

ESG Brief

Is the Google Chromebook Business-ready?

Date: March 2016 **Author:** Mark Bowker, Senior Analyst and Bill Lundell, Director of Research

Abstract: Google Chromebooks are clearly on the radar screens of IT organizations and are poised to potentially disrupt the entrenched platforms end-users have relied upon to do their jobs for years. The simplicity and economics of the Google portfolio can make Chromebook an attractive option for businesses that are experiencing a rapid change in the way employees work. How is this message being received by corporate IT departments, and what impact will it have on the end-user computing status quo?

The Corporate IT Potential for Google Chromebook

When it comes to the corporate end-user computing experience, the landscape is currently in a state of transformation in terms of the devices that employees can use to do their jobs and the manner in which they use those devices to access business applications. In order to garner more insight into these trends, ESG recently surveyed 395 IT professionals responsible for overseeing the endpoint device, application, and mobile computing strategy for their organization. A critical focus of the research included specific endpoint device trends, such as bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies and their effect on the entrenched end-user computing ecosystem, namely Windows-based desktop and laptop PCs.

One of the areas of examination involved organizations' openness to Google Chromebook and its potential to disrupt the aforementioned old guard approach. As seen in Figure 1, more than two-thirds of respondents expect that Google Chromebooks will impact their organization's existing Windows-based endpoint device footprint, whether to a significant (38%) or minor (32%) extent. At the other end of the spectrum, less than one-quarter of organizations report having absolutely no plans to provide their employees with Chromebooks.

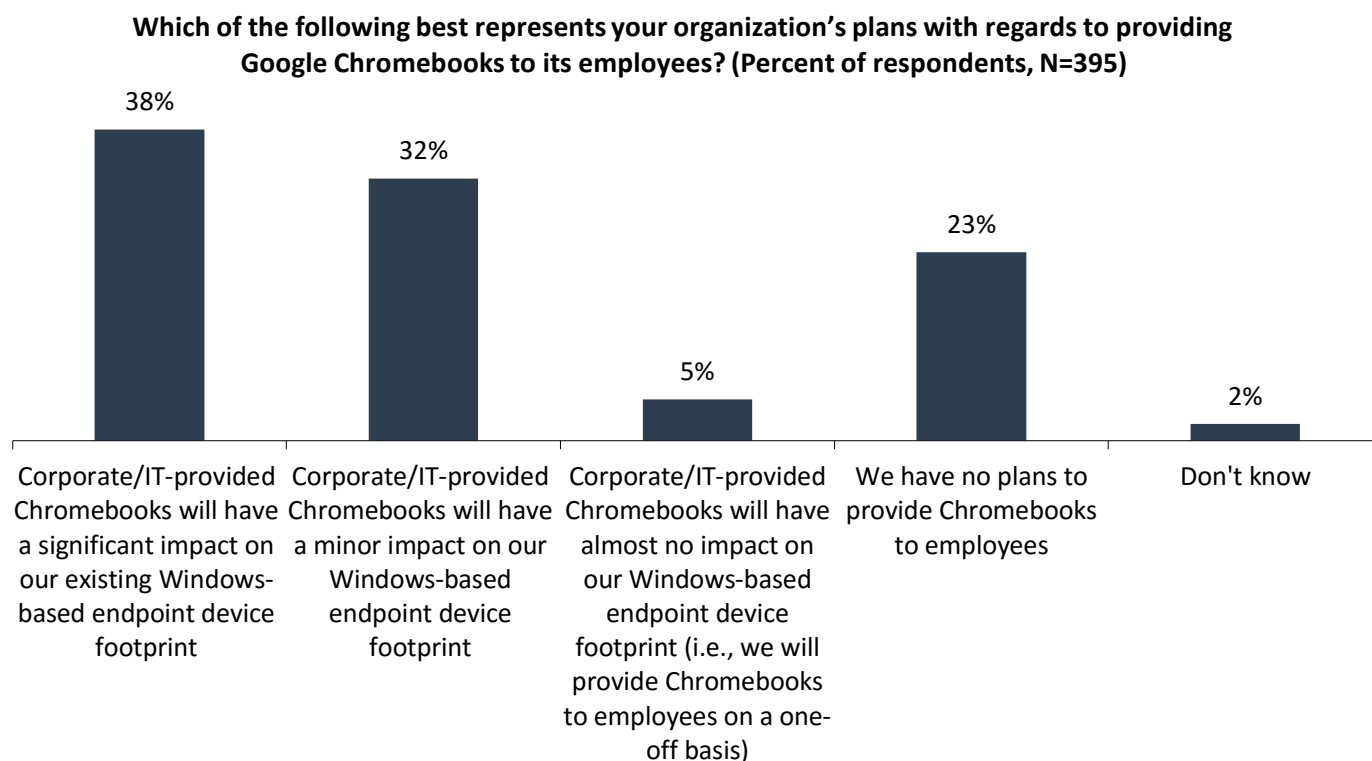
In an effort to further profile those organizations with a greater affinity toward Chromebook, ESG segmented the respondents according to the amount of time their organization has been in existence (i.e., age of the organization). Given their proclivity for being at the forefront of technology trends like cloud computing¹ and BYOD,² it is not surprising that younger organizations are considerably more bullish on their Google Chromebook outlook. Specifically, those organizations that have been operating for ten years or less are more than twice as likely as those that have been around for more than 20 years (56% versus 24%) to believe that Chromebooks will have a *significant impact* on their Windows-based endpoint device footprint (see Table 1). In addition to the previous observations about the technology tendencies of these younger organizations, it is worth pointing out that the Windows-based endpoint device profile of these organizations is likely much smaller from the outset than their more established counterparts that have been in business since the PC revolution of the

