

iExperience From the Zealots Perspective

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By Matt Brunk

For the past couple of years I've been planning and scheming to convert my office wares over to Apple. I read feedback in Information Week that gave me pause as the readers quipped about why businesses won't buy Apple. One reader writes, "that with Windows you have a choice of PC manufacturers while with MAC OS X, your choice of computers is Apple, Apple, Apple." Another reader commented, "He wants selection" and "doesn't want to risk leaving the Windows world."



Why Apple?

My good buddy, the Microsoft server geek god with whom we do a lot of work together, says that I've got a green streak and that MAC users are an odd lot. He's probably more right than wrong. Apple products aren't more environmentally friendlier than most, although Apple is trying to change that perception. I've long sung the song of how long all my Apple wares last as opposed to PC wares. How many IT people does it take to support a MAC network? If you said none, then you're on target. The Windows platform is more about making money and a lot of it, lest anyone should argue and that includes me. We make more money because of Microsoft and it's not because their products are flawless or even great.

However, converging what we do is important to me. Our desktops in the office are important not so much as the "remote desktops." Our ability to get email on our phones isn't novel since we get work orders, requests for MACs (Moves, Adds, Changes) and service requests via email. Getting the email on our new iPhones is a practical use of the technology to try and improve our service to our customers. The iCal (iCalendar) synchronizes with all our iMacs and iPhones. This is another practical tool and convergence of information. Over the years we went from 80(F)/20(O) to today 60(F)/40(O) and I think we will eventually hit 20(F)/80(O) for a complete paradigm in how we do business. Greening how we work along with rising costs of fuel will dictate this unless someone cracks the energy nut.

(Percent Time spent in (F) Field Work or (O) Office Work)

I need to say this again- look for service work to become a paradigm. Working on someone's telephone system or network from the office will become the norm instead of rolling the truck to the customer site. It may take years- but it's my guess and "IT time" is always somehow shorter.

Our contacts now reside and are synched up from our MACs onto our iPhones. So, simply touching a customer address will pop up the Google Map with directions to the customer site. This is cool and much less expensive than a NAV system for the trucks- although not quite as elaborate as the NAV systems. While this seems to be all iPhone hinged- it's not.

The iMacs IMHO are superior to PC wares. One of our SMB clients in the environmental business recently changed over to Apple. They are using Parallels Desktop for MAC to run Windows apps on their MACs. We've traded a lot of information and exchanged ideas back and forth. We've loaded the Parallels app on my iMac and I have our client VPNs to connect to their sites so I can run our Windows based telephony programming tools to maintain, troubleshoot and program customer systems and networks. Maybe this answers in part why would you want to run Windows on an Apple. Telephony manufacturers don't design dealer software tools around Apple's OS.

We or I should say, I have another reason. Web publishing tools such as Site Builder and this Blog on VoipLoop (Mambo) don't fare well with Safari. One in-house tool that we use to document customer networks and to pitch new proposals- is SmartDraw. Vista as far as I'm concerned is what put me over the top. Poorly executed software leaves a bad and long lasting impression. The IT solution is to turn off many of the annoyances of Vista to make it look good. Long after this initial draft, we completed moving our website over to Apple (Dot Mac services). The Apple graphic and presentation qualities and capabilities are far easier than Microsofts. Or, maybe I'm just more Apple brained than PC brained. This comes from a guy that took out a loan at the credit union to buy an IBM PC with an RGB Screen weighing as much as my then portable TV, 5.25" floppy drive, Hayes 300 bps modem, 64K of memory, and the only onboard software was DOS, Basic and Lotus 1-2-3 software.

Lastly, I can now work comfortably using one desktop in both worlds- using Apple playing host to Microsoft and have the best quality with as good or I'd argue better innovation. One thing I believe that convergence in telecom has taught and that is convergence as a whole is a good thing. There are many arguing today that the Internet is not growing fast enough. I think in part this is true. What is missing is a huge convergence effort on behalf of the industry that creates band aids and work arounds for every possible need or effort to fill a gap in Microsoft products and services. This includes Apple too.

Since 1996, I've had a PC and an Apple on my desk. That's the equivalent of having one TDM and one IP phone on your desk. I want both the quality (TDM) and access to most applications (IP). There really is a parallel here. Soon- I'll have one desktop computer- Apple and access to everything using either OS. The PC sitting on my desk has been replaced three times and the 3rd PC was rebuilt about a year ago while the same old iMac is here and it has been upgraded with memory that I stole from another iMac that was 8.5 years old and dying. Because I can't resist saying it again- "what makes Apple so successful?" Whatever it is, is exactly what I want applied to the industry and what runs the industry is software. This is where I think, will the greatest convergence effort, unlike anything we've seen thus far, occur.

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