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The Mobile Workplace: How Businesses are Embracing Mobility to Improve Key Performance Indicators

Summary:

80% of small- and medium-size businesses equip employees with a mobile device, and the average mobile worker uses 3.5 different devices¹. How did we get to this point, and why are businesses choosing to push mobile in spite of the potentially huge risks it presents? Join us as we examine the background, challenges and benefits of enterprise mobility.

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¹ "Mobile Darwinism," *iPass Global Mobile Workforce Report*. iPass, 2012.

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Defining the 'Mobile Enterprise'

What does it mean to be mobile, both at the employee level and the enterprise level? And how did we get to this point?

Changes in the Traditional Workplace

Office life used to only exist between the hours of 8 am - 5 pm., and it was difficult to take your work home with you. Working after hours meant staying at the office after hours. Cell phones were only for the big shots-- the closest thing the average employee or manager had was a car phone, and that was really only for car emergencies or to get the occasional drive-thru dinner order from the family on the way home from work. The Internet was slow and it was limited in its business functionality, as were the desktop behemoths it ran on. Information was stored on floppy disks or CD-ROMs, and office communication happened in-person or via printed paper.

It's a wonder anything got done, right?

Obviously all of this has changed in the recent decade or so. Some of these changes are driven by culture - new generations have different ways of getting things done - and some are driven by technology. Most are driven by a combination of the two. After all, technology is going to have a major impact on a culture that grew up immersed in it.

Office hours are different. Some people in the same department work 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., others 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Some don't even go to the office at all. Office communication is instant over email. Everyone has a cell phone, and most everyone has a smart phone. And it does more than just make phone calls. Floppy disks and CD-ROMs have been replaced by flash drives, network servers and the all-mighty cloud. The Internet is fast and functional, as are the myriad devices of varying sizes that access it. Workers can connect to anyone, anywhere at any time.

The pace, place and process of business has changed and notions of what a workplace should look like is becoming harder to pin down.

Being mobile **within** the office is just as important as being mobile **outside** the office.

Technology has given workers options, and culture is starting to allow them to demand and exercise those **options.**

Technology has given workers options, and culture is starting to allow them to demand and exercise those options. I don't have to be at my desk to write that report; I can access the data from home. I don't have to be in the office for that one-on-one meeting; I can set up a video conference. When you break it down, at the heart of all of these options is mobility.

The Difference between 'Mobile' and 'Remote'

We can't define a "mobile enterprise" without first defining what we mean by "mobile." The first thing most people think of when you say "mobile" is "on-the-go," and they aren't wrong to think that-- a salesperson in an airport checking his or her work email is being mobile to some degree. But to really build a mobile enterprise, "mobile" has to be more than accessing data or communicating with co-workers from outside of the office. In broader terms, it can't just be defined as working remotely.

Being mobile *within* the office is just as important as being mobile outside of the office. Consider this example: You're meeting with co-workers from a different department to discuss plans for the next quarter. Someone asks what the return on a specific investment made the previous quarter was. Can you or someone in the meeting pull up that info at the table without returning to their desk? It may be a small example, but it speaks to efficiency and time management. A truly mobile enterprise can be most-simply defined as:

An organization whose employees have the ability to access pertinent data and documentation, as well as execute any function of their position, from locations within and outside of their office and/or usual workspace.

By this definition, even a remote employee is not considered mobile if they can't function outside of their home office. Basically, a mobile enterprise frees an employee from his or her desk (wherever that may be), and in the following sections we'll examine what the business implications of this freedom are.

What's Driving Mobility in the Workplace?

Technology is the obvious answer, but which specific devices, advancements and trends are having the biggest impact on mobility in the workplace?

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

BYOD, or "Bring Your Own Device (to work)," is one of the fastest growing trends in the corporate world, and it makes perfectly good sense why from an employee perspective: If I am familiar with my device and it helps me more efficiently do my job, why shouldn't I be able to use it? It's that sentiment that drives 82% of tablet owners to use their personal tablet for work¹, and why 53% of organizations offer BYOD².

