

Cody Cooper Explains BYOD Policy

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TULSA – Companies seeking to cut costs are encouraging the workplace.

The idea that employees can bring their own devices is not that farfetched, said Cody J. Cooper, an attorney at Phillips Murrah PC.

“The idea is more prevalent,” Cooper said. “Technology is moving at a fast clip. And companies are allowing employees to choose what they want to use – a BlackBerry, iPhone or an Android.”

Cooper, who is in the litigation department, represents individuals and privately held and public companies in a range of civil matters.

“There are benefits to companies that offer the flexibility of bringing your own device,” Cooper said.

In fact, there is a trend toward bringing your own device, or BYOD, Cooper said.

“The cost advantage for companies is tremendous when you think about replacing an iPad every couple of years,” Cooper said. “It is much cheaper for companies to require the employees to use their devices. Companies have experimented and implemented policies requiring employees to use their own personal phones, computers and tablets in the scope of their employment rather than the employer providing these devices.”

California-based Robert Half International is a human resource consulting firm that offers accounting and finance staffing

services.

Robert Half's BYOD policy allows employees to use their devices of choice to access the company network, said spokeswoman Kellie Shadle.

A survey by Robert Half Technology in May 2012 found that only a third of 1,400 chief information officers allowed employees to use their personal smartphones, tablets, computers or other devices. Two-thirds of the CIOs said no to the idea, according to the survey.

Another staffing company, Tulsa-based Part-Time Pros, has not seen the issue come up, according to Brett Baker, Part-Time Pros chief operating officer.

Cooper, who published an article regarding the subject this month, said the notion has grown over the past few years because nearly everyone has a cellphone or iPad.

Cutting or avoiding costs is one consideration, Cooper said. Another is that employees enjoy the freedom to choose and use the technologies they already like compared to juggling a BlackBerry for work and an iPhone for friends and family, Cooper said.

"By using a personal device, employees tend to be connected and available more than with an employer-provided device," Cooper said.

Of course, there are potential obstacles.

"What information is allowed, what is not allowed and who controls that data are just a few of the issues," Cooper said.

Another issue is how a company might wipe the data from a phone in the event of a termination or the employee voluntarily leaving.

"Can an employer wipe a device?" Cooper said. "It has to be

spelled out in the policy.”

One trend is to allow employees access to company data via an application that requires a password. Then, in the event of a termination or the employee leaving, the company can simply revoke access, Cooper said.

At the same time, using apps is expensive, Cooper said.

“Companies have to take that into account,” Cooper said.

Bottom line, once a company decides the risks are worth it, it can stop purchasing smartphones or tablets for employees, Cooper said.