

Forming a Mobile Strategy for Enterprise Apps

With the proliferation of smartphones and tablets, enterprises are missing out if they don't take advantage of these portable, easy to use devices. The usefulness of mobile devices in most enterprises hasn't gone much past checking email or a glorified day planner. While those are valid uses of a mobile device, enterprises need to look at where they can really take advantage of both smartphones and tablets to improve efficiency, boost productivity, and reduce costs while addressing concerns like security. All of these gains produce an unintended side effect of improving relationships with customers and that could be the biggest benefit of all.

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Improve Efficiency

Every worker in an enterprise wants to work smarter, not harder. Being able to cut out unnecessary steps in a process is the best way to improve a worker’s efficiency. Take a look at what different workers do day-to-day and determine whether any steps could be cut out with the use of a portable device they can take with them anywhere.

A company in New Zealand called Quality Consultants did just that with their field inspectors. They worked with their partner to create a custom app that allowed their inspectors to enter forms on their tablets. Instead of filling out paper forms, turning them in, and waiting for them to be entered into their system, the electronic forms were transmitted at night directly to their backend. It turned a 10 day process into one that was accomplished in 24 hours.¹ This not only saved the field inspectors’ time, but improved customer relationships because of the quick turnaround.

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An auto dealership in Phoenix, AZ also cut one of their processes by an order of magnitude. They use a custom iPad application that took the sales transaction process from 40 minutes to 4 minutes. The new sales process eliminated some up-sell opportunities, but the dealership recognized that up-selling was the part of the sales process that customers hated most. By eliminating that part of the process and speeding it up 10-fold, they improved customer satisfaction and increased sales by 35%.²

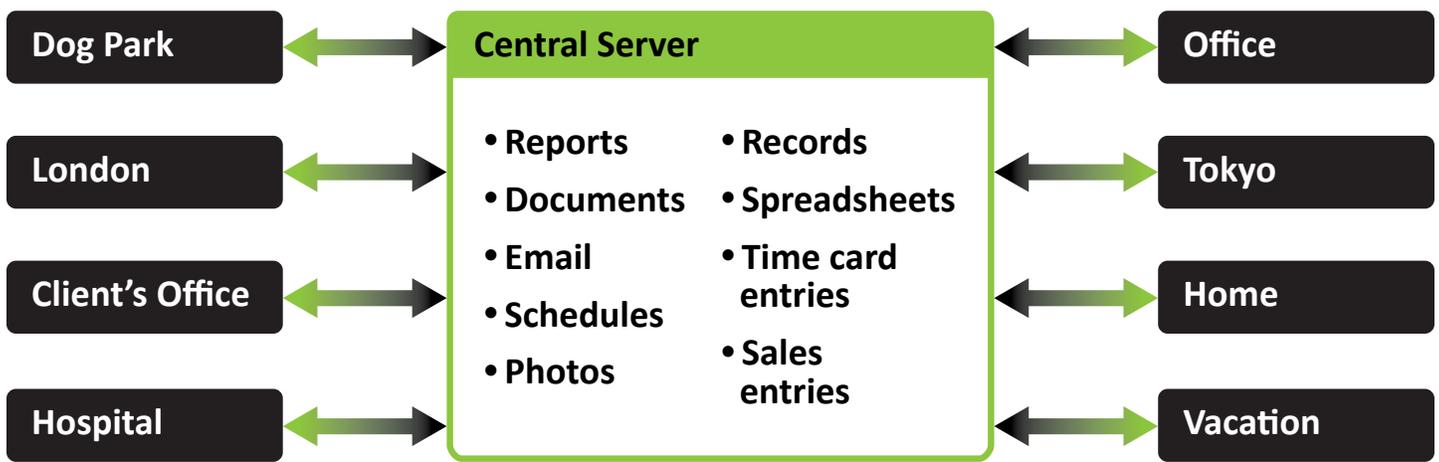
Over time, workflows can get out of hand, especially those that use archaic technologies (i.e. paper). Enterprises could benefit from reviewing workflows that haven’t changed in years and improve efficiency with a direct connection to their services backend.

Boost Productivity

Connections back to enterprise servers not only help workflows, but can also help workers out in the field get more accomplished. Aside from the obvious communication productivity, connections to computers back at home base can provide critical information to the field to help in their business decisions and help drive sales. Examine situations where workers routinely access in-house data, especially ones that are available electronically. Could that same data be provided on a tablet that the worker can carry with them to a meeting or client site?

