



CIONET

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

ENTERPRISE MOBILITY AT A CROSSROAD?

This article was written by Roger Camrass, director of CIONET UK and a visiting professor of the University of Surrey, and is based on the conversations during a dinner on 'Enterprise Mobility' sponsored by BlackBerry in May.

A revolution in mobile communications

Just ten years ago we recollect a corporate environment where staff were restricted to just one corporate device – typically a Blackberry or iPhone handset. Such devices were used exclusively for email and telephony, and traffic was directed over secure, private networks. Consider just how fundamentally this picture has changed in 2019.

Today most organisations have adopted a 'bring your own device' (or BYOD) on which both corporate and personal communications take place. In such environment's employees can access their emails, work documents, plus a full range of social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, they have access to cloud-based data storage apps such as Dropbox as well as corporate repositories.

Underpinning this revolution in mobile connectivity is the move to universal platforms such as iOS, Android and BlackBerry OS. And this is just for starters. Imagine the mobile world in five years' time when CISCO predicts there will be some 50 billion communicating sensors and machines – both at work and in the home. Clearly this presents challenges to both IT and business executives who seek to maintain the highest level of security in an increasingly open world.

As one delegate responded,

'Enterprise mobility is one of our greatest challenges, yet it receives the least attention.'

A growing gap in mobile communications

Just three years ago BlackBerry commissioned an executive survey on enterprise mobility undertaken by Forbes in the UK and USA. The results confirmed a growing gap between fixed and mobile communications within the enterprise. Just as today, it suggested:

- The workplace is becoming more mobile, supported by an explosion in smart phones, tablets and apps
- Consumerisation of both devices and applications is proceeding at an accelerating pace with diminishing boundaries between personal and corporate data
- But IT organisations do not have either the mandate or resources to address the growing gap – to the growing dissatisfaction of staff

Closing this gap required a comprehensive modernisation of communication platforms, the widespread introduction of APIs (to link to legacy applications) and a careful orchestration of qualified developers who could assist in the transition to enterprise mobility.

Why is enterprise mobility so important today?

Mobile communications have progressed significantly since their inception in the nineties. In the first phase of corporate adoption, emphasis was placed exclusively on communication of emails and documents. More recently, attention has shifted towards staff productivity – enabling mobile access to corporate applications such as HR, finance and CRM. This has enabled employees to continue their work regardless of location. Recent surveys suggest that mobile working has improved productivity by 15-20% in many sectors.

A further development is now in full flow. This is the ability to collaborate through mobile working across disparate teams, where documents and images can be shared in near real time. Such an innovation is beginning to transform the way we conduct complex tasks and is helping to streamline critical processes. A case in point is the way in which insurance companies process accident claims. Images from a crash can be shared immediately across insurance case workers, with dramatic reductions in settlement times of hours or days rather than weeks or months.

The next phase will be linked to the Internet of Things (IoT) where sensors communicate vital data to corporations. A recent experiment at Surrey University suggests that by embedding sensors into roads, continuous monitoring of surface conditions can reduce life cycle repair costs by up to 35%. This has been enabled by the advent of 5G where the lifetime of a sensor can be increased ten-fold due to low power consumption.

What are the security implications?

As mobility becomes central to corporate communications, collaboration and staff productivity, security is paramount both in the protection of intellectual property and business continuity assurance. With an explosion of devices, data sources and multi-cloud platforms, the 'attack surface' continues to grow. This requires a comprehensive solution that can adapt quickly over time.



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