¹ Source: ESG Research Report, [2015 IT Spending Intentions Survey](#), February 2015.

² Source: ESG Brief, [BYOD: Increased Investment Leads to Increased Productivity](#), May 2015.

1980s. For their part, 41% of organizations that have been in existence for more than 20 years have no plans to provide Chromebooks to their employees, compared with only 9% of those organizations born in the digital age.

FIGURE 1. Plans with Regards to Providing Employees with Google Chromebooks



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2016

TABLE 1. Plans with Regards to Providing Employees with Google Chromebooks, by Age of Organization

Which of the following best represents your organization's plans with regards to providing Google Chromebooks to its employees?			
	10 years or less (N=137)	11 to 50 years (N=115)	More than 20 years (N=142)
Corporate/IT-provided Chromebooks will have a <i>significant</i> impact on our Windows-based endpoint device footprint	56%	35%	24%
Corporate/IT-provided Chromebooks will have a <i>minor</i> impact on our Windows-based endpoint device footprint	33%	41%	23%
Corporate/IT-provided Chromebooks will have almost no impact on our Windows-based endpoint device footprint	2%	5%	8%
We have no plans to provide Chromebooks to employees	9%	17%	41%
Don't know/too soon to tell	0%	2%	4%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2016

The Bigger Truth

Google Chromebooks are clearly on the radar screen of many organizations and are poised to potentially disrupt existing platforms that have been used in businesses for many years. There are certainly strong potential synergies for companies that have standardized on Google Apps for Work and adopted Chromebook, but other companies can benefit as well. An employee who is primarily using web applications in her environment could be a strong candidate, as could employees who are still using Windows applications but stepping away from Windows devices in their business setting. Chrome RDP technology, Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp, VMware Horizon, and other emerging solutions can all help project a Microsoft Windows workspace onto a Google Chromebook.

Google is the newcomer in a corporate business setting as it bumps up against Microsoft and Apple, but ESG research respondents indicate that the Google Chromebook is a potential fit for some opportunities and a healthy group of IT professionals surveyed indicate that they believe it will have an impact on the Windows PC environment over time. The fog over the type of buyer has also lifted a bit, indicating that IT professionals under the age of 35 are more likely to influence Google Chromebook decisions and investments. Outside of the education market, Google has the potential to package Google for Work **with** Chromebooks in environments where employees are embracing endpoint device change, and the simplicity and economics of Google solutions can make the Chromebook an attractive option for businesses that are increasing their reliance on a cloud-based application delivery strategy. Application delivery and endpoint device choice are creating a fast-acting catalyst for businesses to modify process and employee behavior at work. The goal of improved productivity and security are front and center as businesses explore alternative options and look toward Google as a company that can help shape their strategy and advance the effectiveness of applications and devices for employee productivity.

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