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INC.

# Tablets at Work

EMBRACE THE TECHNOLOGY OR GET LEFT BEHIND





The popular iPad, and other tablet devices, are altering the way we communicate; the way we are entertained; and the way we organize images, videos, music, and other files. Angry Birds, Pandora Radio, Skype, and Netflix are among the most popular applications (apps) downloaded today. As you probably know, the apps can be incredibly entertaining, and that's why an estimated 46 million apps are downloaded from Apple's App Store every day.

However, with all this considered, what kind of impact are these tablets having in the workplace? Should your company be the next to embrace the technology?



If you are in the process, or have already deployed tablet devices across your organization, then you are certainly not alone. Last October, Apple CEO Tim Cook reported that 92 percent of Fortune 500 companies were either testing or deploying iPads.

For those who have yet to embrace these devices, you probably have a long list of questions, and that's to be expected. In theory, the choice should be an easy one—your employees want this new technology, and implementing tablet devices across your organization can offer significant productivity advantages, not to mention improved worker satisfaction.

**Can tablets replace computers for your staff?**

**How will the devices be supported?**

**What about Wi-Fi versus the data plans and mobile hotspots?**

**What are the costs of a tablet?**

We developed this white paper to help answer some of your questions.

## Can tablets replace computers?

This topic is often debated, but the truth is that in today's workplace it depends on the employee and their job function. In most cases, we find the answer is no...at least for today. Although, tablet manufacturers are making significant strides with new apps and computing power in hopes of making the traditional PC obsolete.

For example, the Surface™ from Microsoft® is neither a PC nor a tablet. Microsoft sees the tablet and PC experience as something that can be embodied in one device. With that in mind, Microsoft designed the Surface for more traditional PC tasks, but with the ability to function as a tablet as well, meaning it works well for both content creation and consumption. It's one of the first Windows 8-optimized devices; one of the first Windows RT devices; and the first computer to come directly from Microsoft.

In the workplace we have found that highly mobile sales professionals, field technicians, and even some executives have had success transitioning completely to a traditional tablet, while the in-office worker still relies on a traditional workstation.

For most tablets today, they just aren't built for spreadsheets, nor are they very efficient when it comes to heavy document editing. There are also times when an employee may need a particular program that isn't compatible with the tablet, or they might need to transfer content to another device, and the lack of a USB port on some of the units can make this challenging. There are several scenarios when a PC will meet the user's needs better than the tablet. However, as the technology improves, tablets have growing potential for business usage, whether at the office or in the field.

## How will the devices be supported?

Tablet manufacturers have made noteworthy developments that help reduce frustrations for IT departments when it comes to supporting these devices across an enterprise. First, make sure your IT staff or your IT consultant is experienced in supporting tablets. We've found that if the IT staff is not well informed, they quickly become frustrated, and your employees who are using the new devices lose patience. It may seem like common sense, but your IT staff needs the skills to quickly resolve ordinary issues, like configuring Exchange accounts and troubleshooting Internet connectivity, etc.

**“In theory, the choice should be an easy one – your employees want this new technology”**

**🔗 FUN FACT:**  
According to Electric Power Research Institute, it costs \$1.36 per year to fully charge an iPad every other day.

It's also vital that your organization develop policies when it comes to purchasing and installing apps. Who has the rights to do so, and what constitutes an app that's needed for business? Clear directions need to be provided when it comes to connection to your network via VPN, which employees get remote access, and how a tablet gets wiped clean if it's lost or stolen.

To help our own IT Group manage and support tablets, we utilize sophisticated mobile device management software that allows us to monitor them and quickly solve problems. This suite of software is actually the first solution that gives the IT department real-time intelligence and control over mobile/tablet content, activity, and apps in order to secure the enterprise, reduce wireless cost, and improve the mobile-user experience.

When supporting a device, of course security is a major concern. You'll want to determine your security requirements in advance and how they should be met. For example, will users be required to leave sensitive information on the corporate network, thereby leaving the tablets more secure? Establish other security procedures and requirements such as passcodes that must be entered in order to gain access to the tablet.

Ultimately, if your company is considering embracing this technology, just know that tablets are a new breed of devices that require non-traditional methods of support.

## What about Wi-Fi, data plans, and mobile hotspots?


Some companies are able to get by with using tablets that connect only to Wi-Fi hotspots. These tablets use high-speed Wi-Fi networking to connect to the Internet. It's ideal if you are near a wireless hotspot in a coffee shop or airport for example. These days, there are free Wi-Fi hotspots nearly everywhere and the tablets can find them automatically.

You can also select a tablet device that will allow your employees to connect to the Internet even when Wi-Fi isn't available. If your users need to stay connected while they travel in the car to a sales appointment or work from a jobsite, then the Wi-Fi with cellular model will be important. These tablets keep you connected to the Internet using a fast mobile data connection. The data plans are sold separately from your wireless carrier like AT&T or Verizon Wireless.

