



Technology Brief...

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J.Gold Associates LLC, 6 Valentine Road, Northborough, MA 01532, USA
www.jgoldassociates.com +1-508-393-5294
Research, Analysis, Strategy, Insight

HP Wants to Manage More Corporate PCs

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Most enterprises still struggle with managing PCs, and it's only gotten worse as users move to a work-from-anywhere model. Indeed, one of the biggest headaches companies face is how to make sure that remote workers have all the updates necessary on their devices (e.g., firmware, malware protection, app updates, policies) before they are allowed to access enterprise environments. There are a plethora of tools available but many choose the popular tools from Microsoft like InTunes. InTunes allows companies to provide some level of support, but often at a significant cost in resources/manpower with its less than fully automated features. Indeed, between mobile and desktop PC management taking as many as one full time person per 200—300 deployed devices, enterprises with thousands of users and device are looking for more efficient alternatives.

As a result, we are seeing an increased use of Device as a Service being offered by both hardware vendors (e.g., Dell, HP, Lenovo) and third party providers (e.g., Compuware, CDW). These "lifecycle management" offerings are not new, as companies have been using services to do things like preloading software and remote break-fix for decades. But increasingly organizations are looking to eliminate the total burden of endpoint management altogether. As a result, more full featured "as a service" offerings from vendors will increase over time and by 2025 we expect 15%-25% of enterprise PCs to be DaaS enabled. And while it's still attractive to smaller organizations, we expect SMB implementations to be substantially less as they generally have fewer options to implement such services. However we are starting to see SMB focused PC sellers increasingly sell pass through services to SMB delivered from the big vendors.

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Trying to take advantage of this trend, HP recently introduced a set of service offerings that includes both "sweet spot" components for making management task easier, to a fully endpoint management service that alleviates IT from managing enterprise devices. HP's Adaptive Endpoint Management is a fully managed service offering that provides direct to end user PCs so there is Zero-Touch needed during deployment. HP Connect for Microsoft Endpoint Manager is a service that sits on top of Microsoft endpoint management tools to make it easier to do most of the base level tasks, like remotely configuring and securing the devices as well as updating the BIOS (a particularly difficult task). And HP Cloud Endpoint Manager is targeted at helping organizations who need to deploy cloud-based thin clients.

While we expect such service to become more popular over time, one major issue is that the HP services are currently targeted at their own base of PCs. Since most

large organizations have endpoints from multiple vendors, these services may not be all that attractive. To its credit, HP does offer a full service DaaS program that manages a multi-vendor environment, but that represents a much larger commitment from any enterprise wanting to move in that direction.

Bottom Line: HP is trying to tap into a growing market of frustrated organizations that have to deploy significant resources to manage their endpoint devices and the users employing those machines. And frankly most enterprises still have older and not well automated solutions for endpoint lifecycle management that make them inefficient. This results in having to deploy scarce IT resources that could be better spent elsewhere. It also means a reliance on Capex spending when an Opex strategy might be more advantageous. And despite predictions that many organizations will move to a cloud based thin client “workspaces” approach, that still represents a small minority of deployments (we estimate no more than 10%-15% of deployed endpoints). But enterprises would do well to evaluate and adopt a more “as a service” strategy for endpoint lifecycle management, and subsequently moving any newly available IT resources to more productive and revenue contributing tasks.

How Samsung Missed the Business Market Opportunity with its new Z Fold 3 Device

Samsung recently introduced its next generation Foldable Smartphone device, the Samsung Galaxy Z Fold. This is the third generation of its flagship foldable, with improved performance through new processor, high quality 5G connectivity including mmWave, sleeker design through a new hinge technology, and improved displays both on the cover and inside. There are a number of other enhanced features and consumer-friendly capabilities, but below I want to concentrate on its business oriented capabilities.

