they want and need when they want and need it, so they can do their best work and, well, be happy.”
“A 2017 SURVEY CARRIED OUT BY THE WORK FOUNDATION IN THE UK, SHOWED THAT A STAGGERING 80% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL THAT TECHNOLOGY HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THEIR PRODUCTIVITY – BUT ONLY IF IT’S THE RIGHT TECH.”
When we have the power to choose, we are more engaged. Sounds obvious, most fundamental truths are. When we have no choice, we feel disempowered. We’re not in control. And, research shows, that’s one of the main causes of stress, especially in the workplace.

But there’s also a ‘paradox of choice’ as one of the leading researchers into the subject calls it. ‘Choice overload’ – too many options without the right level of information so we can choose the things that would match our needs. Information is empowering. Without it we don’t understand what can help us to be more productive.

We like options, but not too many, and they need to come with the right information. And, strangely, that’s how the digital world has turned out. We hear a lot about the digital giants and their power: there’s only one Facebook or Google or Amazon or Apple – why aren’t there more serious competitors? Why is the market so dominated by a small number of really big players? It’s because we like what they offer, and we don’t really want to be bothered with too much choice. We can get on with our lives and use their services and tools to be social, shop, network and do our work. But if any one of those giant brands are imposed on us, then we don’t feel right. We want to be able to choose between them. And we want to be able to choose freely from the range of what they offer. We want choice, but not too much. We want to match technologies and applications to our needs, but within distinct ecosystems which offer proven quality and service as well as suiting our work – and lifestyles.

It’s about making work more human

Many of us are searching for jobs that offer more autonomy and the chance to be creative and flexible. Digital technologies enable all of those things, but only if the tool matches our needs and provides the right user experience. If we love our tools, they help us become more effective. We think beyond the tool to what we want to achieve. The tool doesn’t get in the way. It’s a fundamental part of being human. We are tool makers and tool users, and we always have been. In fact, research into our evolution shows that tools are just as important as biology: as a recent book puts it, ‘Our modern brains are both broadly, and then finely, tuned by our use of tools.’ [‘The Digital Ape’ by Nigel Shadbolt & Roger Hampson 2018.] The books shows that the mobile phone is perfectly adapted to our brains and our hands and how they work together. It’s the perfect example of a tool which boosts human power because it ‘enables old jobs to be done in new ways, which allows us to do other jobs too, for the same energy price.’

In other words, it makes us more efficient and more effective as human beings as well as employees. And when we can choose the devices that we love to use (because they empower us) then you get the perfect combination of tool, human and the ability to choose.

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Organisations of all kinds are working hard to offer more choice to their people, and back that up with great user experience that matches the consumer-grade experiences they’re used to in their domestic lives. That’s why Apple is fast becoming a serious player in the enterprise space. What was once seen as an expensive option, or one focused on certain select niches, has become a much more mainstream option. Apple devices and applications can be used for any worker, in any industry, for just about any task. It’s about attracting and retaining talent

And the ability to choose Apple is linked to not just productivity and effectiveness in the workplace (and beyond, of course), it’s also about attracting and retaining good people. A 2017 survey carried out by the Work Foundation in the UK, showed that a staggering 80% of employees feel that technology has a positive influence on their productivity – but only if it’s the right tech. That sounds mundane, but it’s important. Of course, Apple has an amazing brand profile, and we’ve all heard stories about Millennials at job interviews who seem more worried about what technology they can use at work than the size of their pay packet.

Apple: why and how

So, the big question is – why Apple? From an organisational perspective the fact that there are relatively few choices of devices on offer means that managing the ecosystem is much easier. That sounds mundane, but it’s important. Of course, Apple has an amazing brand profile, and we’ve all heard stories about Millennials at job interviews who seem more worried about what technology they can use at work than the size of their pay packet.

That’s why many organisations are starting to get serious about what they offer their employees and how they manage both the choice-making process and the support of devices and applications once they are out in the field (or the office). The bottom line, for me, is that if you offer the right amount of choice, and people choose the devices they love, they will use them to their maximum potential. They will do more work, faster and smarter, and productivity will go up. They won’t get bored or feel that they’re not in control of their own destiny.

It’s anecdotal, but I suspect scientific research would prove the point. I’ve experienced it at Computacenter. I am regularly asked if we can supply iPhone, iPads or Macs. It gives me great satisfaction to answer in the affirmative. Our Workstyle Analysis shows that offering choice means that devices get used to their maximum potential.

