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## **Chapter XI**

# **Wireless Sales Force Automation in New Zealand**

Brett Walker,  
Centre for Interuniversity Research & Analysis on Organizations, Canada

Stuart J. Barnes, University of East Anglia, UK

Eusebio Scornavacca, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

## **Abstract**

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*Mobile and wireless technologies are deeply affecting the way many organizations do business. Among the several types of wireless applications, business-to-employee (B2E) applications have a strong potential to generate considerable value for organizations. Wireless sales force automation has been one of the most common applications found among companies that have adopted wireless B2E solutions. This chapter examines the impacts of wireless sales force automation on three organisations operating in food-related industries in New Zealand. The findings demonstrate that wireless technologies can enhance the benefits of traditional sales force automation, but that fundamental transformation of processes and value proposition is not yet apparent. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future practice and research.*

## Introduction

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A trend that has been changing the landscape of information technology in recent times is the convergence of the Internet and wireless technologies. The developments of the Internet and mobile phones have followed two separate paths. Only in the past five years these technologies have converged, making possible a vast range of wireless data communication technologies such as the wireless Internet (Barnes, 2003). Much of the literature on mobile business has focused on consumer applications. However, according to studies published by the Boston Consulting Group (Manget, 2002) and AT Kearney (2003), the international market for business-to-employee (B2E) is expected to grow twice as rapidly as the market for wireless business-to-consumer (B2C) applications.

One wireless B2E application with the potential to generate considerable value for organisations is sales force automation (SFA). Donaldson and Wright (2002) point out that several authors have also noted this lack of a clear and convergent definition of SFA. Although SFA has been available for over two decades, the number of empirical studies about them is limited (Rivers & Dart, 1999). According to Morgan and Inks (2001, p. 463) these technologies involve “the use of computer hardware, software, and telecommunications devices by salespeople in their selling and/or administration activities.” The introduction of information technology to the sales process has created significant benefits for salespeople and the organisations that employ them. The introduction of wireless technologies has the potential to enhance these benefits.

Organisations that have adopted relatively simple wireless applications for sales force automation have realised significant productivity gains. Developments in wireless technologies offer the potential to enhance the ability of salespeople to work more effectively away from the physical premises of their organisation. Increased mobility can increase the productivity and effectiveness of the sales force, as salespeople can remain in the field for longer periods of time. Other benefits include the ability for salespeople to remotely access back-office systems, the ability for organisations to deliver accurate information to employees in the field, improve communications with salespeople, reduce error rates, and improve order turnaround times. Wireless SFA can potentially impact an organisation’s value chain and generate competitive advantage to organisations.

A better understanding of the strategic impacts of wireless SFA will aid organisations in realistically assessing expectations, investment decisions and implementation planning. There is a growing amount of literature on the actual and potential impact of mobile technologies on organisations. However, there is a gap in the literature examining the role of wireless technologies in sales force automation. The purpose of this study is to investigate the development and impact of wireless SFA solutions on organisations. In particular, we focus on three case studies within the food industry in New Zealand.

The remainder of the chapter will be structured as follows. The following section will present a review of relevant literature covering theory on traditional sales activities, sales force automation, and mobile business. This will be followed by an explanation of the research methodology that guided the current study. The results of the research are then provided for the cases, along with a cross-case analysis. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the key research findings, limitations, and suggestions for further research and practice.

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