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Drowning in data waves or swimming to greater efficiency?

For a lot of companies the much flaunted term “*mobility revolution*” is simply techno-blurb with no clear commercial applications. Acronyms and brands such as Wi-Fi, GPRS, SMS, WAP, 3G and Bluetooth are all well known in the marketplace, but the understanding of how these technologies can actually translate into real business benefits can still be a mystery.

So how do you ignore the jargon, but reap the advantages of these growing technologies?

Strategically, mobility should be viewed as an effective mechanism for providing staff, customers and suppliers with access to required information, regardless of their location. Although the various data carriers mentioned above have been around for a while, they have all suffered from a lack of background application, i.e. they can all send data, but no-one had anything of use to send. But this is changing. With laptops, PDA and mobile phones sales still on the increase the relevance of mobility will continue to grow and those companies creating greater user experiences and functionality will be the winners.

An effective mobility strategy can generate huge profits on the bottom line – but only if management teams remain focussed on the commercial implications. Decide how your efficiency can be increased and how your customers can be better engaged. Leave the technical delivery of your vision to your IT staff and outside developers.

A mobility initiative should concentrate on four areas; (1) how can it ensure consistency, (2) how can it save time, (3) how can it increase accessibility and (4) can it improve functionality and experience.

Here are a few ideas to consider;

Work anywhere – it is not always possible for MD’s and other senior management to be in the office, so take the office with you. Regardless of location you can access what you need, when you need it.

Sales teams - imagine never having to see your sales team again, they can still check stock, generate quotations and place orders, but without ever having to come into the office.

Customer communication – contact customers wherever they are with innovative methods designed to create brand loyalty and extra functionality. Allow them more control of the products they have purchased from you and use the technology to cross-sell your full range of products.

Supplier visibility – track your goods and supplier performance by ensuring they are involved in your mobility strategy. Mobile software can now be developed to manage the entire supply chain, all the way from source to customer.

Operation control – hardware, IT systems and manufacturing lines can be controlled remotely so if you have a wide geographic spread you can cut-down on travel and subsistence costs.

Competitive advantage – find ways of using mobility to create crushing blows to your competition. By leading you will be forcing them to follow, forcing them to spend money and, hopefully, forcing them to make mistakes.

James Bridson, MD of LeoTel Software Systems, comments, “We are seeing a huge increase in demand for our application and embedded development services. Mobility technology has now successfully exited the early adopter stage and is set to become prevalent within the next 18 months. The winners will be those companies that embrace the potential of the data waves aggressively”

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