Despite the security, synchronicity and integration concerns that accompany BYOD and keep IT staff up late at night, the push for BYOD adoption will persist until it comes to full fruition (at least so far as the company can reasonably support it). One reason is certainly the fact that 1 billion mobile devices were shipped in 2011, with that number expected to reach 2 billion by 2016³. The other reason is the fact that it's a top-down demand.



Companies with a work-from-home program are using unified communications:

47%



Executives and C-level employees are just as, if not more, tied to their mobile devices due to travel and attending out-of-office meetings.

Hosted Communications and Unified Communications

Hosted communications and unified communications (UC) go hand-in-hand. Hosted communications solutions are hosted off-site by the company's telecom service provider and utilize voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology instead of traditional telephone landlines for voice communication.

UC solutions take hosted communications a step further and provide infrastructure (through software and/or applications) that enables communication over the company network from any connected device, allowing voice, SMS (most commonly text messaging), instant messaging, email and video messaging/conferencing to all take place from one platform. Because it operates off a hosted IP system, UC is able to integrate communication mediums more easily and efficiently.

It's this ease and efficiency that make hosted and UC technology the foundation for enterprise mobility. They provide the framework for communication in the Digital Age, and businesses, especially SMBs, are buying in. One study has predicted spending on UC apps among SMBs

²EvolveIP, 2014.

³IDC, 2012.

would grow at double the rate than among enterprises with 500 or more employees between 2012 and 2017⁴. Among businesses of all sizes, 47% of companies with a work-from-home program currently implement a UC solution, and 84% of all companies without a UC solution are thinking about or are planning on implementing one in the next 1-3 years².

Combine hosted and UC adoption on the back-end with BYOD and mobile device proliferation on the front-end, and you have a recipe for a mobility boom in the enterprise community.

The Benefits of Enterprise Mobility

With more than 75% of businesses seeing or expecting to see significant benefits from their mobility initiatives⁵, there's a lot to gain through mobile adoption.

Productivity

It's not too difficult to see how mobility improves productivity for sales professionals. If they only worked leads from their desk, they wouldn't have time to work many leads, resulting in fewer deals closed. But what about other roles? It depends on the sector. Human resources teams are often deployed off-site in construction. Maintenance workers and business services professionals are also often on the move. These people, and many others, need to be mobile-enabled in order to maximize the use of their time.

Businesses seeing or expecting to see significant benefits from their mobility initiatives:

75%+

Hosted communications
solutions can drastically cut equipment and management costs for telecommunications systems.

At the other end of the spectrum, some employees simply work better outside of the office. A self-controlled environment with fewer distractions can significantly improve productivity. All told, 74% of employers surveyed by Intel cited it as a reason for mobile adoption (meeting employee requirements was the second-most frequent response at 42%⁶), and businesses utilizing mobile initiatives saw increases in employee productivity improve by 21%⁵.

Costs

Surprisingly, only 27% of employers cited saving money as a reason to pursue enterprise mobility, while 36% of people in the same study cited cost of implementation as one of the top three barriers to enterprise mobility⁶. But only considering implementation costs doesn't take into account the bigger picture.

Hosted communications solutions can drastically cut equipment and management costs for telecommunications systems. Likewise, despite requiring additional attention from a security standpoint, BYOD programs improved cost-savings by 17%⁵. Additional savings can be found in the need for less office space and supplies as well.

⁴Info Trac, 2012.

⁵TechInsights Report: Enterprise Mobility - It's All About the Apps. CA Technologies, 2014.

⁶Intel, 2013.

Employee Satisfaction

As mentioned earlier, mobility is all about freedom, and who doesn't like freedom? Mobility translates to flexibility for many workers. With a lot of employees on different schedules and some salaried employees expected to answer to company emergencies and flash fires at any time of day, mobility gives them more control of their work-life balance, an increasingly important consideration for many on the job market. And the numbers bear this out: Implementing mobile initiatives improved employee retention and/or recruitment by 21%⁵.