I’ve seen examples of when a company bulk buys a certain device and imposes it on the workforce, a big proportion of those devices get put in a drawer and aren’t used. There’s a big rise in Shadow IT and people bring their own devices to work and [if they can] use corporate applications on them.

That results in a lack of control or accountability at the centre: when Shadow IT is used, the organisation isn’t in charge of that technology, applications or, most critically, security and compliance. We’ve seen lots of examples of how that situation can be turned around – and we’ve managed that improvement too. Our Employee Choice solution creates an easy to use portal through which employees can see what’s on offer – just the right amount of choice! – and then get the device they want [and love] and the applications that match the needs of the business and the individual (productivity and security-wise), and everyone is happy.

It’s a managed service that encompasses the whole business. That’s important. I’ve seen businesses where one function – let’s say a manufacturing function – decides it needs tablets running an operational app to make its people more mobile and flexible.

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But, central IT takes too long to respond, so they go out and buy a bunch of iPads and download an app and just do it themselves. That might be proactive, but it fragments IT and leads to duplication and higher costs. It’s better to assess the needs of the whole business and buy, manage and support the technology in a more rational – and cost-effective – way.

So, choosing Apple achieves a more human outcome based on choice and great technology, while managing that choice across an organisation delivers efficiency and better ROI. It’s what IBM decided to do. The tech-press got excited when the company decided to give their employees the choice of Windows or Mac in 2015. It’s been called ‘the largest Mac deployment on earth’ and the business press focused on the cost benefits of the switch. It’s been said that over time Macs were around $500 cheaper to buy and support.

But I think that misses the point: the true story is that IBM boosted the morale of their people by enabling them to choose the right device for their individual needs.

**Focus on outcomes**

You need to focus on outcomes not technologies. On people and their needs and preferences, rather than on corporate procurement policies. That’s the only way to create a workplace that looks after individuals as well as processes and machines. And it’s an approach that has to transcend traditional boundaries: so, it’s not about IT focused roles, it’s about HR, finance, logistics, and all levels of executives, managers and workers. It’s important to understand why your people make the choices they do. At Computacenter, I asked for a Mac and an iPhone not just because it’s a cool brand, but because it suits the way I want to work, and who I am. I actually support my own devices without too much reference to the company. That saves time and money. Apple users tend to support themselves – both in terms of devices and applications. It’s what they’re used to. If the company insisted on a different ecosystem, then I’d have to carry two devices, but that’s neither efficient nor practical.

So, give me choice, respect it, support it, and I will be more productive and stay happy. It’s actually a way of leveraging the power of Apple to the advantage of your business. Because we want an Apple device we look after it better. We use it more. We make the most of its attributes. Our choice has been respected, we feel good, so we do more.

At Computacenter we enable organisations to achieve all of those benefits simply and effectively.
THE END-TO-END APPLE ADVANTAGE
AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDY GODDARD
HEAD OF SERVICE ENABLEMENT – CONTRACTUAL SERVICES

“... IT'S NOW EASIER TO OFFER A WIDER CHOICE, AND FOR DEVELOPERS TO CREATE APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES WHICH TRANSCEND THE OLD BORDERS BETWEEN MICROSOFT AND APPLE.”
Apple is increasingly being seen as a serious player in the enterprise space, why do you think some people are still surprised by that fact?

Fewer and fewer people are, if you listen to what executives across the corporate world are saying. Apple is seen as a premium consumer brand, but it’s always been serious about people at work too. In fact, it’s been the brand of choice in a range of sectors. What I think has been happening is that the other brands out there have been raising their game and now there are a wider range of premium devices to choose from. And prices, at the high end, are roughly aligned. So, what the enterprise has to think about is what’s best for their people, what’s best for productivity, and what’s best for the bottom line. Apple is a serious choice in all those areas.

But there’s also been a change of perception about how viable Apple is in terms of its ecosystem too hasn’t there?

That’s right. Several years ago, the tools and services you need to do all you need to do in the corporate space weren’t that well developed. That’s because Apple is, after all, a hardware brand which has a great OS, but that’s what they focus on. It’s what they do best. The dominance of Microsoft in the corporate world meant that there were lots of applications and services developed by the ecosystem that surrounded them which focused on enterprise needs. They were more work focused. That created network effects across the enterprise world. Now, that’s changed completely.

