

Mobile loss – easy to be careless

Rob Bamforth, Principal Analyst

Quocirca Comment

Many will have just enjoyed a festive period of present giving, with a fortunate number receiving fancy new mobile phones, tablets and other smart and small mobile gadgets. These types of devices have moved in recent years from being the specialist tools of a certain preserve of workers to being everyday objects that virtually everyone casually expects to carry about their person all day (and according to recent research, a significant percentage will take them to bed too.)

These small shiny packages are high performance, state of the art compute and communications platforms, bristling with functionality, crisp high definition screens and sophisticated user interaction through touch screens, location awareness and movement detection. Despite high volume manufacturing and incessant off-shoring, the rising toll of highly engineered form, increasingly high speed data communications and real-time Angry Bird app functionality means that these gadgets are not cheap. Subsidised contracts will only hide these costs so long, and this becomes all too clear when devices have to be replaced.

While the applications and media downloaded to them will (probably) be backed up in case of loss or damage to the device, there may be unprotected personal data at risk. Today, for most people, it might only be the inconvenient loss of contacts, phone numbers and other tediously replaceable information, but for some now and for many in the future it might be so much more important. Digital tickets, boarding passes and mobile financial transactions that are carried out through "tap and go" as easily as an Oystercard are fast becoming a reality for smartphone users.

So everyone really takes great care of their mega mobile devices, right?

Far from it. Around 10,000 mobile phones are left in London taxis every month, and since smartphones are rapidly becoming the default mobile phone option, a large percentage of this

number are likely to be at this expensive end of the mobile spectrum.

Maybe a percentage drop out of pockets, handbags and briefcases while the owner is working or otherwise occupied. Maybe a number are late at night when their owners are distracted or overly merry? Perhaps, but there are so many other places where mobile device owners are careless - at cafes, in bars, in shops - in fact almost anywhere the owner can sit down - or just be distracted by what is going on around them.

A recently seen example highlights another tempting location. A father leaves his new iPhone with his young son to play games on while they sit in a queue at the barbers; father gets haircut first and when son gets up he leaves the £500 gadget unguarded on the chair. The young boy might not realise the inherent value of the device, but surely the father does - so why hasn't he imparted this information? The way the boy follows his father's example is similar to the effect imparted on junior employees by countless senior executives who are all too casual with their mobile devices right from the early days of the BlackBerry.

So what do captains of industry and ready-to-be-shorn fathers have in common?

Most probably a combination of a sense of invulnerability with a complete lack of understanding of the value inherent in the device and especially its contents.

Just as few believe that their digital data is ephemeral or in the need for regular backups, until a disk crashes and no valid copies have been made, so too do most people not really believe their mobile devices are at risk. They do believe other people's devices are at risk, they just think they will be 'lucky'. Given that smartphones have a convertible street value approaching that of car radios in the 1970s, the risk of loss of device through theft, either opportunistic or deliberate, is high.

Protecting, insuring and then replacing a stolen device might be expensive, but the bigger problem an owner is likely to face is recovering the data and services contained on it. The minimum that every smartphone owner should do is treat the device like the vulnerable high powered computer it really is. That means back up any data that is critical, important or difficult to replace e.g. contacts.

First use whatever is close to the device itself to store the main day to day services or data, such as sync to iTunes for Apple devices or a mobile content management app for Android etc. Next, think about a suitably secure cloud storage service for documents and other occasionally used data files.

There are plenty of cloud storage options around and most are cheap and easy to use, but the key is to take control of your data and decide what is important, or would be a pain if lost. Finally, try to take more care; keep your eyes open and your expensive-to-lose mobile devices in sight!

This article first appeared on
<http://www.knowyourmobile.com>

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Full access to all of Quocirca's public output (reports, articles, presentations, blogs and videos) can be made at <http://www.quocirca.com>