

PRESS RELEASE: 11 November
2013

"GENERATION CLOUD" BEING FAILED BY SMES SAYS SHARP EUROPE

London, 11 November 2013 – European Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are failing a new generation of cloud workers, by not providing the sharing tools they need to do their jobs efficiently and effectively, claims research launched today by Sharp Europe. The survey of SME employees in UK, France, Germany, Sweden and Netherlands identified a clear 'opportunity gap' between what 'Generation Cloud' workers are demanding in the workplace and what is actually being provided by SMEs across Europe.

A recent Gartner¹ study of large businesses also found that despite the cloud hype only a small proportion had moved towards cloud email or office systems; this despite the fact that the explosive growth in the number of mobile devices used by employees is driving demand for easy remote access. While Gartner's report focused on big business, Sharp's research shows that this is equally an issue for smaller businesses.

Peter Plested, Director, European Solutions Business Centre, Sharp Europe said: "Whether business (large or small) likes it or not, employees are clearly driving for change in how we work, share, collaborate on and produce information. This is a cultural as well as a business process driven shift; and it is happening now." He continued; "Generation Cloud isn't waiting for employers to provide solutions to help them work this way – they are finding their own. European SMEs must sit up and recognise this shift to realise the benefits and not lose control of their own networks and corporate data – some of the most valuable assets for any business."

The Emergence of 'Generation Cloud'

The survey identified the emergence of a new generation of worker within the SME sector across Europe. It indicated that employees are moving towards a more flexible, collaborative working model, whether employers are supportive of this or not, and an increasingly tangible demand for more collaborative, flexible working practices.

- 59% of employees surveyed work outside of their office – those who only ever work in the office are now in the minority
- 46% of employees think that the ability to work remotely is key to their job
- 52% say this has become more important to them over the last 12 months
- 53% think they should be able to access work documents from any device and any location, to aid with efficient working
- Almost half of employees (48%) think they should be able to access work documents on their smartphone
- Most employees (41%) think they are more creative at home

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The SME Cloud Opportunity

Despite claims that businesses of all sizes are failing to implement effective cloud strategies, it would appear that employees are recognising the benefits this would bring; not only to team working and creativity but also to attracting the best talent and profitability.

When asked about the perceived benefits of increased collaboration in the workplace, the results indicated clear business benefits:

- Half of respondents (50%) believe that increased collaboration in the workplace would have a direct impact on their business' bottom line by making it more profitable, with contributing factors including:
 - 55% agreed or strongly agreed that working collaboratively would help them make more informed decisions
 - 60% that it would lead to the production of higher quality work
 - 61% claimed it would make them more efficient
- In addition to profit, there was also recognition that it would have a positive cultural impact on a business through improving company image and also the quality of internal team relationships:
 - 38% of employees would view a potential employer more favourably if it provided collaborative working tools
 - 53% said that the ability to collaborate better with colleagues would lead to closer team relationships

The Reality of the Opportunity Gap

The survey shows however that the reality of service provision within the SME sector is far from the demands from Generation Cloud workers. By not fully embracing new ways of flexible and collaborative working, SMEs are not only failing to realise the business benefits it can bring, but are also losing control of their networks and potentially introducing vulnerabilities; the resulting increase in Bring Your Own Service (BYOS) means that employees are increasingly embracing non-corporate network services to do their jobs.

- 41% employees said collaborative document tools are actively banned in their workplace, (9% use them anyway)
- 83% do not currently think they use an official cloud solution at work
- 43% do not have ways to easily share documents and collaborate with people outside of the corporate network
- 39% of employees say their company has no official policy on sharing work information beyond the work network and 19% of employees don't even know if a policy exists
- 67% of employees still typically share information as paper print-outs
- 13% of employees download collaborative working tools if their company doesn't provide them

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Sharp today launches Cloud Portal Office, a sharing, storing and simple workflow service which allows businesses to collaborate better. Providing access to information on a wide range of hardware, both stationary and mobile, Cloud Portal Office is perfect for businesses with a mobile or multi-office workforce, who want to help their teams work more efficiently.

Giving the IT department control of the cloud, Sharp's cloud offering also provides secure scan and print connectors for other popular storage applications, all from one Portal.

The research was carried out in September 2013 with 1535 office workers in UK (306), Germany (310), Netherlands (310), Sweden (305) and France (304).

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www.sharp.eu*

About Sharp Document Solutions

Sharp offers a comprehensive portfolio of award-winning document management solutions and hardware, ranging from office multifunction printers (MFPs) to large production systems. Sharp's proprietary Open Systems Architecture (OSA) technology can transform your MFP into a powerful information portal with seamless integration to the cloud and third-party business applications. Launched in November 2013, Sharp's Cloud Portal Office is a collaborative storage and workflow service to help your business stay connected, improve teamwork and perform better. We also offer Sharp Optimised Services which help to bring control, efficiency and productivity to your business. This is Why Sharp is the perfect solution for every office document management need. For further information, please visit www.sharp.eu

ⁱ "New Developments in the Cloud Office System Market," Gartner, 13 June 2013,
<http://www.gartner.com/document/2492216>.