What has driven that change?

It’s very simple: the rise of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS). It’s become the norm. Now, the most crucial thing on your computer or your hand-held device is the browser – it’s the gateway to most of the applications you need. That means it’s now easier to offer a wider choice, and for developers to create applications and services which transcend the old borders between Microsoft and Apple. It’s a much more fluid world. Each have their strengths; each have their advantages; now it’s possible to give large numbers of corporate employees a wider choice. It’s a benefit. It’s an advantage.

“... a hardware brand which has a great OS.”

The point is to ensure that whatever you choose to do – go totally Windows or totally Apple, or maybe even something else – you can make it work end-to-end. You can even go hybrid. Our job at Computacenter is to make your strategic choice work for you.
And when we say ‘end-to-end’ we really mean the entire lifecycle don’t we?

End-to-end is actually a bit limiting. Because it suggests a hard beginning and a definite end. In fact, they don’t really exist. Sure, if you choose Apple for the first time then there’s a beginning – but it’s more a transition from what you did before to something new.

And then at the end of a three – or four-year cycle, it’s not about stopping anything, it’s about refreshing devices, tools, applications and systems so that you enjoy the benefits of the next generations of all those things. It’s an ongoing thing.

So, it’s more than ‘cradle-to-grave’?

It’s Cradle-to-re-marketing, refreshing and regeneration. ‘Grave’ isn’t the right word at all. In fact, the devices that get ‘retired’ go off to start another life in some way, either refurbished devices or as part of a much more active recycling marketplace. You get the value if you’ve bought the devices, and if you’re leasing them.

If there was one word that could describe how end-to-end Apple in the enterprise should feel, what would it be?

Seamless.

Whose job is to make it seamless?

Ours. That’s the value we bring.

Where does it start?

It starts with procurement, of course, getting the right mix of Macs, iPads, iPhones and so on to suit the specific needs of the employees of each enterprise. We assess what’s gone before, what’s happening now, and what the core objectives of the enterprise are, and then we can plan the procurement. We know how many devices we need, where and how they will be used, and how they need to be deployed over both time and geographies.

It’s just a logistical process then?

No, not just that. It’s a ‘consumer’ process too. What we want is for the users to have that unique Apple experience – what’s called the ‘unbox’ experience. Apple work hard to make the box not just alluring but exciting too. It’s been shown that there’s a four-second rush people get as they get into the box to reveal the device. We want users to have that. It’s a great start to their experience. It kick starts a sense that their enterprise is treating them as premium employees. And we have to be careful that the service we then provide – from getting the devices working through servicing and supporting them to refreshing them eventually – has to be consumer grade too. It’s how you get that buy-in from people you want to boost productivity.
But doing that for a large number of people at one time is difficult isn’t it?

We work hard to plan it right so that it happens smoothly. Yes, it’s a logistical challenge, but it takes experience to get it right. Once the device is out of the box we then make sure that logging on, getting all the security protocols right and enabling people to get working quickly using the tools, applications and systems they’re used to, is easy.

As I mentioned, with the rise of SaaS (really, XaaS) there are many more options out there. The kind of experience people have long had on Windows can be replicated on any Apple device. So, they can just get into their Office 365 account and everything works the same. They can get files from Dropbox, they can use any kind of cloud-based system they want, and it’s all up and running.

There are tools in the background that need to be put in place to make that happen seamlessly aren’t there?

Yes, we work with partners like VMware, Jamf and Citrix to deliver mobile device management as well as a seamless network experience so that the user can focus on what they want to do, not on how it works. The user doesn’t have to reconfigure anything. We do that in the background, before they get their device, and while they’re using it. For instance, VMware Workspace ONE offers a combined catalogue of apps and services that know who you are and what device you’re using. It’s a workspace platform with smooth logins. It’s middleware that lets you set up connections between identity, storage and application services.

You’ve talked about ‘consumer grade experience’ – how does that work when it comes to supporting the products in-life?

It’s actually merging the customer service you get in the consumer world with the enterprise services that busy people expect. It’s actually more demanding in the enterprise. If you’re an executive – or just a business person – and you break your iPhone screen, or your laptop develops a problem – you’re not going to want to go to an Apple store to make an appointment with one of the Geniuses. You want it fixed or replaced NOW! We enable that to happen. The Service Desk (whether it’s run by us or not) responds to the raising of an incident in a proactive way. You get that new device in less than four hours. Simple. You keep working.

