

How To Prevent Daylight-Saving Time Problems On Smartphones



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With daylight-saving time coming March 11 -- three weeks earlier than expected in the U.S. this year -- business technology managers are scrambling to update their applications, operating systems, and other software programs to handle the new date for the arrival of DST. They shouldn't overlook employees' mobile devices, which also are subject to the same problem.

IT administrators have to pay special attention to smartphones, which contain time-sensitive information related to calendars, e-mail, and business applications, and need to get all the necessary vendor updates and patches for daylight-saving time. Mobile operating system makers and smartphone makers have either issued or are in the process of issuing such updates.

There many scheduling problems that could arise if a smartphone's clock doesn't get updated and the rest of the company's systems do, says Devin Anderson, security business line manager at LANDesk Software, a security and process management provider. "Imagine one of your executives missing his flight to Europe, or being an hour late to an important business deal negotiation meeting. Shipping organizations that have guarantees around timing, car rental companies depend on time for billing need to address this. The legal field and real estate profession have time sensitive deadlines, and all of these could be affected negatively if the device clock is off and the user depends on the device for his or her calendar," Anderson says.

Microsoft last week released an update for smartphones that run its Windows Mobile operating system to prevent clocks and Microsoft Outlook calendar appointments from displaying incorrect times between March 11 and April 1, (the old date for DST to start), and between October 28 and November 4, (the old date for standard time to resume). Smartphone clocks won't automatically update themselves when the daylight-saving time switchover happens, so calendars will be an hour off. All users in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are urged to install these updates.

Microsoft also has set up a Web site to address additional consumer and business questions. The site contains a daylight-saving time guide that provides articles and downloads for the products that customers specify.

When the daylight-saving time dates change in March, Research In Motion's BlackBerry smartphones also will not update their clocks automatically, causing BlackBerrys to display incorrect time zone information for certain time periods during the year. Calendar features also will be affected, says RIM. As a result, RIM is urging customers to apply the necessary patches for BlackBerry software and third-party software. The patches can be downloaded on its Web site at <http://www.blackberry.com/DST2007/patch/index2.shtml>.

Palm, the maker of Treo smartphones that use both the Palm OS and the Windows Mobile operating systems, says it's currently working on a daylight-saving time software update, which should be posted on its Web site by the end of next week.

The daylight-saving time issue goes beyond patching mobile devices. Companies need to have a robust patch management process in place to patch business applications that synchronize data with their smartphones, as well as the operating systems of the host machines.

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