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SOLUTIONS FOR A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD



Productivity and the Mobile Worker

BY GEORGETTE ROBINSON

No matter what industry you work in, employees are increasingly on the move. More and more business processes and activities occur away from the office, be that at the customer site, over the web, at seminars or at home. In fact, approximately 35% of today's workers in the US are mobile and it is estimated that by December 2006 this will increase to 66%.

Employers are realizing that they can generate productivity gains and a competitive advantage by giving employees access to information "anytime" and "anywhere."

Critical Data Access

By giving workers access to relevant information anywhere at anytime, workers can be far more responsive to customers. Critical data necessary to service the customer be it pricing, customer records or product design specification, can all accelerate business activity and productivity if information is readily available in real time.

For example, an organization in the US has demonstrated that insurance field claims adjusters can handle an additional 74 claims per worker per week using mobile solutions. The field agents have been equipped with cell phones and handheld devices enabling them to receive, respond and action information at any time.

Information such as client policy renewal, alerts regarding past due premiums and changes to daily schedules are all managed in the field. Access to critical data has empowered the field agents and has enabled them to successfully manage client relationships and create new ones.

Efficient Communication

Reliable mobile solutions in the workplace allow companies to connect people, information and business processes enabling better decisions faster.

Microsoft's Live Meeting and Live Communications Server are examples of mobility solutions that can significantly enhance an organisation's communication with employees, customers, prospects and partners without the cost and time of travel. The technology enables organisations to demonstrate products, negotiate deals, share files, and collaborate with white boards in real time and at a moment's notice by simply using a PC or laptop with an internet connection and a phone.

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This technology has huge benefits for organizations who find that valuable time is lost trying to set up face-to-face meeting times with clients or whose financial results are impacted by significant travel costs. Companies that are able to efficiently and productively communicate with all their stakeholders and clients at any give time will be a step above their competitors.

Worker Flexibility

Flexibility in work hours is highly valued by workers today. Many employees seek to have some flexibility in their daily structures to enable better management of all the various elements in their lives – children, parents, church and other commitments. Research shows that workers who have some control over their work hours are far more productive than those who must adhere to a strict standard schedule of 9-5.

Mobility solutions enable organizations to provide flexible working arrangements to their staff. Solutions such as laptops with secure wi-fi technology, broad band connections, Virtual Private Networks (VPN) solutions, secure virtual Local Area Networks (vLANS), e-mail access from a mobile device and extranets, can all offer worker flexibility.

Investment

Organizations have to be committed to making significant investments in mobile computing that are robust secure and reliable. However, executives who see it as just a cost to the IT budget are allowing their organization to remain crippled. If mobility computing is not addressed, organizations will be left at a disadvantage due to a lack of communication, higher cost, poor customer service and a lack of flexibility.

To provide feedback on this column, please email MakingITwork@providencetg.com

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Ms Georgette Robinson is Manager, Networking Solutions at ProvidenceTechnology Group. Ms Robinson has 10 years experience working in IT across Project Management, Business Analysis and Network Management & Implementation. Providence Technology Group is one of the Bahamas' leading IT firms, specializing in Networking Solutions, Consulting & Advisory Services and Software Solutions.