

Chapter IX

Strategic Elements for the Mobile Enablement of Business

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ABSTRACT

The Internet wave that swept through business is likely to be seen as a ripple in a pond compared to the changes that are predicted from the adoption of mobility into business. Irrespective of industry sector, the mobile enablement (wrapping business around mobility) of business is expected to bring many opportunities and rewards; and like the Web enablement (wrapping business around the Internet) of business, a few challenges as well. Across all business areas, mobile business will need to support a mobile workforce, the operation of call (service) centres, and transaction processing and collaboration of virtual teams. Mobile business will also impact product offerings, the management of consumer choice and the focusing of communications with a sticky message. Mobile business will drive changes in management, revisions of business operations and the alignment of Information Communication Technology (ICT). This chapter discusses some of the common but important strategic elements to the successful mobile enablement of business.

INTRODUCTION

Although some businesses are starting to offer mobile services and others are preparing for mobile business, many organisations are still formulating the strategies and plans necessary for the mobile enablement of business. Mobile enablement of business can be understood as wrapping of the business around the core of mobile technologies. Organizations are also

identifying the necessary processes and infrastructure changes to support mobile business. Like the Web enablement of business (wrapping business around the Internet) and the integration of the Internet and Web sites into business, common issues exist across all business areas and industry sectors in the mobile enablement of business. Excluding the industry specific market and consumer trends, some of the common and critical strategic business considerations

upon mobile business are reviewed in this chapter. The ability of current Information Communication Technology (ICT) operations to support and deliver mobile business (Sherringham 2008) are of particular significance in this discussion.

BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS IN MOBILE ENABLEMENT

Across industry sectors and many areas of business there are common elements that are required for the effective and efficient mobile enablement of business. Similar to the initiation of any other services and business changes, an effective strategy with a clear business case and well-defined expectations and outcomes are required for the mobile enablement of business.

Resembling the adoption of the Internet, the integration of mobile business will probably follow a phased implementation according to pragmatic business need with a proven business case to lower costs or grow revenue. Other considerations like the ability of the business to manage the change and the time it takes to optimise ICT necessary to support mobility would also drive a pragmatic phased approach.

The mobile enablement of business, including the delivery of services to mobile devices, is a business operation and not an ICT activity and unlike the initial adoption of the Internet that was often driven by ICT, businesses are driving the adoption of mobility by the business for the business. The fact that changes in ICT may be required is a consequence of the process (Unhelkar 2008a). ICT is not the driver of the mobile enablement process; changing market forces is the driver. The business is responding and ICT is the enabler of mobile business.

The extent and range of services in need of mobile enablement are expected to be approximately the same as those that were in need of Web enabling. Mobile enablement will be used to provide services on behalf of the business, to external parties, as well as optimising operations within a business.

For external customers a phased approach can be adopted with the alerts and messaging services being the first to be provided. Additional services for simple transaction processing and validation can be made available next. A focus on the provision of business critical information may also be a priority. As the capability of the business to provide and support mobile business grows, more complex processes can be progressively supplied. Customer interaction

will be a major driver in mobile business and as call centres transition to centres of service excellence, the ability to service mobile business will become a key plank of successful customer service operations (Unhelkar 2008b).

For internal needs, access to contact details on any device anywhere anytime may be the initial requirement; followed by the capabilities of ordering, purchasing and invoicing. Messaging, alerts and information access may come next, with support for advanced transaction processing provided subsequently. The need for collaboration and the power of the mobile device in business collaboration whether it is between employees and/or with channel partners will also come to the fore.

The key to the success of mobile business initiatives will be the business integration, change and the ability to guarantee service delivery. Common elements of the change required include:

- **Optimisation of process:** Resolution of the new processes and how business will operate.
- **Business logic:** Resolution of the business logic required to ensure the functioning of mobile business.
- **Data management:** Addressing the data management issues necessary.
- **Training:** Training of all relevant parties.
- **Support:** The support infrastructure provided to staff and customers to support mobile business.
- **Performance:** Realising the promised cost savings or revenue opportunities.
- **Communication:** Communication to all relevant parties on what is happening, how it is happening, the benefits and how to do things.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOBILE DEVICE IN MOBILE BUSINESS ENABLEMENT

The significance of the mobile device within mobile business lies not only in the ability deliver innovative services to new markets but in the ability of the mobile device to drive out significant operational efficiencies. Any mobile business strategy and mobile enablement plan leverages the two key considerations of the mobile device: screen size and location.

Screen Size - When compared with the more palatial desktop presence, the smaller screen size

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