That’s the challenge we, as Computacenter, face each time we deliver Apple end-to-end: how to merge the consumer experience with the corporate service levels that they expect. We deliver the best of both worlds.

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What are the more mundane, below the radar things?

The things we all take for granted like patching, updates, software updates? They are all managed by us. Just the way we’re all used to it. Most patches are invisible. Some are prompted. It just works. It is a little different to the traditional corporate Windows experience: there was more of a push from the centre approach. With Apple, actually, a lot of the work is self-serve. So, the Service Desk can focus on dealing with more critical incidents.

Is it all achieved completely hassle free?

As with everything in life, there are challenges. But not many. It’s important to be honest about what they are upfront with every customer. You need to have a joined up ecosystem. You need the right bits of technology to be there. If you work solely in an Apple world and you have to access the corporate apps you need, then it’s easy. But, that’s not usually the case.

A lot of people need to access lots of other things – proprietary applications for specific industry tasks, and those kinds of enterprises are very strict about related security and antivirus issues.

There are also lot of compliance requirements that have to be addressed for all devices and all users.

So, it’s how you integrate a consumer based device into the corporate needs regarding service levels and security that is important.

But I want to stress that it’s all possible to do. You can deliver all of the above as a seamless user experience. Absolutely seamless. At the back end it requires more technical things to be done, but it is possible to make an Apple device just as suitable for an enterprise as any other ecosystem.

We implement the technology in the background before the deployment, and then manage the ongoing operational service requirements that make the enterprise experience like the consumer experience.

At the mid-layer between the expectations of the enterprise and that consumer grade experience. We make it all happen.

Isn’t it true that most enterprises are doing most of what you describe anyway?

That’s true. Every enterprise has laptops, desktops, hand-held devices of all kinds, and mobile phones: they all have to provisioned, supported and eventually replaced. What we do is adapt the management ecosystem so you can choose Apple.

It’s as simple as that.
What about costs?

As I said before, the range of premium devices has grown and the costs have diverged. You can make the case that the management needs of Apple are much smaller. That means less ongoing cost. But many of those costs would be incurred anyway – whatever brand you use, they have to be managed. And that costs money.

If you’re convinced by the opinions of my colleagues in this Guide, then what seals the deal is the fact that we can reassure you about making it happen. We have the capabilities and partners to make it all work seamlessly, and do it cost competitively.

Your business will get the technological power it needs to do what it does best – and do it better too. You will get control over the whole ecosystem to ensure that there are the right levels of assurance and governance in place. The tools exist to ensure that happens now, they weren’t around many years ago.

End-to-end reassurance?

Definitely.
ENTERPRISE? THERE REALLY IS AN APP FOR THAT

BY GWYN SMITH
SOLUTION LEADER – END USER SERVICES

"THE KEY REASON IS THAT AN APP – WHATEVER IT IS FOR – IS A 'SIMPLIFIED INTERFACE FOR VISUALISING DATA'."
It struck me not so long ago that you don’t hear ‘There’s an app for that’ anymore. When the iTunes App Store was launched in 2008, just a year after the iPhone, there were 250 or so apps available, but the catchphrase caught on.

The team at Apple which developed the Apple Store were keen, right from the start to allow apps created by third-party developers, and the company put in place rigorous protocols to ensure that all apps met high standards of usability and security before they were allowed to be created and offered to consumers.

The subsequent boom of apps helped the iPhone to sell faster. Suddenly, the power of the device was enhanced and, though most initial apps were games, many of the most downloaded were tools which helped users boost their productivity and organise their lives. It was a lesson Apple had learned when they’d allowed customers to download iTunes onto their Windows PCs – sales rocketed.

In ‘The One Device’, a history of the iPhone, author Brian Merchant argues that the smartphone entered the mainstream: ‘That’s when the iPhone discovered that its killer app wasn’t a phone, but a store for more apps.’

Sales of the iPhone grew exponentially. The key reason is that an app – whatever it is for – is a ‘simplified interface for visualising data’. It enables users to navigate and manipulate data through simple actions – through taps or gestures – and achieve specific outcomes wherever they happen to be. Mobility is key to the success of an app. An app has to deliver the ability to achieve a goal anywhere and everywhere, at any time.

