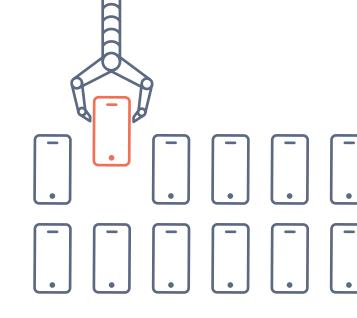# How to implement

a user-choice program

TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT TODAY, companies must recognize that a user-centric IT approach based on choice has become essential. More and more companies understand that empowering employees with the right technology is the best way to make them more productive and propel the business forward. As a result, IT leaders are reevaluating their practices and offering programs that provide employees with a choice or CYOD programs rather than pushing one type of device on employees.

The corporate world has made progress in implementing choice programs. A recent survey conducted by Jamf found over 60 percent of respondents said their company has implemented such a program. And, if you haven't heard, IBM has the largest choice program in the country, with more than 100,000 Macs self-selected and deployed to its employees. But, there's still progress to be made.

Technology choice is bigger than preference. It matters. Selecting a device of choice makes employees more productive in the workplace, according to 72 percent of respondents.

For most organizations, user choice is no longer a "nice to have," but rather a "must have" to cultivate more productive and appreciative employees.

Read on to dig into the five steps to creating and implementing a technology choice program in your organization.

Step 1:
Start with choice

In the first section, learn how to get a device choice program off the ground.

Choice program 101

A lot of organizations struggle to get past internal politics or common myths when it comes to implementing a choice program. Many are tempted to conduct an exhaustive internal application compatibility review, or feel prohibited by the cost factor. Others go in with common misconceptions that "Exchange and Office don't work on a Mac" or "We can't connect a Mac to our domain." All of these are barriers and take away from the underlying reason why any company should offer a choice program — improved culture.

Corporate culture is more important than ever for organizations seeking to attract talent and retain/inspire the employees they already have. Company culture is often equated to a well-written mission statement, great values, the benefits the organization offers, and even the architecture and layout of the offices. But the level of employee satisfaction is also a crucial component of culture, and offering a choice program can greatly add to that satisfaction. Providing options and allowing each employee to choose between a Mac or PC demonstrates that your organization embraces flexibility and is ready to meet a more tech-centered workforce where they are.

Walk before you run

Now that you understand the importance of choice programs, here are a couple of pro tips to getting one off the ground.

1. **Start off small with your choice program.** Consider beginning with a beta program where one department or group gets to choose their work computer. This allows you to test and determine where software and support gaps may live.

2. **Conduct a survey to determine demand.** Work with your HR team to see how often the question of technology choice comes up in interviews. Better yet, execute an internal survey asking what operating system employees would choose if given a choice. This will help you determine the scope of your future project.

3. **Skip the urge to conduct an application readiness assessment.** Just understand that there will be software that won't work on a Mac and vice versa, but there are often alternatives to keep employees productive. Check out the App Store to see what software solutions are on the market. Look for cloud-based solutions that run in a browser to replace outdated desktop software.

4. **Think through the whole experience.** Put yourself in your users' shoes. How will they go about requesting a new device? How will they get notified when their new device is ready and how will they get support for a new operating system? Consider building out a user-friendly portal where users can select and order their new device. Work with your marketing team to send automated emails about when they will get their new product. Look to examples of support pages you prefer and emulate their look and feel. Apple's own support pages are a great place to start. Empower your users to learn from each other by setting up an online forum or hosting lunch and learn sessions to teach on unique features of macOS. Small steps to enhance the user experience will go a long way for your overall success.

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Be open and communicative. When you are ready to roll out your program to the masses, start on the right foot by being open and communicative. Go in knowing that not all employees will choose the same device or be satisfied with their initial decision. Consider offering a return window; IBM offered a 60-day return policy for their choice program. This will give employees the freedom to confidently make, test and stick with their device decision.

