

Mobile-Enable Your Workforce and Unleash Your Business

BY TIM KRIDEL

Need more proof that enterprises are getting serious about mobile-enabling their workforces and workflows? By 2017, 75% of enterprises' internal applications will be designed primarily for smartphones and tablets, with PC usage as an afterthought, says analyst firm IDC.



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**RICH MCBEE,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
MITEL**

Enterprises know that a mobile-first strategy will enable employees to work more efficiently and effectively, and be more responsive.

“Seventy-three percent of senior executives see their mobile device as critical to how they do business,” says Rich McBee, president and CEO of Mitel, which provides a variety of mobile solutions for major multinationals ranging from Hyatt to T-Mobile and Vodafone. “It’s about providing large-enterprise capabilities to small businesses and small-business flexibility to large enterprises.”

New Capabilities

Take the example of a landscaping company. A customer calls the main number and is automatically routed to the mobile number of the employee who’s responsible for that account. If that employee is unavailable, the system is smart enough to route the call to someone who is. At the same time, a cloud-based CRM tool automatically pushes that customer’s account information out to the employee’s smartphone.

As a result, the employee now knows, for example, the brand and model of the customer’s irrigation system. So instead of, “Let me pull your file when I get back to the office, and I’ll get back to you,” the customer hears: “Your system has two spare zones, and we have a crew in your area that can help you as early as tomorrow afternoon.” With calendar, location and context-based tools, the employee can identify the closest crew available. Further, with the availability of unified communications tools to access the company directory, presence and click-to-connect, the employee can reach the crew supervisor immediately.

Work Reimagined; Customer Experience Enhanced

This example illustrates just a few of the bottom-line and competitive benefits that businesses large and small can realistically expect when they implement a mobile enterprise strategy:

- Service workers no longer have to set aside time to return to the office to track down answers to questions that came in during the day.
- Customer satisfaction soars because employees are better equipped to provide answers on the spot.
- Revenue increases because sales aren’t lost when frustrated customers turn to a competitor.

The rise of wearable and M2M/IoT technologies creates additional opportunities to delight customers by putting more data and analytics at employees’ fingertips. For example, a store can combine big data with smartwatches so employees can quickly access customer history and preferences.

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Customer Experience Goes Real Time

According to Webtorials, 18% of projects are delayed because the team can’t collaborate effectively. In the case of businesses with a lot of workers on the go, a major reason for those delays is that 25% of those employees are out of the office at any given time. Building a more

mobile enterprise is an opportunity to minimize those delays by maximizing collaboration opportunities, including with video.

For example, when smartphones and tablets double as videoconferencing endpoints, employees now can participate from anywhere. Enterprises can also eliminate the upfront and ongoing costs of providing road warriors with dedicated office videoconferencing endpoints, which would sit unused most of the time. Moreover, service and information workers can now use video to better assess customer challenges and share important information with remote colleagues.

Mobile video is also increasingly a must-have for collaborating effectively with customers. Companies want a secure, easy and reliable solution that can work across different operating systems or devices. An emerging technology called Web Real-Time Communications (WebRTC) offers businesses an option for embedding video-calling functionality in mobile applications.

Managing BYOD

Video also highlights something that often

trips up a lot of bring-your-own-device (BYOD) deployments: the cost of connectivity. A few brief videoconferences can quickly eat up an employee's monthly cellular data, triggering overage charges or throttling that undermines productivity.

The ability to leverage public Wi-Fi to off-load traffic from the cellular networks quickly changes the economics and affordability of video. Some service providers now bundle hotspot service into their enterprise cellular plans. Businesses can also provide road warriors with stand-alone Wi-Fi plans from hotspot aggregators. Either way, Wi-Fi is typically cheaper than cellular when it comes to supporting bandwidth-intensive applications such as video.

Wi-Fi is also an increasingly common way to get voice service. For business travelers, voice over Wi-Fi (VoWi-Fi) or Wi-Fi calling, is a convenient way to avoid the steep roaming charges that come with international roaming in cellular.

Security is another major concern. When employees are allowed to use their personal smartphone or tablet at work, the security risks can be exponentially higher than with company-issued devices.

At the very least, the IT department may now have to support multiple mobile platforms, rather than standardizing on one. Some of those devices might also be jail-broken, which could make them more vulnerable to hackers, creating a backdoor into the enterprise.

Hence the importance of application- and device-management tools that are flexible enough to enforce security policies across a wide variety of platforms and device types, including wearables. These tools enable IT departments to push out security patches and policies to company-issued and employee-owned devices, regardless of the platform. With the availability of 4G LTE mobile technology accelerating the move to push communications across IP networks, an additional layer of security and management is required to ensure that the flow of voice, video and real-time chat traffic is also secured via proper configurations or with the support of gateways.

Sound complex? It can be, but savvy businesses understand that if they reimagine how business is done and focus on the new customer experience, they and their customers will come out ahead.

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