Persona-Led Device Refresh: Moving Beyond One-Size-Fits-All

October 2026



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Most organisations still refresh devices in much the same way they did ten years ago. A laptop reaches a certain age, a replacement is ordered, and the cycle starts again.

The problem is that the way people work has changed significantly, while many device strategies have not. Hybrid working, greater use of data, specialist applications and the arrival of AI are changing what people need from workplace technology. Yet refresh decisions are still frequently based on age, job title and standard specifications.

This can leave some people with far more technology than they need, while others struggle with devices that no longer support the work they are being asked to do. Persona-Led Device Refresh provides a more informed approach by starting with people, experience and working patterns rather than the hardware catalogue.

Why Traditional Refresh Strategies Fall Short

Not every employee uses technology in the same way.

A finance analyst working with large datasets has very different requirements from a frontline worker, a field engineer, or a customer service advisor. Yet many organisations continue to provide devices from a limited catalogue based on department, job title, or simply what was purchased previously.

The consequence is familiar.

Some users receive devices that significantly exceed their requirements. Others struggle with performance issues because their device no longer aligns with the applications and workloads they depend on every day.

These decisions are rarely made with bad intentions. They are often driven by simplicity, procurement processes, or a desire to standardise.

However, simplicity can come at a considerable cost.

As hardware prices continue to rise and organisations look to maximise the value of every technology investment, blanket refresh programmes increasingly become difficult to justify. The opportunity now is to align device investment with actual usage, performance data and employee experience.

The answer is not to create a unique device specification for every employee. That would simply replace one problem with another. The aim is to identify meaningful groups of users whose requirements are sufficiently similar to support better, more consistent decisions.

Understanding Device Personas

A persona-led approach focuses on understanding how employees use their devices in the real world.

Instead of relying solely on job titles or organisational structures, device personas are built using evidence. This includes application usage, workplace telemetry, performance data, sentiment, Digital Employee Experience insights and direct engagement with users.

Patterns quickly begin to emerge.

Some users require significant processing power for analytics, development or specialist applications. Others spend most of their day working across collaboration tools, email and productivity applications. Some are highly mobile and place greater importance on battery life and portability than raw performance.

By analysing these different needs, organisations can create a set of meaningful device personas that reflect how work is actually performed.

A typical assessment might reveal groups such as technical users, specialists, knowledge workers, field workers and frontline employees, each with distinct requirements and experience expectations.

The result is a far richer understanding of workplace technology demand than can ever be achieved through job titles alone.

Turning Data into Better Decisions

The real value of persona analysis comes from what happens next.

Many organisations already hold significant amounts of data about the devices in their environment. What they often lack is a framework to transform that data into actionable decisions.

In our conversations with customers, the issue is rarely a lack of device data. The challenge is bringing that data together with employee experience and working patterns so that it informs better decisions.

The Persona-Led Device Refresh approach combines several connected stages.

It begins with discovery. Using a Digital Employee Experience platform, device information, application usage, workplace telemetry, performance and employee sentiment are brought together to establish a baseline. This creates an objective view of the current environment rather than relying on assumptions.

The next stage is persona definition. Users are grouped according to actual working patterns, performance requirements and digital experience. Instead of treating thousands of users as individuals, organisations gain a manageable set of meaningful personas that represent their workforce.

From there, insights and recommendations emerge. Organisations can identify where devices are underperforming, where users are over-specified, and where investment can be redirected to deliver greater value.

Finally, this intelligence is used to shape a long-term device strategy that aligns refresh, reuse, redeployment and future investment decisions to genuine business need.

Improving Experience, Not Just Reducing Cost

The most successful refresh programmes are not solely focused on saving money.

They focus on improving experience.

Employees rarely care about processor models, memory configurations or hardware specifications. What matters is whether technology enables them to perform at their best.

Poor device performance creates friction throughout the working day. Slow boot times, application crashes, poor battery life and degraded performance all impact productivity, employee satisfaction and perception of IT.

By understanding digital experience alongside persona requirements, organisations can make refresh decisions that directly support workforce productivity.

For example, a technical persona working with large datasets and development tools may require significantly higher specifications than a standard knowledge worker. Conversely, a device that is no longer suitable for a technical user may still provide an excellent experience for a different persona.

This creates opportunities that many organisations never uncover through traditional refresh approaches.

Extending Value Through Reuse and Redeployment

One of the most powerful outcomes of a persona-led strategy is the ability to make better lifecycle decisions.

Historically, devices have often been refreshed based purely on age.

Yet age alone is a poor indicator of suitability.

A four-year-old device may still deliver a strong digital experience for certain personas, while a newer device may already be struggling in more demanding use cases.

Persona intelligence allows organisations to evaluate each device based on performance, role suitability, device health, user experience and business need.

This creates three clear paths.

Some devices can remain in service following refurbishment or component upgrades.

Others can be repurposed and redeployed to different personas where their specification remains a good fit.

Only those devices that genuinely reach the end of their useful life need to be replaced and responsibly recycled.

The result is a more sustainable refresh model that maximises value from existing assets while maintaining a positive user experience.

Aligning Refresh Strategy with Sustainability Goals

Sustainability has become a key consideration in every technology decision.

Organisations are increasingly expected to demonstrate measurable progress against environmental commitments while continuing to support business growth.

Device refresh is often overlooked as an opportunity to contribute towards those objectives.

Extending device life where experience remains strong, reducing unnecessary hardware purchases and increasing reuse all contribute to lowering environmental impact. Persona-led decision making provides the evidence needed to support these choices with confidence.

Instead of defaulting to replacement, organisations can make informed decisions based on actual performance and user need.

This approach supports both financial and sustainability outcomes without compromising employee experience.

The Future of Device Refresh

Device refresh will always involve decisions about hardware, cost and lifecycle. What needs to change is the evidence used to make those decisions.

Age and job title may be useful inputs, but they do not tell us whether a device is supporting someone effectively, whether a higher specification is genuinely required, or whether an existing device could deliver value elsewhere in the organisation.

Persona-Led Device Refresh gives organisations that wider view. It connects how people work with device performance, experience and lifecycle data. This allows investment to be directed towards the people who need it, while extending the life of devices that remain suitable for others.

The result is not simply a better refresh programme. It is a more intelligent and sustainable way of managing workplace technology, built around the needs of people and the outcomes the organisation is trying to achieve.

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