Sounds like what every employee or manager needs to do several times a day – every day. Which is why the rise of the enterprise app was equally as swift as all those games and entertainment and social media apps which dominate current ecosystems.

‘Mobility is key to the the success of an app.’

And, of course, the enterprise grade applications from the likes of SAP or Salesforce et al are, in truth, just scaled up versions of what you can download from the App Store. Apps are big business. In fact, it’s said that in 2016 they were worth $51 billion – that’s bigger than the value generated by Hollywood.
If you don’t provide the right apps, your people will find them anyway

Which is why it’s important to think hard about all the applications employees have access to and can use to do their work. Apps are now a key element in the success of any enterprise, large or small. And in any sector. Apple is serious about ensuring that the right apps are available for organisations as easily – and ubiquitously – as they are for consumers. That’s because your people demand them. And if they don’t get them, they either build something themselves or resort to Shadow IT.

I worked with a broadcaster not so long ago to assess their technology needs and discovered that one of their journalists had created their own ‘field reporting kit’ based on a couple of apps downloaded from the App Store, an iPhone and a professional microphone. He collected them together in a shoulder bag and went out to get broadcast quality TV and radio material without the need to wait for a camera – or sound-producer to be sent on location. It proved so successful that he put together kits for other journalists. It was a rudimentary, unofficial app – but it worked. There was a need that the organisation wasn’t fulfilling, so he acted. Now, there’s an app for that.

The same thing happened in a large retailer I worked with not long after. In this case it was the manager of a maintenance team. He’d got tired of waiting for emails or faxes from stores reporting faulty fridges or tills and the delays they caused. He’d get it in the ear from management about slow repairs, but his pleas for a better way of sharing fault information fell on deaf ears. So, he requisitioned some iPads, downloaded a job scheduling app, and then sent out his team with the ability to take pictures of faulty equipment and book jobs so that the engineer could turn up with the right parts, knowing exactly what the fault was and where it was located within the store.

There are definitely a range of apps for all of those tasks, and millions more. It’s important to provide the technology so that people can do their jobs better, faster and smarter. That boosts productivity and efficiency as well as ensuring that employees feel more effective and supported.

Enterprise apps are serious business

So, it’s no surprise that, at the last count, Apple are offering over 235,000 business apps on their App Store. They are described as ‘secure, reliable, compatible with any office environment, and easy to deploy.’ That might be pure marketing-speak, but in this case, it’s true. In my experience, organisations are keen to provide their people with consumer-quality user experiences based on what they’re used to in their everyday lives and doing so in the most cost-effective way possible.

That’s what Apple has made possible. The apps are designed to the high standards you’d expect from the ecosystem: they’re easy to use and so require little training, and they look and feel like the consumer apps we use in our private lives. That means they can be used more intuitively so that employees can focus on the task in hand rather than on how the app works. Apple’s developer guidelines are just as rigorous as they always were, and it’s possible to develop bespoke apps for specific areas of your business within them, then make them available on your own enterprise App Store.

The retailer I mentioned was a little nervous about moving to Apple. They saw themselves as a Windows based organisation. But the fact that interoperability and compatibility were completely seamless meant they could reassess their image of Apple. It wasn’t just a consumer brand anymore; it was a provider of enterprise class devices and apps. That enabled them to create their own App Store and scale the rollout of both devices and apps to make a difference where it counted, in each and every store and the supply chain that supported them.

The big software vendors like SAP and Salesforce are providing software development kits to help enterprises move to iOS with greater ease and to ensure that they can leverage the power of the software via custom apps wherever it’s needed within the business. It also means that the management of patches and upgrades is much simpler. The ‘evergreen’ approach – pioneered by Apple – is now standard. That means that devices and software are upgraded as and when needed and seamlessly. Just like your iPhone or iPad.
The right apps for every need

Some business people I’ve spoken to say they’re worried about not having control over both the apps and their management, but then I remind them that they accept the same effortless upgrades on their iPhones or iPads without worrying about it, so what’s the difference? There isn’t one. It just works.

