MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS AND COMPUTING

WHY YOU NEED TO RETHINK YOUR MOBILITY STRATEGY

As enterprise mobility has progressed from a way for employees to stay in touch while traveling, to the comprehensive mobile computing and communications platform that it is today, the right strategies, policies, controls and management have become critically important to the bottom line — and equally complex.

Manufacturers are constantly introducing new devices and capabilities. Carriers offer upgrades to new wireless technologies (think 5G) as they hit the market and consistently offer enticing changes in plan rates and terms. Trends such as bring your own device (BYOD) have in-house infrastructure and operations teams frequently re-evaluating the benefits and actual costs of allowing employees to use their own handhelds and data plans compared to corporate-provided resources.

Perhaps nothing has moved the enterprise mobility needle more than the proliferation of applications, especially proprietary ones developed to increase productivity, differentiate the customer and employee experience, and outpace the competition.

Why It's Time to Re-think Mobility

Today's employees and customers alike depend on around-the-clock services and productivity tools enabled by business-critical mobile applications, especially for sales, customer service, employee collaboration and essential administrative functions. On-the-road sales and customer service teams depend on customer relationship management (CRM) applications to manage leads, contacts, closings and ongoing relationships. Employee teams rely on business collaboration and file sharing tools to communicate and exchange information in real time without wasting hours commuting to the office or another physical meeting location.

Cloud office systems such as Office 365 and Google Apps for Work allow employees to perform a full range of administrative and creative tasks on their handhelds. Proprietary applications are on the rise in enabling a wide range of company-specific capabilities.

> **Mobile technologies are helping employees become more productive and accessible to their clients, colleagues and bosses, but they bring a host of issues to IT departments around managing the devices, contracts, invoices and users.**

While extremely beneficial to the modern enterprise, mobile capabilities need to be deployed and managed strategically to maximize effectiveness and minimize costs. In fact, according to Simon Zaccardi, Vice President of Managed Services at the Cannon Group, any business's mobility enablement should start with a sound strategy — one that clearly lays out how mobility enables the business. That strategy needs a comprehensive plan to control and manage the devices, the applications, the myriad of data plans on the market, and of course, the costs of these assets.

Finally, there must be always-available support to monitor, maintain and optimize all the company's mobile resources.

Evaluating Your Mobile Ecosystem

Those business-critical applications that your employees now depend on to perform their jobs are consuming massive amounts of data, especially the ones that stream video and audio; share large files; exchange photos and perform other data intensive functions. Most of the applications are probably residing in the cloud, which means additional data consumption and dependence for access and transfers. Disparate or poorly managed data plans can quickly wreak havoc on corporate budgets.