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Measure the impact. If you're going to go through all the work of rolling out a choice program, you should definitely measure the impact. Whether it is a question on an annual employee engagement survey or a quick satisfaction survey after an employee gets their new device, be sure to gauge how your users are feeling about the right to choose, the device they chose and the process implemented to make device choice a reality.

Common questions about Mac

Can I bind a Mac to Active Directory?
Yes!

Won't Macs end up costing us more than PCs?
See the true cost of Mac versus PC.

Will all my printers work with Mac?
Most likely! Here's a nice list from Apple.

Does Microsoft Office work with Mac?
Yes!

Do I need to add a bunch of security software to Mac?
There's a lot already built in!

Step 2:
Streamline your deployment

Next, look at technologies from Apple that will help deploy your choice program devices.

Deployment technology available

In order to streamline Apple hardware deployments, you first need to understand how macOS, iOS and even tvOS are capable of being managed. There are three acronyms that are critical to this understanding: MDM, DEP and VPP.

MDM — Mobile Device Management: This is Apple's built-in management framework that enables remote Apple device administration. Profiles are delivered over the air, configuring various settings and restrictions within Apple's operating systems.

DEP — Device Enrollment Program: This Apple-exclusive program gives IT the ability to distribute devices without ever touching them (aka zero-touch deployment). By pre-assigning purchases, devices are automatically configured when they boot up for the first time.

VPP — Volume Purchase Program: This Apple-exclusive program allows IT to purchase and assign App Store app licenses in bulk. These apps can be pushed to devices independent of Apple IDs.

With these three technologies, you can deliver a unique user experience while also moving away from time-consuming imaging and manual configurations that often leave IT wanting to pull their hair out.

Apple's Device Enrollment Program

Order from Apple → MDM profiles Apps with Volume Purchase Program (VPP) Security settings → Ship to User

Leveraging the tools you have available

As the numbers indicate, when given the choice, your users are more likely to choose Apple over other brands. To help you accommodate this influx in devices, look to simplify your ordering process utilizing the three technologies previously mentioned. But first, consider setting up an online portal that mimics a typical shopping experience. This approach gives users a sense of ownership over the process and provides IT with an easy way to approve or deny hardware requests.

As new Mac, iPad or iPhone orders and placed and approved, the devices can be shipped directly to the employee and pre-configured thanks to DEP and MDM. Consider sending emails to users to inform them of the status of their device and remind them where to find helpful IT resources.

Upon receiving and opening their new device, users will automatically be guided through the IT-customized setup process and enrolled into management. The MDM profiles, with all the appropriate provisioned settings and policies you have defined, are automatically installed. The same goes for apps that you have licensed via VPP. Finally, any security settings you have in place — like turning on FileVault encryption — are also applied. No IT hands ever touch the device to make all this magic happen.

Step 3:
Embrace native Apple technology

Next, let's look at security and how IT can leverage native Apple technologies to keep devices secure, without sacrificing the user experience.
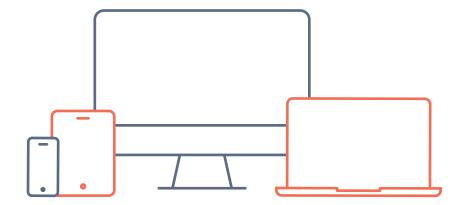
Native experience

Apple has spent considerable time and effort making the user experience of Mac, iPad and iPhone a pleasant one, and organizations looking to deploy these technologies as part of a choice program should strongly consider keeping that experience intact. Especially since the user experience is the main reason why many people choose Apple products in the first place.

Let's explore some key security configurations IT can implement to ensure their deployed iOS (operating system for iPad and iPhone) and macOS (operating system for Mac) devices remain protected, without needing to bolt on additional software and interfere with the native Apple experience users expect.

Encryption for iOS and macOS. Apple has native encryption tools built into the operating system that can be managed remotely. For iOS, this is as simple as requiring a passcode. Once a passcode is set, iOS automatically turns on its AES 256-bit encryption. The method for applying a passcode policy is via Apple's MDM framework, which was discussed in step two. IT can simply deploy a profile which requires their users set up a passcode.