I’m not being theoretical. This is about day to day reality. And it’s a reality we’ve embraced at Computacenter. We’re working with developers to create a range of apps for all of our people. For instance, any time a visitor attends any of our Customer Experience Centres they’re encouraged to download an app which gives them a plan of the building, tells them all they need to know about the facilities available (health and safety too) and informs them about their visit, hosts and presenters. That’s our app. It’s unique to us. It’s on the App Store. It’s built to Apple’s guidelines (by developers experienced in delivering the quality they expect), and it works.

Now, that could be any kind of app you need. You can get a commercially available app and buy a licence for 100 people or 1,000, manage those licenses centrally and allow your users to self-serve. You can allow people to use a combination of apps they own, and apps you provide, and manage the interaction between them. Thinking ahead you can build apps that utilise Augmented Reality to help your people do more and do it better. For instance, if you’re manufacturing engines you can build an app that superimposes plans or specific information about parts that need to be repaired or installed, and then connect the engineer with advice or technical information in real time with instructions superimposed on the engine being built.

Take control and think big

Apple is leading the way when it comes to offering new ways to use technology to boost productivity, efficiency, cost-savings and, of course, safety and security. Enterprise apps are maturing. They are becoming more specialised. More and more enterprises are working to create their own or adapt those offered by big enterprise software vendors. You are in control. All you have to do is match your imagination with your ambitions and you can achieve greater results. And yes, there’s an app for that!

At Computacenter we’re helping organisations create their own App Stores, so they offer the right range of apps – including those that augment Microsoft products from Office 365 onwards. We’ve created apps that link people to their service desks. We did the same for our people with an app that enables them to make the most of our Next Generation Service Desk (and we’re doing it for customers too). We can support volume purchases for apps, manage upgrades, and ensure that all devices are supported. It’s all focused on delivering better ways of working so your people are more productive and happier. A combination that always boosts value.
Apple means more choice for the enterprise

The digital age is all about choice. The ability to choose when, where and how to do just about anything you can think of. It’s what drives digital businesses across all sectors and all walks of life: from shopping to industry to government and civic engagement.

Within the enterprise there was, strangely, less choice than in other spheres of human engagement. Often, the enterprise was a monolithic place where one ecosystem reigned supreme. That’s changing fast. And that’s good for competition and it’s good for the people who work within the enterprise, which is just about everyone.

In this Insight Guide we’ve explored the fact that Apple’s rise as a serious enterprise player has brought added dynamism to the enterprise space. There’s the right amount of choice, and more flexibility in terms of devices and operating systems. The fact that interoperability is increasingly seamless means that employees can move seamlessly across the different sectors of their lives to do work when they want and need to.

That makes for happier people and happier people are always more productive and innovative. So, the broadening of choice together with the well-known brand attributes of Apple are contributing to a step-change in the ability of enterprises to work smarter, faster and focus on their core objectives free from technological concerns or constraints.

We hope that our contributors have enlightened you and given you food for thought when it comes to Apple in the enterprise. It’s all about choice. It’s not a competition: one brand is not better than another brand, it all depends on what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve it.

Of course, you don’t have to choose Apple, but if you do, you’ll know that it’s entirely viable. It makes sense. It should be an option. At Computacenter we have all you need to make Apple work for you and your people. You have the choice. We are your partner whatever you decide.

If you like to talk about how Apple can work in your organisation get in touch and we’ll be happy to help.
THE CONTRIBUTORS

All the contributors to this Insight Guide are members of the Computacenter Apple practice.

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As Chief Technologist for the Workplace and Mobile, Paul works closely with our vendor partners, analysts and our technical community to help define and advise on technical strategy, roadmaps and propositions for Computacenter and our clients.

The technical portfolio within Paul’s remit extends from classic user technology through to emerging Mobility and Collaboration technologies, as well as a range of “enabling infrastructure” services supporting End Users. Paul has 15 years’ experience in the IT industry having worked for a number of leading IT Service providers as a Consultant and Solution Architect. He has experience designing and deploying a range of solutions across a number of technology areas and within a range of industry verticals.

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To discover how Computacenter can help transform your digital workplace with Apple, please contact your Computacenter Account Manager, call 01707 631 000 or email ApplePractice@computacenter.com

Computacenter is a leading provider of IT infrastructure services, enabling users and their business in a digital world. We advise organisations on IT strategy, implement the most appropriate technology, optimise its performance, and manage our customers’ infrastructures. In doing this we help CIOs and IT departments in enterprise and corporate organisations maximise productivity and the business value of IT for internal and external users.