Procore has a construction project management app that allows a PM to dictate notes, share documents and photos, and even record time card entries.³ All the information is sent back and forth from a smartphone or iPad to a central server. The home office has access to this information so that projects can be monitored by anyone that has access. Giving onsite project managers remote tools like these cuts out time spent going to and from the main office and improves communication with the home office and the customer.

Mobile devices can also help in-house workers that are rarely at a desk. A perfect example of this is how the iPad has made its way into doctors’ hands. Doctors can view patient data, retrieve patients’ x-rays, and even write prescriptions (and send them off to the pharmacy) all while in front of the patient. Doctors no longer have to track down patient records or lab results which results in better care.⁴ All of the information can be at their fingertips. In fact, one doctor even accessed patient records



while sitting his car waiting for his family to finish grocery shopping.⁵ Stealing away a few minutes where one would normally be idle is productivity at its best.

The result of data accessibility is clear. Workers can be more productive in more places and less time will be wasted trying to obtain information. The information that workers use on a daily basis can be analyzed, digested, and presented more quickly resulting in more work getting done in less time.

Reduce Costs

C-level executives are always looking at the bottom line. They hesitate to spend money when they don't have to, especially in tough economic times. At first, it would seem counter-intuitive that an enterprise could reduce costs when spending \$500 or more on each piece of hardware. But when one puts some thought into the scenarios above, it becomes obvious that money will be saved with increased efficiency and productivity. However, these savings are often intangible and hard to quantify.

A more concrete measure is in the cost of hardware and software. Tablets can replace laptops for many field workers. They cost as much as mid-range laptops, but it beats paying \$1000 or more for a higher end laptop that some field workers think they need. But the real savings comes in the software. The software for tablets is very inexpensive compared to the comparable counterparts on laptops. And in many cases, they are free.

The maintenance costs for smartphones and tablets are much

cheaper as well. Most devices are owned by the worker as a personal device where they will deal with maintenance issues themselves. If the device happens to be owned by the enterprise, IT departments will spend less time on them because they are much easier to troubleshoot and have less hardware that can go wrong. Even if the device has to be replaced, it is much less expensive than replacing a laptop. Enterprises should also notice a reduction in paper and printing

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costs. Fewer emails, account histories, and sales reports will be printed when a worker has access to them electronically anywhere they go. But also consider the cost of sales materials. Brochures and pamphlets no longer have to be printed because they can be shown right on a tablet. When a prospect requests the sales materials, it can be emailed to them. This especially helps when minimum printing runs far exceeds the actual number of hard copies an organization needs.

Most enterprises can identify commodity purchases that can be reduced or eliminated by going electronic. Take some time to quantify these reductions to build your case for management. Couple those with efficiency and productivity gains and the ROI of mobile devices should become obvious, or at least arguable.

"The iPad is the de facto standard in tablets, but take in consideration how tablets will be used before settling on a tablet platform. An Android device or RIM tablet may be a better option both in cost and usability."



Encryption in Mobile Security

Security

One of the biggest challenges enterprises face is security. With so many workers bringing in their own devices to work, security becomes a major concern.

Mobile security can be broken into two parts: application security and device security.⁶ Application security on mobile devices is not much different than application security on enterprise devices. The same methods that apply to local data, data in-transit, and obsolesced data on enterprise computers and laptops can be extended to the same type of data on mobile devices. The newer challenge is the devices themselves. Fortunately, Mobile Device Management (MDM) software makes managing security policies much simpler than enterprises might expect. Once this is understood enterprises can be rest assured that their data is safe.

Hardware Considerations

When it comes to smartphones, workers will want to use one which they are comfortable using. It is possible to mandate and pay for a particular phone enterprise-wide, but consider a monthly stipend for cell phone service instead. This allows workers to choose their own smartphone and doesn't require

them to carry two different phones: one for personal use and one for business use. One device will make them feel more comfortable and prevent them from losing or breaking the one that belongs to the enterprise. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is becoming a very popular option for enterprises, especially with the simplicity of management that comes with MDM software.

Standardizing the enterprise on a tablet is more practical and most enterprises will gravitate toward the iPad. The iPad is arguably the best

device on the market and its user friendliness is beyond compare. Associating oneself with the premium Apple brand certainly has its benefits as well.