For macOS, Apple builds FileVault into the operating system. This is similar to BitLocker on the Windows side, except it's included with the standard installation of macOS. IT administrators can enforce their users to turn on FileVault at any time. IT can even escrow the encryption keys in a single location, allowing access to keys only as needed. These simple measures ensure security standards without requiring additional software.

Limiting malware. macOS enjoys far less virus threats than Windows thanks to its UNIX underpinnings. Apple maintains a virus definition list and automatically updates all Macs. This is known as XProtect, and just like FileVault, is built into the operating system and doesn't get in the way of users. IT can enforce this setting via an MDM profile.
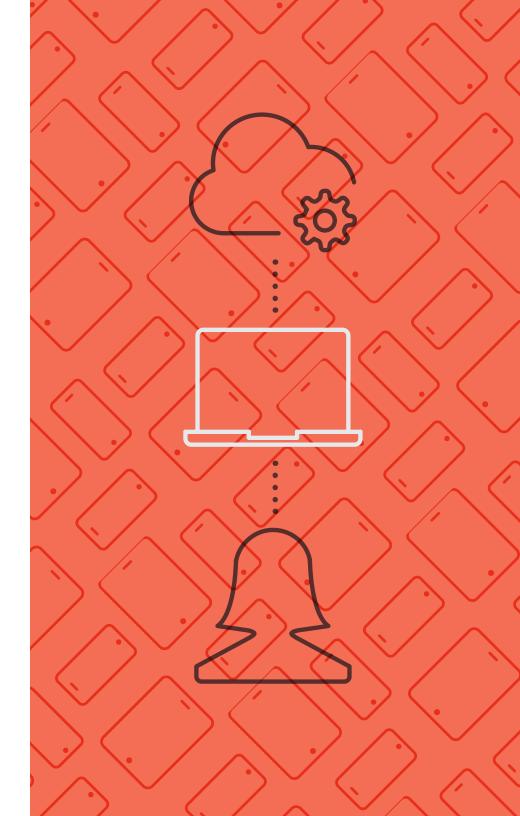
Since iOS relies on the App Store — which in turn relies on Apple vetting and approving apps — there have been no widespread viruses for the mobile operating system. As such, there is no need to add any anti-virus software to iOS.

Applying restrictions. Part of securing devices also means applying restrictions. Thanks to the MDM framework, Apple provides IT administrators with a clean way to turn certain features on and off depending on the use case. For example, an IT admin could disable the camera on an iPhone being used in a secure area. Or some of the consumer features, like iCloud, can easily be disabled on both Mac and iOS. These restrictions are all baked into the MDM framework, which IT can build and deploy to their users' devices.

Specifically for Mac, IT needs to consider how they want to handle user accounts. When a Mac is set up for the first time, an account is created for the local user often with full admin privileges. This is not always desired since a full admin can install any software they want, modify system settings, and even un-enroll a Mac from management. Because of this, IT can opt to restrict their users to a standard account as opposed to an admin. This setting can be enforced during the initial setup of the Mac, as long as it's tied to the DEP.

Remote management. Finally, IT admins will want to update settings and software once they are in the hands of users. This is where a management tool that leverages MDM can help. Keep your software up to date by tracking and deploying patches to applications and even the operating system. Run advanced reports to ensure security compliance and automate actions to be taken on devices out of compliance. Using a remote management tool, IT can even ensure security of devices that are lost or stolen by placing them into Lost Mode or remotely erasing the device.

By avoiding third-party security software, organizations allow users to get the most out of the Apple experience.

Step 4:
Resources at the ready for employees

Next, look at how to improve support by automating service tasks through an app catalog.

Empower employees; free your time up

Providing on-demand resources is a great way to enable users to be self-sufficient. App catalogs, which can be either a website or desktop and mobile app, are populated with IT-approved resources that users can get on their own. No need to submit an IT ticket for trivial tasks like installing printer drivers or downloading your company's chat app. This concept is known as "tier 0 support" because it allows users to skip the traditional tier 1 desktop support group. Let's look at what IT can make available through an on-demand app catalog.