Devices, where the typical employee carries an average of three, need strong inventory and management control. Security and productivity can easily be compromised with misplaced, stolen or even aging devices that cannot support updated applications and protocols.
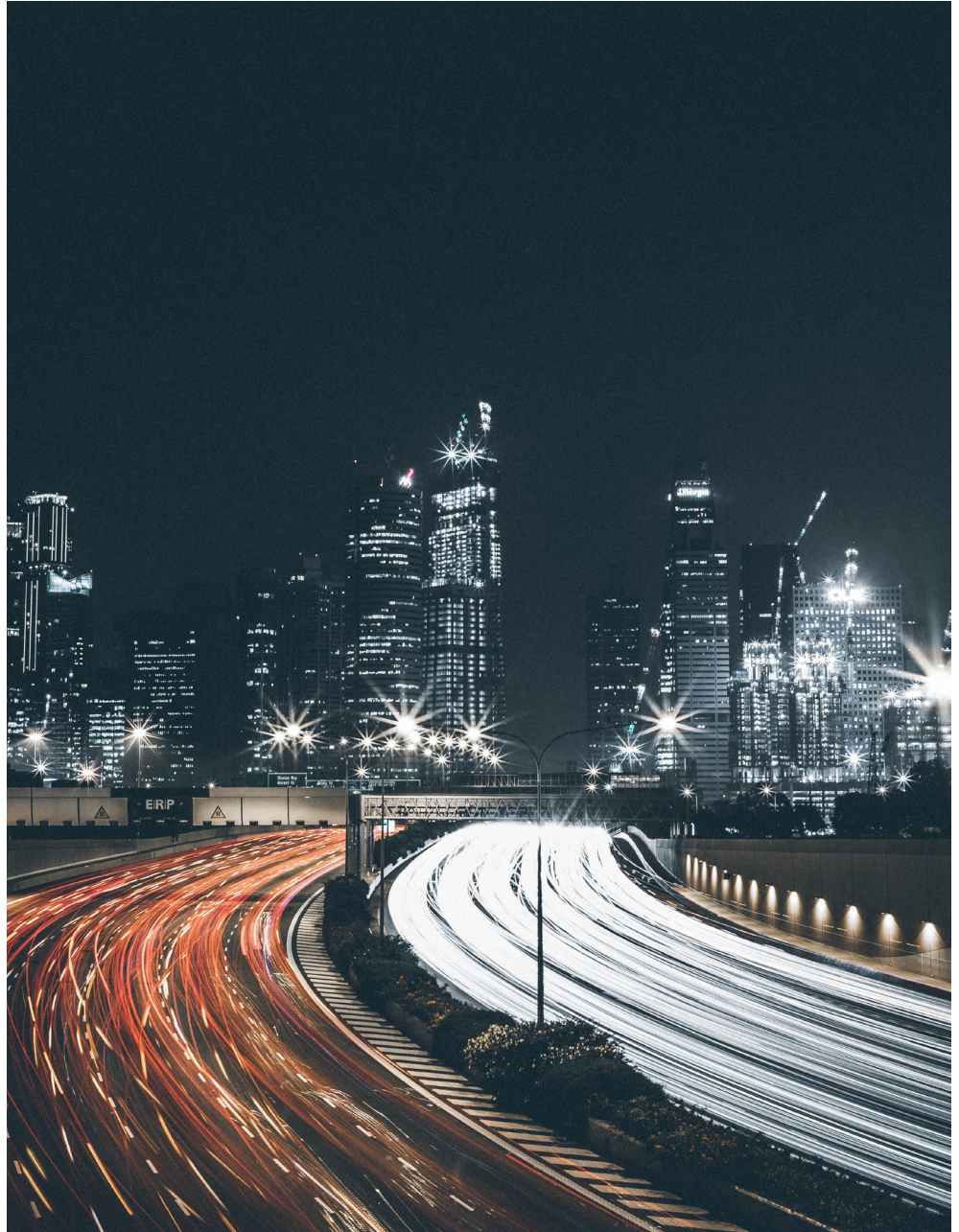
Regardless of a BYOD or company-owned environment, security of the data and devices is paramount, especially when company and customer sensitive data are involved and phones are used for much more than communications. There are, of course, multiple mobile device management (MDM) and mobile application management (MAM) programs available, but taking on the responsibility for implementing and managing them in house can be a huge strain on an already over-burdened IT team.

Obviously, mobility has become a strategic business imperative that empowers employees and contributes to efficiency, productivity and profitability. Embrace it, but be sure that your enterprise's ecosystem has the rock-solid strategies and controls in place to address complexity and costs.

Seven Key Considerations to Maximize Your Mobile Computing Strategy

1. MAKE MOBILITY A BUSINESS ENABLER

According to Zaccardi, a sound strategy starts with determining exactly how your enterprise intends to use mobility to enable your business. Best practices in mobile management all begin with addressing that question. Whether your priority is sales, customer service, a more agile and satisfied workforce, or most likely, all of those plus other priorities, it's critically important to understand mobility's goal in your specific business.

2. MAXIMIZE YOUR CRITICAL APPLICATIONS

Mobile applications have become strategic business enablers that are transforming the way people work, as well as transforming the way business is sold and delivered.

