



wireless watchdogs

# Enterprise Mobility Costs: Challenges and Solutions

# Mobility and Business

Mobile devices are ubiquitous in private life. But as businesses move more and more to connected workforces – by some past projections, mobile workers will account for 75% of the U.S. workforce by 2020 – it will become increasingly incumbent upon business to properly manage the attendant costs if the true benefits of a connected workforce are to be realized.

The mobile workforce appears in a variety of guises. Remote workers have long been common in home healthcare and industries that provide field service, for example. With better connectivity (3G, LTE, ubiquitous WiFi in some locations, etc.) and more powerful devices have come better applications – applications that transcend telephony and extend both field worker capabilities as well as provide for efficient back-office management of those workers and their tasks. These kinds of efficiency-enhancing applications extend to business the promise of increased efficiency, and in turn the promise of a better bottom line.

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The gains from such efficiencies, however, can become easily compromised in an enterprise setting owing to the various underlying challenges and costs associated with deploying and managing a high number of often-differing mobile and connected devices. Thus, in order for enterprise to truly capitalize on the increased efficiencies of a mobile workforce, it is imperative that implementation and management costs are properly managed throughout the mobility lifecycle.

## Costs

### Connectivity

Despite the growing number of makes and models of mobile and IoT devices on the market, there's one element that they all have in common: The need for connectivity. Statistics from 2016 Rethink Technology Research data indicate that "mobile professionals" use upwards of 700 megabytes of data per day. That may be a high number, depending on what Rethink Technology considers a mobile professional, as opposed to other remote workers who might use less data on a daily basis.

Nonetheless, connectivity costs are a huge part of the total cost of ownership (TCO) in enterprise mobility, taking up 14% of TCO, making connectivity cost management a priority for any enterprise looking to implement or better management its mobile workforce.



## Help Desk Support

As more mobile workers come online, requests for support will continue to increase. According to HDI, help desks saw an average increase of 57% in tickets submitted from 2015 to 2016, and in a subsequent asked what the growth was attributed to. The answer was a combined 78% of respondents attributing it to either new applications, new devices, or supporting the mobile workforce.

There's no reason to think, as the number of connected devices, apps, and mobile workers continues to grow, that help desk tickets will decline in number. Along with that growth, of course, come the costs of not only staffing an enterprise help desk but also the costs of resolving the tickets. Thus, it's clear that any business initiative to implement mobility solutions needs to consider help desk impacts as an essential factor when weighing both implementation and ongoing management costs.

## IT Management

Every enterprise will have its own app or suite of apps that mobile workers will need to use in order to complete their tasks in the field. In environments where workers are issued company-owned devices (as opposed to bring-your-own-device, or BYOD), the issued devices will also need initial provisioning and set-up as well as ongoing maintenance, both for the device itself as well as for necessary application and firmware updates.

In an enterprise environment, the burden of provisioning, updating, and managing the devices very often falls on the IT department. The attendant workload on IT in small businesses is perhaps manageable – but at the scale of hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of devices, the costs in time and labor to an IT department can be enormous.

Just as with the increased demands on help desks, then, businesses implementing a mobile

workforce need to examine all of the new costs within the IT department that can come along with such an implementation.

## Security

Another IT department burden comes via the need for mobile device security. As the number of connected devices grows, so too do they become a more attractive target for hackers. A 2017 report from Dimensional Reach revealed that 20% of companies have already been attacked through their mobile devices – and that number will doubtless continue to grow. Connected and mobile devices are especially attractive when the device is capable of connecting to an enterprise network, potentially presenting a valuable backdoor to exploit for unauthorized access to data.

And the costs of such data breaches are high, reaching an enterprise-average of \$1.23 million per breach from March 2017 to February 2018. A common way for hackers to gain unauthorized access is through exploiting outdated applications and device firmware. Because such exploits are low-hanging fruit, many attacks can be stopped simply by ensuring that devices always have the latest updates installed. Such updates are commonly issued to fix known exploits, and the attacker will simply move on if their targeted exploit is unavailable.

