

Mobile devices blur work and personal privacy raising cyber risks, says QUT researcher

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QUT's Dr Kenan Degirmenci. Credit: QUT Media

Organisations aren't moving quickly enough on cyber security threats linked to the drive toward using personal mobile devices in the workplace, warns a QUT privacy researcher.

Dr. Kenan Degirmenci from QUT's Science and Engineering Faculty's School of Information Systems said workers worldwide expected to take their work with them whenever and wherever.

But he warned Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) had opened up a can of worms for employers and employees alike.

Dr. Degirmenci's published research, Future of Flexible Work in the Digital Age: Bring Your Own Device Challenges of Privacy Protection, will be presented at the International Conference on Information Systems in Munich in December.

"The breakneck speed of digital transformation brought with it opportunities as well as threats," he said.

"Organisations don't appear to be keeping up with the pace of change, deliberately putting the brakes on digital transformation because it comes with security challenges."

Dr. Degirmenci said, nonetheless, by 2021 the BYOD and enterprise mobility market which incorporates segments such as software, security, [data management](#) and network security is estimated to grow to US\$73 billion globally.

Data breaches including stealing of personal information are also on the rise for all kinds of businesses and workplaces.



Dr. Kenan Degirmenci from QUT's School of Information Systems. Credit: QUT Media

Often employees use their personal devices, but many don't know if their employer has a policy in place to protect their data and usage.

"Some organisations wary of malware or theft of data can track employees' locations during work and non-[work hours](#), wipe data, as well as access private emails and photos," Dr. Degirmenci said.

The research involved a [case study](#) of two multinational companies and a survey of almost 550 employees from the United States, Germany and South Korea about bringing their own devices (BYOD) to work.

Dr. Degirmenci said the [multinational companies](#) from the survey used mobile device management (MDM) to monitor, manage and secure devices of employees.

"American employees placed greater emphasis on BYOD risks compared to Germany and South Korea," he said.

He said Australia ranked similarly to the United States in terms of its "individualist-type culture" and while workers wanted increased flexibility there were drawbacks to using their own devices.

New technologies and digital capabilities are also omniscient across the education sector with schools enacting BYOD.

"We've recommended BYOD security management be improved, particularly for countries like America and Australia."

More information: Degirmenci, Kenan , Shim, J.P. , Breitner, Michael H. , Nolte, Ferry , & Passlick, Jens (2019) Future of flexible work in the digital age: Bring your own device challenges of privacy protection. In ICIS 2019 Proceedings , Munich, Germany.

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