According to survey results published in the recent Adobe study, Driving Competitive Advantage with Enterprise Mobile Apps, messaging and collaboration are the most mission-critical mobile apps in enterprise today. The majority of survey respondents also ranked customer service and support apps to be mission critical, with 61 percent saying they'll still be critical by 2019.

It's key to understand and prioritize the apps that deliver the greatest value and results for your business.

3. PREPARE FOR THE DATA YOU'RE GOING TO CONSUME

"These business-critical apps – especially the ones your sales people are using to stream video and audio during customer presentations, and the file sharing and collaborative programs employee teams are running during remote meetings – can consume massive amounts of data," adds Zaccardi. "And that consumption is going to continue its upward spiral."

There is a seven-fold increase in mobile data usage, an almost 50 percent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) anticipated through 2021, according to Cisco.

The myriad of data providers and plans on the market make data widely and readily available, in fixed or scalable quantities. Staying abreast of every vendor, each plan offered, pricing structures and terms can be overwhelming. The right choices can make a major positive impact on IT budgets. And sometimes the apparently obvious choice, such as unlimited data, may not be best and ultimately waste hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The bottom line: Mobility apps will have an impact on your data usage – so it's critical that your network infrastructure (WAN) as well as cellular data plans (employee expensed or corporate owned) are right for your business.

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4. PUT THE RIGHT CONTROLS IN PLACE

"Keeping track of mobile devices with access to your corporate network is more important than ever," notes a headline in a June 2017 PC online article on mobile device management. "If there's anything keeping IT managers awake at night, it's fearing for their data's safety."

Control encompasses the whereabouts of the physical device, its performance, usage patterns and data consumption. It includes complete life-cycle support, from ordering, maintaining performance and security and establishing and monitoring policies for devices and their usage. But that's not all.

"If an employee is using a tablet for business-critical apps and something causes that device to lose its ability to support the apps, the potential loss of revenue is greater than the cost of the monthly plan," notes Zaccardi. "When addressing control in a mobile strategy, it's important to think of it in the macro dimension, including the device, its impact on the business, the apps with the data it holds, and the employee's privacy."

5. SECURE EVERYTHING!

While security and control in many ways go hand in hand, both need laser focused attention and planning in your mobile strategy.

How to secure the data is every bit as important as securing the device. "It's one thing to use your phone to check email; it's quite another to run human resources functions, sales or customer service, where sensitive employee and customer information are involved," adds Zaccardi.

There are multiple mobile device management (MDM) and mobile application (MAM) software solutions on the market; most are now grouped under the enterprise mobility management (EMM) umbrella, which also include data analytics tending to further complicate decisions of which is best for your business. Be sure that you understand exactly which solutions you are choosing.

And it goes without re-stating: Don't overlook security — in its entirety — for even a second.
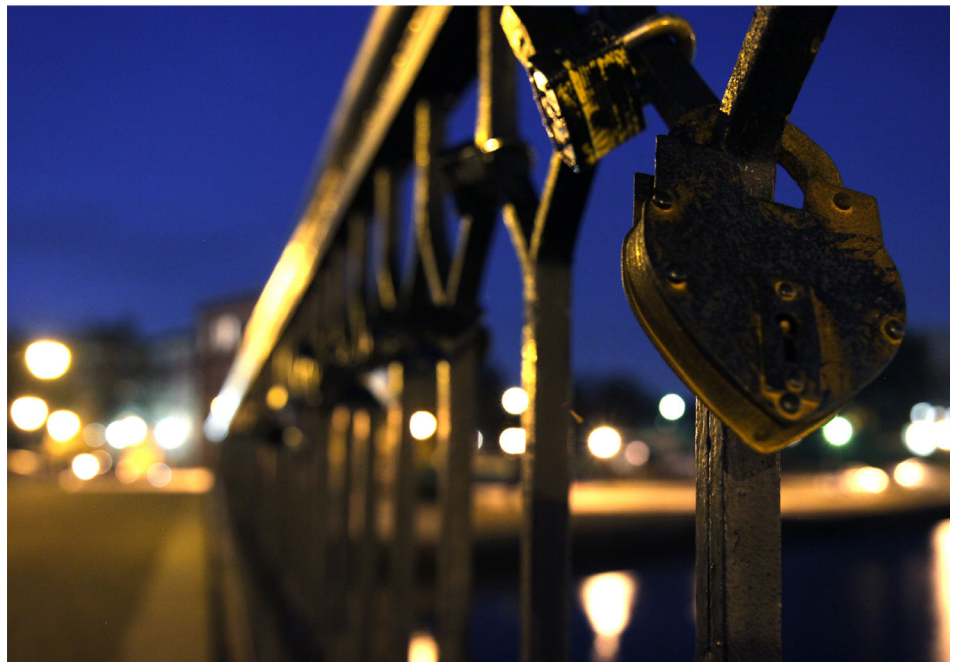
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6. DECIDE WHETHER OR WHERE BYOD IS THE RIGHT FIT

