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Tablet Policy Puts California City on the Cutting Edge.

Rancho Cordova's move to tablet devices has been a rousing success in its first year of implementation.

An experiment using tablet devices to display city council agendas has sparked a paperless office movement and progressive technology policy-making in Rancho Cordova, Calif.

Under a new [policy](#) launched last July, if an employee can show three business reasons why a tablet would help improve work efficiency, the city will purchase either an iPad or Android tablet for him or her. The device is then authorized for both business and personal use, but the employee must agree to bring it to work every day.

The policy has been a success for the city so far. Jay Hadley, IT manager for Rancho Cordova, told *Government Technology* that 61 of the city's 70 full-time employees are now using city-owned tablets. In time, Hadley believes the devices will eventually enable staff to become a completely mobile work force.

The tablet explosion originally started as a way to eliminate the high cost of printing the city's meeting agendas. Hadley revealed the city was spending \$17,000 per year printing materials for the meetings, so it rolled out iPads for city council meetings to cut that expense. The devices were used by council members and staff, and one device in the council chambers displays a copy of the meeting agenda for the public to reference.

Encouraged by the results, city leaders decided to invest in tablets for the entire staff and make a commitment to keep its employees at a high level of technology.

"We want to provide state-of-the-art resources to staff so they can be more efficient and productive," said Joe Chinn, Rancho Cordova's interim city manager. "Access to this newer technology has been embraced by our city team and seems to be allowing employees to find more creative ways to accomplish their jobs."

POLICY RESEARCH

Drafting a policy to govern tablet use wasn't an easy task, however, as there weren't any best practices established to work from. While Hadley and his team reached out to their peers in other cities, what they found was a bunch of varying BYOD policies, but nothing that addressed tablets specifically.

So Rancho Cordova looked internally and discussed what the policy should look like with users from various city departments, and executive level leaders. The result was a simple document that outlines basic expectations and responsibilities for the use and care of a tablet that clearly outlines the city's right to inspect the device as needed.

The city's mobile device management (MDM) solution notes when a device logs into the system and can send a ping out to one of the tablets if an employee loses it. Rancho Cordova pays for the

applications on the device necessary for public business, but employees must pay for all other private-use apps.

The cross-pollination of business and personal use has risks, however. Theoretically, employees could potentially spend an inordinate amount of time using a state-of-the-art tablet for fun and games. But Hadley wasn't overly concerned about the potential for abuse.

"I don't think we've gotten into the minutiae of worrying about them being used too much on the personal side," Hadley said. "Our organization is based on empowering and trusting employees to do the job, and we have a very cohesive team of people here."

Chinn added that having a support team in place to help employees integrate technology into their jobs - internally called the Technology Tribe - helps reinforce the city's trust in people and the commitment to embracing new ways to do their jobs.

"Because our culture has removed the fear of taking risks, employees look forward to new technologies as an opportunity, and do not associate it with a fear of failure," Chinn said.

Rancho Cordova city employees can also bring in their own mobile devices under the city's BYOD policy. While generally used for smartphones and laptops, tablets also fall under the BYOD umbrella. But users have to agree to have the city's MDM solution installed on it and adhere to the relevant access policies.

Hadley added that his team sits down with employees for a frank discussion on how their personal tablets are used, and if it appears to be more of a family device with children using it, he typically suggests the issuance of a city-owned tablet.

SECURITY ISSUES

Although Hadley hasn't had any technical challenges implementing the tablet policy so far, he admitted that security is always a concern. His staff spent a lot of time researching security policies and technologies related to tablets, but found that in reality, most of the mobile security tools available are MDM solutions aimed at traditional computers.

Rancho Cordova has a network access control system that automatically scans PCs and laptops logging in to its network. The system evaluates certain parameters like the computer's anti-virus status, operating system service pack level and other criteria. If the machine doesn't meet those parameters, the network access system won't let it in. But according to Hadley, the same automation doesn't exist for tablets, so his team has to manually set protocols for users of those devices.

In addition, Hadley noted that in his research on tablet use policies, he found that many cities are still locked in to what he considered the "old archaic way" of thinking of device security - not trusting the users to do the right thing. While Hadley admitted that even the most technologically-savvy employee could fall for a phishing scam or get sucked into social media obsession, he feels it's important to trust the judgment of city employees to do the right thing.

"Everybody is thirsting for freedom and doing stuff, they don't want to be locked down," Hadley said. "But we have to balance it. [Security] is more of an educational and policy-driven thing, and on the other side, we have to keep our firewalls in place and do due diligence on the IT side. The more you open yourself up, the more you have to make sure you are covering those bases."

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