Software and licenses

The first, and most likely, items IT will populate an app catalog with are apps. You'll want to think through all the different software needed for your users' Mac and iOS devices. Software on Mac can be either in the App Store or downloaded from an outside source. For common software titles, like Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative Suite, you can package up the software installer and place it in the app catalog.

If you are deploying App Store apps, you'll want to make sure your management tool supports VPP. You'll be able to distribute those apps to your users without the need for an Apple ID. A management tool can even keep track of the software licenses for both App Store and non-App Store apps.
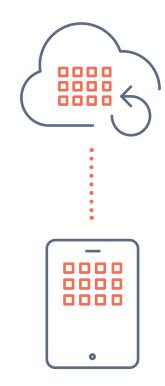
IT resources

Next, you'll want to examine what secondary software you need to provide for your users. This could be office printer drivers, configurations for email accounts, VPN settings, and more. You'll be able to publish configuration profiles that contain pre-defined IT settings. Say goodbye to manually setting up VPN for your remote employees. You can even provide various plug-ins for common services, like WebEx or browser extensions for your single sign-on (SSO) provider.

Maintenance

Finally, IT can even provide a quick and easy way for users to run basic maintenance on their machine or device. You can populate an app catalog with a script that will run basic maintenance tasks on your users' Mac, including permissions fixes and flushing caches, and then force the machine to reboot. Who said there was no such thing as an easy button?

No admin rights required

All this can be run by a user without admin rights, meaning standard users are also given the freedom to customize their own device. This is not a one-time process either. Add new and popular apps to your app catalog and remove unnecessary items at any time. All these resources can be scoped to specific users and groups, so users only see what they are approved to see.

Step 5:
Offering a better support experience

Next, see how to go beyond the IT department and improve the support experience by leveraging other aspects of your organization.

While IT will do the heavy lifting of deploying and triaging support tickets, consider working with marketing, HR, communications and UI/UX teams to build an intuitive support experience that accounts for all the different touch-points users have with their technology. The way an employee receives or requests a new device, including support for that device, can be improved by bringing in outside ideas.

Infuse design and engineering

First, consider what makes for a good customer experience (and we say customers here because our users are really like internal customers.) Good engineering and visual design can go a long way. Think about what you expect in your consumer life when you get support. You expect it to be clear, simple, well-designed and easy to find the answers you're looking for without sifting through clutter. This same concept applies to your IT team. Evaluate your current IT touchpoint with UX in mind. Are they clear for the user? Are they well-designed? Are you presenting too much information? By taking the time to do the engineering and make IT interactions simple and easy, users will start pulling the resources they need, as opposed to you having to push resources on them.

A flexible support portal

Beyond an app catalog you will need an online portal that serves as your main hub for employee interactions with IT. You may already have something like this in place. Think through the common workflows your users will encounter: How do they request a new computer? How do they find VPN settings? How do they submit a ticket? A well-designed portal can act as an online community encouraging peer support. Your portal quickly becomes the forum for arming employees with answers, and gives them a place to ask questions and post comments. This leads to employees self-helping, instead of immediately contacting you for assistance.

Resolution plus empowerment

In order to encourage and support a culture of self-sufficiency, the help desk can focus on delivering a positive user experience, versus trying to close the ticket as soon as possible. If the fix is something simple, encourage your team to take the time to train the user on why this or that broke and how they can fix it on their own. This drives down future calls to the help desk since the user is empowered to address their own problem and even help their co-workers troubleshoot a similar issue. The overall goal is to drive a culture change within your help desk. User choice programs perform well when users feel comfortable contacting IT with questions regarding any of their devices.

Paving roads to improved company culture

At the end of the day, adding these components to your IT model is really all about culture. IT needs to be an extension of the culture your organization wants to have. It's one of the few functions in a company that touches all employees. Good culture comes from engaged employees, and the quickest way to engage employees is through something they use every day.

Each one of the steps discussed aids and enhances the culture at any organization. If organizations are offering technology choice and IT is seen as an enabler, you'll quickly discover you'll have more productive, happier employees.

Ready to put all that you've learned in this series to use at your organization?