Challenges to Overcome

The benefits are clear and quantifiable, but reaching mobile enterprise maturity isn't all roses. Businesses face several challenges on the path to mobile success.

Security and Device Management

Mobile adoption definitely puts a strain on IT departments. With an ever-increasing number of devices to account for, it's no surprise that 41% of IT professionals ranked mobility as one of their top three IT risks⁷. This makes device management one of the biggest barriers in building a mobile enterprise -- 59% of SMBs cite lost or stolen devices as their top mobile concern⁸, and only 27% of all companies believe their mobile security is adequate⁹. Still, security solutions, systems and software exist to curb the risks associated with mobile adoption. The real challenge companies face is staying on top of new risks and threats, and giving IT the resources to properly monitor devices and networks.

Communication

Physical and geographic barriers will always present a challenge, regardless of the quality of the systems put in place to overcome them. At the end of the day, an out-of-office employee can't simply walk over to a co-worker's desk if they need something from that person. You can call or email all you

Improvement in employee retention and/or recruitment due to mobile initiatives:

21%



want, but that doesn't mean the person on the other end is going to answer quickly, if at all.

Mobility leaves employees more free to communicate with co-workers on their own time, which can be a positive or negative depending on the urgency of the situation being communicated about and the responsiveness of the worker being communicated to. Technology provides people a means to connect; if and when they choose to connect is up to them.

Resources

Similar to security and device management, mobility can put a strain on resources, whether that's in manpower, hours, hardware, software or cold, hard cash. IT staff are needed to secure and maintain the mobile infrastructure, limiting their ability to manage other aspects of the company's technology systems. This is why hosted communication solutions are becoming increasingly popular among businesses with mobile ambitions -- they alleviate some of the burden on IT support staff.

IT Staff - Mobile Devices - Systems & Programs

Businesses must correctly balance their investments to maximize the value of mobile adoption.

⁷ *State of Mobility Survey*. Symantec, 2012.

⁸ "Mobilizing for Success: Boosting the Power of Business Applications with Mobile Solutions," Laurie McCabe, Sanjeev Aggarwal and Dwight Davis. SMB Group, 2011.

⁹ "CIO Attitudes Toward Consumerization of Mobile Devices and Applications," Nick Jones. Gartner, 2011.



If the company decides to provide mobile devices to employees, whether in addition to or in lieu of BYOD, that's obviously going to cost money as well. Providing devices, however, can eliminate or minimize issues with device and network integration, in turn reducing demand on IT staff. It's a balancing act businesses need to evaluate and manage on an individual basis in order to maximize the value of mobile adoption.

Employee Management and Oversight

This is an issue that comes down to trust. Do you trust employees to get their work done and even be proactive in working ahead or taking on new projects without direct supervision? Mobile employees have great freedom, but as the saying goes, with great freedom comes great responsibility. Every business is under pressure to hire quality employees that fit the company and the role, but mobile enterprises may be under even more pressure to do so given the higher level of responsibility its employees are expected to demonstrate.

The Workplace of Tomorrow Is Here

The worldwide mobile worker population will represent more than 37% of the total workforce by 2015¹⁰. And you can bet that number will only continue to rise as communication platforms and security measures continue to improve. After all, those are the two key ingredients to successful mobile adoption. Communication and security. Your company's mobile culture, processes and strategy depend on the ability of employees to connect at any time, anywhere. Enable that connection and ensure its security, and you'll be on your way to building a mature mobile enterprise.

About Powernet

Powernet enables businesses to connect in the office and across the world through wireless networking, voice, data and call center solutions,

in addition to domestic and international carrier services. With more than 20 years of telecom experience and expert sales and support teams operating out of our Cincinnati, Ohio headquarters, we provide our partners and clients the unparalleled service and innovative technology they need to achieve their business goals. Visit powernetco.com for more info.



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¹⁰ IDC Worldwide Mobile Worker Population 2011-2015 Forecast. IDC, 2011.