The problem, again, is that ensuring that all devices are always updated is another burden that falls on the IT department – and can present

large challenges in time and expense when the number of devices on the network is at enterprise scale. Just as with the other IT management costs associated with mobility, then, implementers need to consider security as a cost that simply cannot be done away with.

## Solutions

Similar to the build-versus-buy debates that occur around software and IoT development, enterprise mobility implementers and managers are confronted with two choices: To either manage all of the devices and staffing themselves, and bear all of the known and unknown costs, or to outsource

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their mobility management to a dedicated third-party provider.

Such a decision, of course, will account for business needs and goals, and some enterprises will appropriately choose to manage their own mobility initiatives. There are solid reasons, though, for engaging with a mobility management provider – reasons that can cut across all of the costs previously discussed, as long as the provider can bring certain fundamentals to the table:

When it comes to connectivity, a mobility management provider is typically capable of providing low-cost connectivity across multiple providers. This is important for two reasons. In the first instance, the differing models of devices as well as the typical wide geographic dispersion seen in an enterprise environment often necessitates not only different kinds of connectivity (e.g., LTE versus WiFi), but also different carriers. To an enterprise, that of course means multiple contracts and multiple invoices every billing cycle.

A mobility management solution provider will typically handle that for the enterprise, finding the best options for all devices and presenting the enterprise with only one contract and one invoice to be paid.

Solid, enterprise-grade mobility management providers will also supply their own help desk and support staff for the mobile devices it's managing. Offloading device support tasks frees up costly internal support resources. In addition to lightening the work load and the costs of internal support, there's another cost-saving benefit that's sometimes difficult to quantify: Appropriate help desk servicing minimizes the costs of downtime by helping to be sure that mobile workers are always able to do the necessary work in the field.

Just as with offloading help desk support, finding a mobility management provider that can also handle more IT-driven device needs can also free up a large amount of enterprise resources. The provider should be able to provision the

devices initially with all required software and functionality, as well as provide ongoing management in terms of rolling out necessary updates. Such updates are often necessary from a functional perspective, but as previously mentioned they are also critically important in terms of keeping devices and the corporate network secure.

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Aside from device security, it's also standard that enterprise organizations will have a variety of security roles and policies scattered across their many devices. Ensuring that every device has the appropriate security level in place for its intended user can be another drain on IT staff – but again, mobility management providers can implement and monitor such policies as a part of their services, as well as rapidly lock down devices or users that attempt to violate policies.

Finally, a mobility management solution provider can aggregate and analyze usage and cost data across all of the functional areas of mobility, and provide ongoing insights. Such a feat would be difficult to achieve internally without a dedicated management or executive role charged with



compiling and maintaining the data and achieving such insights, which provides a culminating value stemming from

## Conclusion

When a business attempts to implement a mobile workforce, all of the aforementioned costs of that mobility can be difficult to ascertain. That

difficulty can bubble up to the executive level, where ground-level impacts are hard to discover and quantify, which in turn makes it hard for executives to appropriately manage mobility initiatives.

Because of these difficulties, the true TCO of an enterprise-level mobility policy is often not known until some lengthy period of time post-implementation – which in turn leads to the current situation in the United States, where mobile device costs to business averages more than twice the initial expectations of the business.

To ameliorate many of these costs, and thus to truly capitalize on the increased efficiencies and capabilities that mobility can bring, it's worthwhile for any business with a current or prospective mobility policy to examine their business needs and weigh the costs and benefits of internal management versus offloading to a comprehensive mobility management solutions provider.

## Ready to learn more about the benefits of a managed mobile solution?

Please contact our authorized agent, Adaptive Network Solutions, for more information about how we can help make your future less costly and more secure.

 800.484.2575

 [Info@Need2Adapt.com](mailto:Info@Need2Adapt.com)

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