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It’s a premium device with fold out screen making it the equivalent of a tablet when open, while also offering enhanced multi-screen/spilt screen capability so important in a business device. And Samsung remains the most secure mobile devices available with its Knox security enhancements – taking over the mantel of premium mobile security as Blackberry receded from the market. And Samsung Dex offers the ability to create a PC-like environment with large screen, mouse/pen navigation, Windows app availability, etc. through externally attached screens, keyboard and mouse.

But, Samsung has almost exclusively pitched the consumer based features of the device. This is a major failing, in my estimation. The Fold has the potential to have a major impact on the business and the pro-sumer market, although Samsung’s messaging seems not to press its advantage here.

We see Chromebooks becoming much more popular in SMB and even enterprise. No Chromebook is going to be a replacement for a feature-rich smartphone like the Fold. But could a device like the Fold be a replacement for a Chromebook? I think there’s a good argument to be made for that, and would show a positive ROI for enterprise and business users generally (ROI is something we look at a lot). Why is Samsung not pressing its advantages in messaging the DEX and Knox capability inherent in the Fold? These are perfect solutions for business users who want to compare and contrast this device versus the primary competition, Apple’s iPhone. Apple is positioning itself as the most secure, but Android has come a long way in securing its OS, and in many ways Knox is superior to iPhone security. And Samsung, and Android, especially Android Enterprise, offers better UEM capability

and support, not to mention a much larger number of apps that many business users rely upon.

Samsung seems to “undersell” its close relationships with Google and Microsoft. Is there a reason for this? I see many business users looking for mobile options to work with either GCP/Google workspace or Office 365, but have to “fend for themselves” to do so. And this is especially true for remote work, which obviously is not going away anytime soon. Why does Samsung not offer a “Business Bundle” for the Fold (e.g., with S Pen, perhaps even Office 365)? This would be a very attractive offering to both enterprise and small business users, and it would make a purchase decision that much easier.

There is a real TCO advantage for enterprises in having one multi-purpose device rather than multiple devices deployed to each user. It also means there is potentially a single point of failure if the device breaks, but currently most users have the ability to move to their PC or tablet if necessary. And while the Fold is not ideal for all business users, a good percentage could be fully empowered with just this device rather than having multiple devices to work with, especially with the large screen format and Dex connection options.

Bottom line With the new Fold, Samsung is positioning it through its messaging as a consumer device when in truth there is a significant advantage (and ROI) for business users. And while it’s not exactly the same, I do think there is a missed opportunity in marketing the recently announced Galaxy Smart Watch to business users as well. Samsung is known primarily as a consumer company, even though it spends resources on marketing to businesses and has won some major accounts (e.g., Walmart with its purchase of 700K XCover Pro devices). But Samsung should be making its messaging about mainstream products with major business appeal more obvious about the benefits to business users, rather than having such users need to discover the benefits on their own. This is a missed opportunity for Samsung in marketing a compelling new device to business users.

In a Departure from the Past, Webex Goes for Ease of Use

Not sure that I thought Cisco buying Webex many years ago was a good idea. It diverted them from their primary business model which was high quality enterprise grade networking. And for several years, Webex languished with user interface challenges and a reputation for being too complex to implement and manage. It was buggy, not very intuitive, and performance suffered compared to more modern competitors. Indeed, people used to ask when Webex will catch up with the competition. But, then along came the requirement of Work from Home.....

Fast forward to now – and Cisco has done a pretty good job upgrading Webex over the past couple of years to become one of the premier collaboration suites available. It is no longer a resource hog that brought your PC to its knees, and it now works well on mobile devices too. But perhaps the biggest improvement has been in the user experience. Most collaboration suites have been adding multiple capabilities to their products (e.g., video, file sharing, support for collaboration appliances like cameras, whiteboards and the like, and interconnecting with primary office tools like calendars, meeting scheduling, messaging, etc.). All of this capability has made it hard for users to work with anything but the most basic features, and the learning curve for the more complex functions can be daunting.

