

Three Steps for Creating A Mobility Strategy

Executive Summary

Today, mobility is no longer a novel idea, and not just a tactical move. It's a fundamental requirement for virtually every business. With fixed-mobile convergence on the horizon, now is the time to plan in a comprehensive way to ensure mobility delivers maximum value as a strategic tool for the enterprise. This paper outlines the three steps needed to create mobility strategy.

Introduction

In countless ways, mobility is boosting business productivity, speed and responsiveness. Tools like notebook computers, PDAs, cell phones, Wi-Fi networks and virtual private networks (VPNs) have turned business on the move into business as usual. But many organizations have implemented mobility in a tactical and piecemeal manner, not realizing the gains possible from adopting a true strategic approach to mobility.

Mobile devices and networks have multiplied simply because they are such effective productivity tools. Today, traveling executives remain in touch with key colleagues and track email in real-time. Sales people upload customer requirements and download proposals right in the customer's office. The benefits driving mobility are convincing:

- Mobility enhances customer service and responsiveness.
- Mobility accelerates speed and productivity and fosters better decisions.
- Mobility is reshaping business models.

Many business leaders have seized on mobile communications when a specific need has arisen, but most have done so without an overarching plan. When a mobility idea made sense they went for it, without necessarily considering how it fit into overall business needs or comprehensive technology solutions.

When the sales force needed cell phones, they got cell phones. When they asked for BlackBerry® smartphones, they got those too. Expense and deployment were departmental concerns. Laptops with network access clients and softphone software? They were probably delivered by the corporate IT group. But no one climbed above the treetops to view the forest as a whole.

Today mobility is no longer a novel idea, and not just a tactical move. It's a fundamental requirement for virtually every business. With fixed-mobile convergence on the horizon, now is the time to plan in a comprehensive way to ensure mobility delivers maximum value as a strategic tool for the enterprise. It is time to create a strategy for mobility.

Benefits of a Strategic Approach

Compared to piecemeal implementation, a comprehensive and strategic approach to mobility can provide important advantages.

- By basing your planning on an in-depth review of business processes, you may uncover applications where mobility can deliver unanticipated value, and eliminate others from the list of mobility opportunities. The result can be less waste and greater return on investment (ROI).
- With an enterprise-wide strategy you can introduce mobility first where the payback is greatest, and maximize economies of scale in procurement, training and support.

- You can take a comprehensive approach to security, and implement uniform policies and procedures across the organization.
- With a forward-looking strategy you can implement mobility today and at the same time prepare for the future, when fixed and mobile communications will converge.

Three Steps for Creating a Mobility Strategy

Developing a strategic plan for mobility should proceed in three stages:

- 1) Audit your current mobile deployment, applications, technologies, policies and procedures.
- 2) Conduct a comprehensive review of business activities. Determine how adding mobility could make processes faster and more efficient – or even eliminate them outright. What emerging devices and applications might pay off in your operations? For instance, could you drive time out of your manufacturing process by sending materials arrival confirmation wirelessly from the loading dock?
- 3) Synthesize your findings into a strategic implementation plan, and create policies and procedures for your entire organization. Your strategy should include clear directions for technology, including the steps required to prepare for the future integration or convergence of fixed and mobile communications.

As you move through this process, an outside perspective could prove helpful. While you cannot ignore your existing mobility investments, you will also want to understand what would be possible with a state-of-the-art mobility solution based on the latest and best industry practices and technologies. Consider obtaining support from an independent consultant with proven experience in developing mobility strategies.

Mobility Audit

The first step toward a mobility strategy is to fully understand your current situation. Among the questions you should consider:

- Who in our business is using mobile technologies today and what are they using them for? Most common will be sales and field service organizations, executives, manufacturing, warehousing, transportation and fleet management. In many organizations mobility will be widespread in staff groups too. Identify applications that your employees are using and how to make them easily and securely available.
- What providers, technologies and applications are in use? Limiting your number of vendors and standardizing mobile hardware and software can improve compatibility and communication across your business, simplify administration and help you leverage your combined purchasing power.
- How is mobility provisioned and managed? It is not uncommon to see cell phones and BlackBerry® smartphones purchased by departments or even individual employees, with the costs charged back and paid at departmental level. Guidelines as to which devices and applications are most useful and cost effective may be defined differently by each group. Yet in other organizations, approvals, purchasing and billing are highly centralized. How does your organization manage mobility?

