MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

MOBILE DEVICES ARE GETTING THINNER AND LIGHTER, MAKING WORKING WHILST TRAVELLING FAR MORE PRACTICAL. TYPICAL SCREEN RESOLUTION IS MUCH IMPROVED, ALLOWING AN ENTIRE DESKTOP TO BE DISPLAYED ON SMALLER SCREENS. FOR DAY-TO-DAY WORK, THE ADDITION OF CLIP ON KEYBOARD CASES MAKES TYPING FAR EASIER AND QUICKER. WHICH DEVICES ARE BEST FOR BUSINESS USE?

JASON CONNOLLY, DIRECTOR AT **NEXT GENERATION IT**, MAKES HIS PREDICTIONS.

Smartphones (iPhone vs Android)

With Blackberry dead in the water, Apple has been the runaway leader in smartphones. With its stylish design, bulletproof build quality and benchmark ease of use, Apple richly deserves its crown. Android had been catching up fast and the upcoming launch of Samsung Galaxy G6 may narrow the gap still further. Microsoft has recently bought Nokia and its Windows phones appeal to businesses who do not want to pay Apple's high price, but also want to standardise on a consistent, reliable and easier to use product than Android.

My verdict: Apple's iPhone 6 has recently powered ahead. But the new Galaxy G6 with its curved screen will make a big dent in Apple's lead.

Tablets (iPad vs Microsoft Surface)

Apple was the first to make a successful tablet with the iPad and despite strong competition, the iPad still reigns supreme. Microsoft's contender is the Surface tablet, which in theory should be much more suitable for businesses, allowing documents and applications to be shared between the office and the tablet seamlessly.

JASON CONNOLLY

Apple has such traction in this market space, but the Windows Surface tablet is a great concept, providing a portable tablet with the capability to snap on a lightweight keyboard to provide a very portable laptop. Many other manufacturers have caught on and are now designing their ultrabooks with a detachable keyboard, which in my view is the way things will go.

Ultrabooks (Macbooks vs Windows 8)

Sleek, light and thin ultrabooks have replaced bulky laptops, with solid state drives reducing weight whilst improving performance. Once again Apple's Macbook has led the way but Apple hasn't had it all its own way recently with HP, Dell, ASUS, Lenovo, Samsung and Toshiba all providing very similar ultrabooks running Windows 8. Windows 10 is due out later this year and helpfully is available as a free software update for Windows 7 and 8 customers.

For remote access, it is difficult to beat an ultrabook for flexibility and usability in a portable package. They are quick to boot, so great for quickly catching up on emails, and have a separate keyboard which makes them far more suitable than smartphones or tablets for anything more than quick replies to emails.

Mobile connectivity (3G/4G vs wi-fi)

Free wi-fi is commonly available and provides a convenient way of accessing the internet. But what if wi-fi is not available, is too expensive or too congested? Mobile internet (3G/4G) is the alternative, providing access to the internet over the mobile telecoms network. This has traditionally been slow and expensive, but as Sure and JT are currently rolling out their 4G service and pressure is mounting on telecoms companies to limit roaming charges, this is set to be an area of huge change.

However, with the introduction of 4G and the significant bandwidth available, there is even greater risk of bill shock (returning from abroad to a large, unexpected bill for roaming costs). To avoid this issue, many of our clients buy a pay-as-you-go SIM in the country they are travelling to, and plug this into a portable wi-fi hotspot carried in their bag.

Remote access technology (remote desktop vs Citrix)

So how do you connect from your ultrabook or tablet to the corporate system? To establish a connection, you can connect via a VPN (Virtual Private Network) to your office firewall, and remote control your desktop PC from there, which is great for smaller businesses as it requires very little additional infrastructure. This is quite clunky and can be problematic on slow or unreliable connections.

Citrix resolves many of these issues by providing a remote access server with the ability to connect different staff members simultaneously. Connection to the system is slick using a web portal which can be accessed from any internet connected PC or tablet. Security can be improved further with two factor authentication (physical or soft tokens), and the user's experience is much improved over slow and unreliable connections.

Citrix is the clear winner here having a significantly superior product, and will continue to be the lead player in remote access.

Conclusion

It is also worth considering cloud based IT systems, such as NGIT's Office Anywhere service, which uses Citrix to provide seamless access from any internet connected PC, ultrabook, tablet or smartphone (Mac or Windows) to a full IT system securely hosted in a local datacentre. So whichever devices you choose, you will have access to all of your company's emails, applications and data from anywhere in the world.