Research reveals contradictory claims regarding whether BYOD is more or less costly for the enterprise – especially considering the issues mentioned earlier about IT managers who are most concerned about keeping company data safe and secure.

"The monetary costs of BYOD to the business depend on its policies around stipends, reimbursements on data plans, roaming charges, overages and other similar factors," adds Cannon Group's Zaccardi. "But you also need to consider the business impact of downtime – which can be more concerning than the costs for the device. Since the company has less control in selecting the carrier, device and/or its operating system, there is greater potential for substandard performance of those mission critical applications.

But cost is only one consideration when it comes to BYOD. Control, tracking, security, along with capabilities to shut down and wipe data immediately from a misplaced device is critical. Consider how employees are using those devices and keep in mind that today, mobile phones should be treated as any other end point in your computing strategy.

7. DETERMINE HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR DEVICE AND APPS 24/7

Getting the devices into employees' hands when they need them, and keeping them up and running, is imperative and should be explicitly addressed in any mobile strategy. Waiting for repairs, replacements, or an explanation from the carrier as to what may be impeding service, is lost productivity and profitability.

The right resources can handle these logistics and more. A single point of contact for employees to order their mobile devices, get immediate help and submit trouble tickets when something goes wrong are critical elements of a successful mobility program. Productivity and customer experience gains can quickly disappear when mobile devices/ apps are not functioning properly and employees are left to deal directly with their mobile carries for service issues.

Next Steps

Enterprise mobility: It's a critical business enabler. Your customers and employees expect it. Your business profits from it. But it's complicated, especially for in-house teams who may have inherited the responsibility, adding it onto their already full IT plates.

The good news is that there is expert help available. In today's fluctuating landscape of vendors, services, products and plans, the right trusted partner with the up-to-date knowledge and in-depth experience offers invaluable resources in keeping your enterprise mobility lifecycle current, efficient and cost-effective. The right partner also frees your in-house resources to re-direct their attention to responsibilities that more directly support the core of your business, helping to drive its continued success.

Cannon Group offers the proven expertise and resources for managing mobile expenses and devices through their entire lifecycle, from ordering through deployment, troubleshooting and upgrading, as well as optimization and compliance. The company's help desk handles more than 60,000 end-user trouble tickets annually, with a satisfaction rating of over 98 percent.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW CANNON GROUP CAN HELP YOU REASSESS YOUR MOBILITY STATEGY, PLEASE CONTACT US: VISIT CANNONGROUPINC.COM OR CALL (610) 930-1000

ABOUT CANNON GROUP

Cannon Group is a trusted expert in managing costs and migrating technologies in large, complex IT environments. As a private telecom management firm based in Blue Bell, Pa., Cannon Group has the experienced people, processes & tools to deliver value, efficiencies and results. Our portfolio of solutions includes Strategic Sourcing, Telecom Expense Management and Managed Mobility, as well as Project Management to oversee complex migrations.