"It’s a dynamic world," says Doron Mintz, Personal Client Platforms Service Manager for Intel IT. “We need to stay in front of the change curve.”

For this reason and others, Intel IT’s approach to client computing is continually evolving. By aggressively adopting new technologies, the IT organization can take advantage of new capabilities and interfaces. It can boost workforce productivity and mobility. And it can maintain its leadership position in the industry.

“We want all of our employees to experience new technologies and trends, and we want to learn what works and what doesn’t,” Mintz says. “Adopting new technologies internally helps us be leaders externally.”

PCs used to be the standard computing devices for Intel employees, but they were largely replaced with laptops that are more portable. Today, it’s difficult to find a desktop PC within an Intel work environment, and even laptops are declining in numbers. Nearly 20,000 touch-enabled Ultrabooks™ have been deployed to Intel workers over the past year. Combined with employee-owned smartphones and tablets supported by a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program, some 45,000 such mobile devices are now being utilized by the Intel workforce to access email and other capabilities.

“Adopting new technologies internally helps us be leaders externally.”

Doron Mintz
Personal Client Platforms Service Manager for Intel IT
“Newer client devices help us drive efficiency that leads directly to business value,” says Lisa Spelman, Director of Client Services for Intel IT. “They also give us invaluable insight that can be used to help our company and our partners shape product cycles and refine go-to-market strategies.”

A natural and logical progression
Intel IT has worked hard behind the scenes to make the employee transition from PCs to laptops to Ultrabooks and smartphones as seamless as possible. With more employees conducting work from virtual offices, conference rooms, customer sites, home, and while traveling, the demand for smaller and more portable devices continues to increase.

“It’s a natural and logical progression for us,” says Mintz. “The latest client devices allow anywhere, anytime access to business applications. They improve mobility. And they offer new interfaces like touch. All of these things enhance user productivity and satisfaction, which are two of our most important goals.”

The broad deployment of Ultrabooks is a huge success, he adds. Intel employees are very satisfied with them, and the early adoption of a consumer-centric technology in an enterprise environment continues to be informative.

“There haven’t been any major surprises; yet, we’re learning a lot about ports and connectivity, battery life, hardware and software alignment, and managing thousands of these devices across a globally distributed workforce,” Mintz explains. “This is invaluable information for our product teams and our hardware and software partners that can be used to fine-tune the devices for an enterprise setting.”

The change management process
According to Kevin Breen, Manager of Small Form Factor and Handheld Devices for Intel IT, careful planning and formalized processes are necessary before any new client technology can be effectively deployed.

“When moving a large, diverse workforce to new form factors, new interfaces, and new software, the change management process is critical,” he says. “We conduct pilot projects to validate the use of new devices before deploying them broadly. Then, once the decision is made to move forward, we move quickly.”

The pilot projects typically involve Intel IT specialists first, and eventually application developers and early adopter customers. The assessment and validation period builds confidence and provides insight before the decision is made to aggressively distribute new devices.

“We evaluate devices based on manageability, security, connectivity, and usability,” says Breen. “We also closely monitor the health of our business applications as we deploy new client technologies.”

In any deployment, three things are essential: well-defined security and administration policies, an efficient onboarding and activation process, and a host of support resources, from training documents to call center specialists who can help users get up to speed with new devices and troubleshoot any problems.

Building new capabilities for existing devices
Intel IT’s evolving approach to client computing isn’t just centered on new devices. It also involves new capabilities for existing devices.

All supported device/operating system (OS) combinations can now accommodate Intel users’ email, calendar, and contacts as well as a growing number of line of business applications. In fact, there are roughly 1,200 OS-device combinations currently being employed.

More work is being done to align business applications with the unique capabilities and interfaces of client devices. Context awareness, for example, will help turn certain device functions on or off depending on the user’s location and activity.

“We’re testing context awareness in two of our factories,” says Breen, “where the camera of a smartphone or tablet is automatically turned off when entering a sensitive environment.”

Intel IT is also evaluating new management tools that provide better support for and control of these advanced capabilities. And the move to “all wireless” throughout Intel work environments is on the horizon, which will further boost the usability and effectiveness of newer client devices.

“It’s our job to increase the productivity of the Intel workforce,” says Spelman. “We’re doing this by increasing users’ mobility, enabling them to access business applications on any device, and arming them with new interfaces and capabilities. There is no finish line, just constant evolution.”