Webex is trying to fix this dilemma. It now includes a rich feature set that competes well with others, including those that add one-off specialized capabilities and app integrations (Webex does this too when it’s needed). Webex offers accessory headsets and videoconferencing displays, appliances for standalone deployment, enhanced whiteboarding features, and can interact with competitors like Zoom,

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Google and Microsoft products for users who need cross-platform availability (as most users not limited to internal corporate communications and collaboration do). The product includes team and personal insights that provides informational analytics about usability and performance. And with the recent acquisition of Socio for in-event and post-event analytics, as well as Slido for audience messaging and Q&A, Webex has moved well beyond the early versions with a klugey interface, poor performance and limited functionality, to also offer a rich set of management tools.

Cisco has also upped the game for security and manageability as well. Webex is fairly tightly integrated with Cisco security and management tools like ThousandEyes and Meraki manager to make it easier for IT to deploy, and to monitor network traffic for anomalies. Further, Cisco has added a number of features that use AI for both user experience and IT management functionality. Webex is also available as a cloud-enabled “as a service” offering, making it much more manageable to deploy and eliminates needed infrastructure necessary for on-prem installations, as well as enables a “pay as you use” model.

What’s changed?

Good technologies, especially those with large numbers of functions, are best for users if they are transparent and unused functions remain invisible. Complexity is the bane of users’ existence. So much functionality can add a great deal of complexity to a product and make users cringe. But Cisco’s approach to the latest Webex generation has been to maximize the user experience by minimizing the complexity. It does it in three ways. First, it only reveals functions that are needed for a particular task. This menu driven approach makes it much easier to associate functionality with user needs. Second, it uses AI to enhance the usability by making suggestions based on user ease of use and relevant context (e.g., raise your hand in front of the camera raises your hand for a question in the app). And finally it uses even more AI to predictively suggest functions/operations for the user based on context of user interactions. And the AI assist also works with the back end management capabilities. IT staff have enhanced functionality made visible to them based on the AI algorithms.

Webex may be well beyond what many users and organizations need in a collaboration application. Indeed, Webex will primarily appeal to larger organizations that require a rich feature set and not those organizations that simply need a reliable but easy to operate collaboration system. That is why many have utilized the basic functions available in Zoom or Google Meets. Cisco does offer a subset of the complete Webex functionality for SMB users, but I don’t expect a very large percentage of their customers to be in this category. Still, being able to start with limited capabilities and then upgrade/enhance your features can be very appealing to those starting small but expecting to add features over time.

Bottom Line: For those that have experience with Webex of the past, and have not been enamored with its features, it might be time to try it again. Cisco’s recent focus on user experience and ease of use has made it much more user friendly (and IT friendly as well). It’s still primarily going to appeal to larger organizations, but unlike the past when it was seen as a necessary evil, the new Webex is actually a formidable competitor in this space.

About J.Gold Associates, LLC.

J.Gold Associates provides advisory services, syndicated research, strategic consulting and in-context analysis to help its clients make important technology choices and to enable improved product deployment decisions and go to market strategies. We work with our clients to produce successful new product strategies and deployments through workshops and reviews, business and strategic plan coaching and reviews, assistance in product selection and vendor evaluations, needs analysis, competitive analysis, and ongoing expertise transfer.

J.Gold Associates provides its clients with insightful, meaningful and actionable analysis of trends in the computer and technology industries. We have acquired a broad based knowledge of the technology landscape and business deployment requirements, and bring that expertise to bear in our work. We cover the needs of business users in enterprise and SMB markets, plus focus on emerging consumer technologies that will quickly be re-purposed to business use.

We can provide your company with a trusted and expert resource to maximize your investments and minimize your risk. Please contact us to see how we can help you.



J.Gold Associates, LLC

6 Valentine Road
Northborough, MA 01532 USA

Phone:

+1-508-393-5294

Web:

www.jgoldassociates.com

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