The Android tablets, however, can be a viable alternative. Enterprises can save \$100-200 per device and even get them for free in some cases when combined with cellular plans. Since the release of Android 4.0, also known as Ice Cream Sandwich, Android's usability and security is arguably as good as iOS.

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Why Magenic

Magenic has taken their vast backend enterprise experience and is applying it to mobile. Magenic understands that mobile isn't just about being able to access email on the go. Since 1995, Magenic has been creating mission critical custom applications for enterprises. Magenic knows that mobile is just an extension of these applications into a new platform.

Magenic also knows that user experience will make or break a mobile application. Sixty percent of all mobile applications are abandoned in the first month, thirty percent after its first use. User experience is a large part of that abandonment. Magenic Studios has extensive experience in user interface design and can create feature rich, visually stunning interfaces that are intuitive and easy to use.

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Contact Magenic to engage a team of professionals who create, support, and maintain innovative custom solutions that will transform business and drive growth.

Summary

The mobile device revolution is in full swing and enterprises can feel like they are being left behind if they aren't buying their workers smartphones or tablets. But doing so without taking full advantage of them will result in glorified communication and day planning tools. While that will help an enterprise, it won't have the full ROI that mobile devices can offer.

A recent study conducted by Aberdeen Group cited that the top three mobile strategies for businesses are:⁷

1. To improve communication and collaboration between team members
2. To rapidly deliver actionable information to the point of decision
3. To use mobile software to increase customer intimacy

Improving communication and collaboration results in improved efficiency, rapidly delivering actionable information results in a boost in productivity, and customer relationships improve as a result of both those gains.

A perfect example of this comes from the Phoenix car dealership mentioned above. Their custom application was putting car information at the salesman's fingertips and totally impressed one of their customers. The customer walked in with research of a particular car in her purse, but never took it out or mentioned which car she was interested in. After asking a series of questions, the salesperson came up with the same make and model of car. The customer was so impressed, she now refers all her friends to the dealership.²

Forming a mobile strategy is not as big of a mountain to climb as one might think. Taking just a few minutes to think about how workflows can be improved or how remote data access would be useful in certain situations can be a good basis of how mobile devices can benefit an organization. Once that is done, start small to get some quick wins. Once those wins are seen by management, more investment can be made to build upon the first steps that will eventually turn an enterprise into a full-blown mobile workforce.

Resources

- ¹ Motion Staff. 2011. "Quality Consultants of New Zealand Equips Farm Inspectors with the Latest in Mobile Technology Solutions." *motioncomputing.com*. http://www.motioncomputing.com/about/news/press_release_072011.asp
- ² Yara, Georgann. 2011. "iPad Helps Longtime Car dealer streamline, boost sales." *The Arizona Republic*. January 18. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/business/articles/2011/01/17/20110117ipad-car-sales-rc-auto-corp.html>
- ³ Procore Staff. 2013. "Construction Management App for iPhone." *procore.com*. <http://www.procore.com/features/construction-management-iphone-app>
- ⁴ Coombs, Bertha. 2011. "Apple's iPad Tops with Doctors." *cnbc.com*. http://www.cnbc.com/id/42218296/The_iPad_Is_Tops_With_Doctors
- ⁵ Sarasohn-Kahn, Jane. 2011. "The Doctor is In (and Using an iPad)." *thehealthcareblog.com*. <http://thehealthcareblog.com/blog/2011/06/08/the-doctor-is-in-and-using-an-ipad>
- ⁶ Magenic Technologies. 2012. "Robust Mobile Security for Enterprise Networks." *magenic.com*. <http://magenic.com/Portfolio/WhitePaperMobileSecurity>
- ⁷ French, Bill. 2011. "Survey: Mobile Apps Increase Enterprise Performance and Productivity Advantages, Top Three Mobile App Strategies Gain Momentum." *ipadcto.com*. <http://ipadcto.com/2011/01/05/survey-mobile-apps-increase-enterprise-performance-and-productivity-advantages-top-three-mobile-app-strategies-gain-momentum>

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Norton Lam has been the mobile lead consultant for Magenic. He brings with him more than 20 years of experience in the software development industry and is particularly versed in Java and Android development. He holds a B.S. in Computer Science and Math from Purdue.

About Magenic

Founded in 1995 by the same technical minds that still run the company, Magenic focuses on the Microsoft stack and mobile application development.