

Microsoft Ups Mobile Game With EMS, iPad Office

Written by Marco Attard
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Microsoft confirms the "mobile first, cloud first" ethos of CEO Satya Nadella with two mobile- and cloud-related announcements-- the iPad version Office and a BYOD bundle in the shape of the Enterprise Mobility Suite (EMS).



"Microsoft is focused on delivering the cloud for everyone, on every device," Nadella says. "It's a unique approach that centers on people— enabling the devices you love, work with the services you love, and in a way that works for IT and developers."

Office for iPad has been a long time coming, and sees launch before the Surface-tailored version. It includes Word, PowerPoint and Excel as redesigned with a touch-first UI and OneDrive cloud storage integration. Users can create regular Office documents and edit files created in other versions of the software, and Microsoft insists the app wholly preserves document formatting and visual fidelity (something the current OneDrive app fails at with distressing regularity).

The app requires an Office 365 subscription, and one subscription cover allows installation on up to 5 tablets and 5 PCs/Macs.

The announcement also covers a change in Office Mobile for iPhone and Android, as the apps now do not require an Office 365 subscription for the viewing and editing of files stored on OneDrive accounts.

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Meanwhile EMS brings together 3 Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) services-- Azure Active Directory (AAD) Premium identity and access management, Windows Intune cloud-based device management and Azure Active Directory Rights Management Services data management. It covers all kinds of devices, be it iPads, Androids, Surfaces and 3rd party Windows 8 tablets, and Nadella describes it as "the most strategic piece of what we are doing in support of enterprises."

AAD handles user accounts and single sign-on across Office 365, Dynamics CRM, Windows Intune and 3rd party services including Box and Salesforce.com. Premium extends such services with multifactor authentication, self-service password resets and reporting, while Rights Management takes care of document validation access rights on documents stored on BYOD PCs.

Windows Intune is extended with iOS capabilities such as remote locking, selective wipe and email profile management. Android support is similarly improved with Samsung Knox support.

Office for iPad is available now on the Apple App Store, while EMS sees launch via volume licensing channels from May 2014.

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