

CONVERGENCE: ONE MACHINE FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO.

WHICH MACHINE? IF YOU PICK THE RIGHT KIND AT THE START, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO MATTER.

If you've ever needed a document on one machine when you'd left it on another... emailed a photo to yourself... bought the same song more than once... or mangled a presentation because you were using the version from three edits ago... you're ready for some convergence.

We're hearing a lot lately about barriers falling. The air is thick with terms like cloud, virtualization and convergence. So to start, let's set these terms into their respective corners so we know what we're talking about.

The cloud, which is powered by virtualization, boils down to: It doesn't matter where you are or what kind of device you're using. Convergence is about how different devices are evolving to perform similar tasks, thus blurring the lines in a way that will allow you to use fewer devices than before.

It's becoming commonplace to see convergence in the consumer electronics realm. Some game consoles double as DVD players or web browsers, and one company has put a TV screen in the door of a microwave oven. Smartphones are where most people encounter convergence – consider how many separate devices it once took to take and manage photos, store contact information, access the Internet, send and receive messages, play games and view multimedia content. Oh, and make phone calls.

WE GET IT. BUT WHAT DOES IT GET US?

This popular view of convergence may help people understand the principle, but it may also obscure two important insights: First, convergence involves more than personal enjoyment and efficiency through consumer electronics. And second, convergence doesn't just combine familiar functions into fewer boxes – when technologies come together, they have a way of producing new solutions no one has thought of before.

Think of what that can mean to public authorities that are facing budget cuts – agencies that have to do a bigger job every day without adding people. For them, convergence means efficiency, whether it's in a patrol car, at a DMV window or deep in a transportation command center.

GOVERNMENT DOESN'T RUN ON A SMARTPHONE

When people can perform more tasks with fewer devices, their individual productivity goes up while their drain on the capital budget goes down. When they aren't shackled to a specific device for each task, they aren't shackled to a time and a place, either – which opens the door to flex work, telecommuting, hot-desking and other emerging strategies for efficiency.

If convergence is pointing the way from many devices down to few – or one – the choice of device becomes more critical. And the choices people make for personal use won't scale to the complex missions that make up public service. The answer is a powerful, durable, versatile device – a laptop, tablet or even all-in-one desktop, depending on the job – that's ready to thrive in two environments at once: a personal world and a professional one, connected by the cloud.

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WHO DO.



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CONVERGING ON ONE SPOT

Don't think of cloud-based convergence as a solution that works only for field operations. True, a cloud-enabled laptop or tablet can get a lot done in a maintenance truck or a police cruiser – but consider the value of convergence for desk-based administrative and finance operations.

The traditional desktop setup involves big machines that work only when mated to a tangle of fixed cables, dependent on local apps that the IT function has to install and maintain one PC at a time. When you introduce a cloud-enabled all-in-one desktop to this environment, there are no wires to pull because the machine has wireless built in. No desk visits to install patches, because everything's managed centrally. And moving from one desk or floor to another can be as simple as just changing power outlets.

More importantly, convergence allows a machine like that to be whatever its operators need it to be. That takes the cost and hassle out of internal redeployment. When functions change – when one area with a growing workload needs to adopt PCs from another that's slimming down – every machine in your inventory is a utility player.

What makes this all possible is a cloud-ready PC that can let the central server know where it is, what it is, and, above all, what it's capable of. That way, using only a standard browser, the cloud can deliver apps and content that conform to that client machine's security profile and physical capabilities. No more “this screen looks wrong on my machine.”

THE FUTURE WON'T HAVE ROOM FOR SPECIALIZED DEVICES

We've all read the news reports about a “jobless recovery” – the nation's productivity is rising but hiring isn't following suit. In the public sector, budgets and headcounts face greater and greater scrutiny. In the next five years, organizations are going to have to do more with less. That means people will too.

As it has during past upheavals, the tool will make all the difference. Convergence is the art and science of putting more utility in fewer, smaller packages. And management? That's the art and science of choosing the packages that will get the job done.



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