- How is mobility evaluated for productivity and cost effectiveness? Do not be surprised if the answer is a long silence. Many employees and their supervisors “just know” they could not live without cell phones, PDAs and laptops. But has anyone really examined how and how often these tools are used? If not, can performance evaluation systems be put in place? Before changing how mobility is managed, it is important to be able to identify where in the organization it is working well today, and where it is falling short.

Business Review and Opportunity Assessment

This is your opportunity to rethink and re-engineer your business model, so you can take full advantage of today’s mobility applications and prepare for the fixed-mobile convergence that is coming. For those open to change, mobility can revolutionize how companies do business.

Questions to ask in your opportunity assessment:

- What jobs could be done more efficiently by going mobile? Think about how today’s mobile employees could use mobility even more effectively. Would cell phone users perform better with email access too? Beyond today’s users, ask what other employees and additional functions might gain from mobility. In San Diego a wireless monitoring system for sanitation trucks improves efficiency by verifying route coverage, eliminating redundant pick-ups and re-routing trucks when needed. The streamlined service is projected to save \$10 million over 10 years.
- How are competitors using mobility? Competitors and companies in other industries may be using mobility in innovative and highly productive ways that you can emulate. As you look for the best ideas, think creatively and broadly about what is possible. Glean the best ideas from the brightest organizations out there, because the gains can be dramatic. A mobility program helped one office equipment repair firm cut paperwork by 40 percent and reduced calls to its contact center by 38 percent.
- Let the other guys do the experimenting – you can flatter them by picking up and improving on their ideas. Vendors and service providers should be quick to cut you in on applications that are working well for others.
- What new applications are on the horizon? This is another area where equipment and software manufacturers and service providers can provide useful information. These firms are making major investments to develop new mobile technologies, and they are anxious to sign new customers.
- What are the high-payoff “sweet spots” for new mobile applications? In some functions mobility may deliver little or no benefit over traditional fixed communications. The ROI (and credibility) of your mobility program will rest on your ability to focus spending where the payoff is highest.

- How will a comprehensively mobile organization look and work? Mobility means more than just handing out laptops and cell phones. Mobility can greatly affect the way companies conduct business. For instance, employees who work most or all of the time on the road or from remote locations may not need fixed office space, which means you could reassign or even sell off real estate. But the implications are significant. Some managers are uncomfortable supervising distant employees. Facilities planning requires long term decisions. Engineering a mobile organization requires leaders to instill understanding and buy-in at every level of the organization.

Strategic Policy Development and Implementation

With answers for these and a multitude of other questions, you will be prepared develop a strategic plan and deploy mobility in a coordinated way to improve business processes across the entire enterprise. Key components of the mobility plan:

- Implement standards for technology and provisioning. Identify the transport technologies, communication devices, applications and vendors that will maximize productivity. Clearly define user parameters to identify which employees in what functions will have access to mobile devices and applications. Exercise control, but also allow for flexibility and change. You don’t want a management system so locked down that there is no room to incorporate future innovations.
- Use robust security practices – ensure mobile devices use security methods such as password protection, industry encryption standards, and over-the-air kill, or shut-down of lost mobile devices.
- Incorporate productivity management systems. AT&T introduced an integrated wireless spend management system designed to help customers manage wireless services with maximum efficiency. Called AT&T Multi-Carrier Solutions (MCS), the process was pilot tested with 664 of AT&T’s 5,000 wireless users. By creating a centralized repository of these users, devices and plans, unused lines can be eliminated and potential billing problems can be addressed. In addition, rate plan optimization and improved processes drove efficiencies and cost reductions. AT&T is now implementing MCS across the company.
- Integrate access in network planning. Accessing the corporate network through cellular, Wi-Fi and VPN technologies is standard procedure today. Instead of thinking of access as “connecting to” their networks, as they may have done in the past, organizations must manage networks and access together as one.
- Prepare for fixed-mobile convergence. Manufacturers and service providers are working diligently to erase the divisions between fixed (wired) and wireless technologies. They envision a world where the power of enterprise networks and applications will be available seamlessly to mobile users everywhere. Rich information resources like corporate databases and directories will be accessible from across the globe. What preparatory steps are needed? Fixed-mobile convergence will require the availability of Internet Protocol (IP) networking, which provides for flexibility and compatibility across multiple applications. Now is the time to transition the corporate network to IP.

Conclusion

Mobility is radically changing the ways people work and reshaping the workplace itself. Equipped with powerful new mobility tools, employees today can work productively from virtually anywhere. Its growing potential to strengthen organizational performance has moved mobility from the sidelines to the mainstream of information technology. Organizations intent on maximizing corporate performance must incorporate mobility as a fundamental component of their strategic plans.

Notes

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