

Measuring the Costs and Value of Enterprise Mobility

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Enterprise mobility will be one of the most important decisions managers can make, but deciding what to do and when to do it is critical to successful integration across many applications and users.

ANALYSIS

Enterprise mobility is one of the most passionate issues for IS organizations and users. Rarely do new technologies stir so many emotions and opinions from the business and technical sides of a company. Users looking for more efficiency and increased productivity feel justified in experimenting with new mobile and wireless technologies, and are constantly pushing the limit on what is acceptable in an enterprise. Many of these technologies are readily available for purchase in computer and electronics stores, and are self-installable. This method of adoption allows mobile and wireless technologies to find a "back door" into the enterprise. Cellular phones, notebooks, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and Wi-Fi technology were all introduced into an enterprise by an early adopter — usually a "road warrior" or mobile worker, rather than by the IS department. The IS organization has to step up to accept these new, maturing technologies, providing support and much-needed management. Otherwise, worker productivity will be affected, as well as more important things such as cost, standardization and security.

Most mobile and wireless technology seems to be just ahead of the adoption curve. Cellular phones and now Wi-Fi technology have moved into the mass market, but when should an enterprise invest in handheld devices, smart phones or wireless enterprise applications such as e-mail, field sales or Internet access? That question is not easily addressed with a generic answer. Each enterprise is different, and each has different needs, mobility issues and solutions. In e-mail servers, for example, one size (may) fit all, but mobile and wireless solutions are unique. Often, they exist on top of current wired solutions (wired vs. wireless LAN or mobile messaging), and justifying their additional cost may be difficult. In addition, mobile users will be a subset of total enterprise users, each with different needs. It takes time to figure out what the mobile needs are for each group and provide a solution. Often, the IS department is justified in its hesitation because it doesn't fully understand the business requirements of this evolving technology.

To assist in that effort, we've put together some research that will look at the process of mobility in the enterprise, focusing on the costs, benefits and needs of the mobile company. In some cases, the costs, benefits and needs of using mobile technology may be intangible. In "Intangible and Unexpected Mobile Value" (SPA-15-7662), Nick Jones looks at some of the intangible benefits that mobile technologies may present. Beyond the measurable total benefits of mobile applications, many provide more of a soft return. Here, the value of investment is more prevalent than return on investment (ROI). Kathy Harris examines what the value of new and emerging technologies means in the enterprise, and ten targets for value identification in "The Value Proposition in Emerging Technologies" (DF-16-3875).

There are also hard returns from mobile and wireless technologies. In "Wireless Point of Sale System Improves Rental Experience" (CS-15-8697), Cathy Tornbohm looks at a retail case study using mobile and wireless technology and provides insights into their successes and failures, and returns and costs. Bob Anderson looks at the use of wireless LAN technologies for the small and midsize business (SMB) market — one of the fastest-growing adopters of these technologies — in "SMBs Leverage Wireless for ERP and Inventory Management" (COM-16-1088).

What are the true costs of supporting mobile and wireless technologies? As more mobile devices emerge, we will track these true total costs via our total cost of ownership (TCO) model to gain a better understanding of how to choose a specific device based on a task and its impact on the bottom line — ROI. Will management of these mobile and wireless devices using new tools affect your total costs and returns? In "Wireless Device Support Challenges" (COM-16-5331), John Girard has some great suggestions on when and how mobile management tools should be adopted in the enterprise. These pieces will help almost any enterprise plan for the adoption and management of enterprise mobility.

Wireless technology is still evolving, and managers need to look at hard and soft costs and benefits when deciding which solution to implement. Each technology, user base and application needs to be examined closely before investments are made.

Features

"The True Costs and Benefits of Mobile Wireless Devices" (COM-16-0654). Understanding the real ROI of investing in a mobile device technology is crucial for enterprises. **By Phillip Redman**

"The Value Proposition in Emerging Technologies" (DF-16-3875). Assessing the value of new technologies is a skill enterprises must develop. **By Kathy Harris**

"Wireless Device Support Challenges" (COM-16-5331). Ensuring their support systems are ready for wireless technology is important for enterprises. **By John Girard**

"SMBs Leverage Wireless for ERP and Inventory Management" (COM-16-1088). Managing wireless inventory evolves into mature solutions needed by price-conscious SMBs. **By Robert Anderson**

"Intangible and Unexpected Mobile Value" (SPA-15-7662). Identifying tangible and intangible application benefits provides useful information for enterprises. **By Nick Jones**

"Wireless Point of Sale System Improves Rental Experience" (CS-15-8697). Streamlining front- and back-end processes is a benefit of a mobile application. **By Cathy Tornbohm**

This research is part of a set of related research pieces. See "Developing a Business Case for Mobility" for an overview.

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