Then, there is the option of using a mobile hotspot. A mobile hotspot is basically an Internet signal that you can carry in your pocket. These little portable routers transmit a 3G or 4G data signal wherever it goes. With a typical range of about 120 feet, it's a very convenient way to access the Internet; it's cost effective, and easy to share among users.

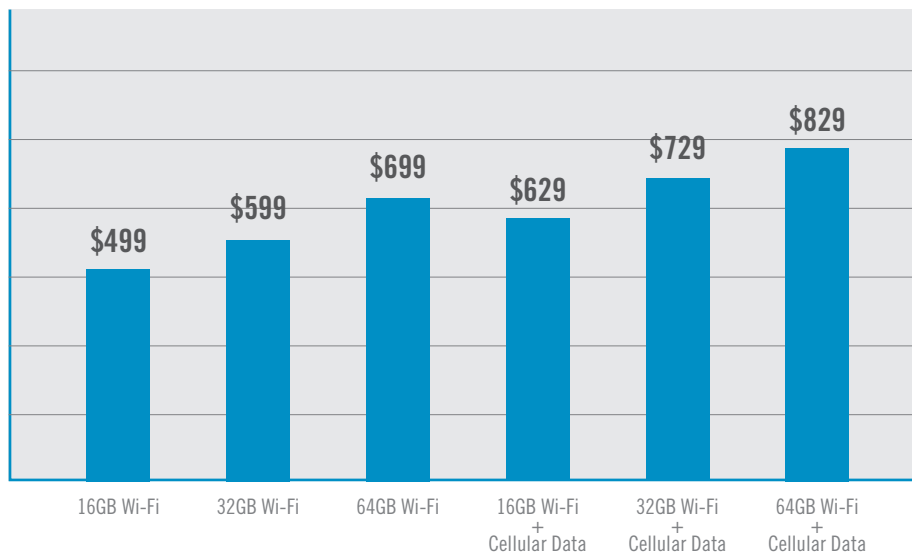
A mobile hotspot picks up data signals just like your smartphone would. But while a smartphone can only receive the signal, a mobile hotspot retransmits the signal, so nearby computers, tablets, and smartphones can access the signal just as they would with Wi-Fi. Many of the latest hotspot devices allow you to connect as many as ten Wi-Fi-enabled devices at one time.

**"Tablets are a new breed of devices that require non-traditional methods of support."**

 **FUN FACT:**  
By 2015, there will be 82.1 million tablet users in the United States.

## What is the cost?

The cost of actually purchasing the devices may vary widely depending on the options selected for storage and Internet connectivity. The Apple iPad for example starts at \$499 and goes up to \$829 per device. The graphic below depicts the six new iPad models currently available and their associated costs.



However, we often find that the need for each user in the workplace to have a dedicated device may not be the most economical option. Another approach can be to simply configure a number of tablets in an identical fashion so that certain groups or teams can check out one of the devices when they hit the road. This shared device model can be a great way to implement the technology at a lower cost.

If keeping your employees connected to the Internet when Wi-Fi isn't available is important to you, then don't forget to consider the cost of the cellular data plan. It's a recurring monthly fee that's charged per device based on the amount of data you think you will need. Your organization can monitor data usage and change the plan at any time, including adding data or canceling service if you know you won't need it. Some of the monthly data plans from AT&T and Verizon Wireless and the cost associated with each are shown to the right.

We also mentioned the option to go with a mobile hotspot. So what's the cost? One of the most popular mobile hotspots is from Verizon Wireless, called the Verizon Jetpack. With a 2-year contract the device itself can be purchased for about \$50. Then there is the monthly recurring data plan fee. These data plans range in price depending on the amount of monthly data you need. The plans start at 4GB per month for \$50 and then climb in increments of 2GB. The 12GB plan costs \$90 per month.

## Learn how you can use tablets in your business!

Forrester Research, Inc., recently estimated that about 25 percent of computers used for work globally are tablets and smartphones, not PCs. Whether your company is ready or not, the tablet has emerged as a serious player in enterprise computing, leaving you with a choice: embrace, or get left behind.

Here at American Structurepoint we've rolled out tablets to a subset of our own employees and have some fantastic success stories to share with you. We assist our clients in developing implementation plans for these devices and offer best practices when it comes to supporting the mobile technology.

**FUN FACT:**  
80 percent of tablet users say that tablets have improved their work/life balance.



250MB per month	\$14.99
3GB per month	\$30.00
5GB per month	\$50.00



1GB per month	\$20.00
2GB per month	\$30.00
5GB per month	\$50.00

**Contact Tony for more information!**

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