

# Scaling the heights

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# Get up and go

*The mobility challenge has been on the lips of many in business, but few have yet seen the full potential benefits. VARs and partners are the right people for the job, says Fleur Doidge*



Many business customers appear to be standing at a crossroads; cloud computing and consumerisation have accelerated the move to more mobile ways of working, yet this same phenomenon creates enormous challenges for businesses running an increasingly diverse IT estate and the services bundled around it.

It is no surprise that many organisations of all sizes are unsure of their direction when it comes to choosing and deploying the right technological offerings to

enhance their business processes and profits. This is partly because there are so many issues for them to examine, few of which can be considered in isolation.

OEMs and other name brands cannot of course be relied on to give a completely neutral or even a holistic, eagle-eye view of the situation. So that leaves third-party providers of support, services and product.

However, the task can be equally difficult for many VARs of all stripes as well. This is particularly true of smaller providers who have their own struggles over resources in the race to stay relevant in a

fast-changing technological world where the customers are eyeing tightened belts and empty wallets as well.

Fortunately, help is available. Companies such as Comms-care – the sponsor of this Special Report – can put together a range of sophisticated packages that go beyond hardware support to fully managed services around virtualised infrastructure and cloud, incorporating security considerations and data compliance concerns.

When we talk about mobility today, we are talking about mobile users, but also mobile devices, mobile applications and mobile networking. Layered on top of that basic foundation is the intersection of all these elements – and then of course there are regulatory restrictions, and service-level responsibilities to customers. It's a complex, multi-dimensional picture that is continually changing.

So third-party support providers such as Comms-care aim to provide channel partners with the agility required while maintaining the overhead space to make a profit. If channel companies can focus on what customers really want, and on delivering that, they may really hit the ground running.

■ Fleur Doidge is features editor at CRN.

## A chance to increase productivity

*Businesses that implement reliable, secure mobility solutions will reap the benefits immediately and in the longer term, writes Ben Davies*



Technology has always been a pivotal cog in the success of most industries as businesses look to its ability to implement improved working processes, increase productivity, drive efficiencies and help differentiate them over the competition.

As with many business tools, technology needs the workforce to fully embrace it before you can consider it a success. It is only once the workforce adopts a new technology as an

integral business tool that you will see a real drive for change and improvement across the business.

By empowering staff with the necessary tools to benefit instantly from any technology advancements, you will accelerate technology adoption, encourage loyalty and increase levels of motivation across a business. These tangible benefits cannot be underestimated: quite often, looking after your own staff has a direct influence on high customer satisfaction and retention levels. Adopting such technology advancements will also assist businesses in ensuring they remain aligned with the needs of their customers.

The continued innovation in mobile devices, development of

business apps and an established infrastructure to host technology advancements means that mobility is a huge growth area that is moving at a phenomenal pace and shaping not only our business lives but our personal lives too.

For businesses, implementing mobility solutions is growing increasingly important, to ensure their workforce is equipped with the necessary tools to remain both competitive and productive in a difficult financial climate. However, concerns associated with mobility still remain over security, technical complexity and perceptions of high costs, so it is important that IT resellers have the right answers to such pressing issues. If these answers do not currently sit in-house with the reseller, the answer may be in sourcing and developing partnerships with the right trusted, third-party mobility support partner.

This CRN Special Report, sponsored by mobility specialist Comms-care, will demonstrate how implementing the right security provisions in today's complex IT environments can address those common vulnerabilities associated with mobility, security and BYOD as a whole, while leveraging the latest infrastructure and application advances, such as virtualisation, storage and unified communications.

■ Ben Davies is managing director of Comms-care.



# Moving on up now

*VARs and other tech providers climbing the peaks of mobility may only avoid falling off the edge into complexity by forming the right project partnerships, Fleur Doidge finds*

KFC has become the latest consumer giant to announce a game-changing mobility strategy, adding “mobile wallet” technology in April to its 11 herbs and spices in 10 London locations in a pilot to be extended across the UK, the US, and the rest of the world. This is no longer a market cliff edge either — McDonald’s introduced its mobile wallet programme last year, and Starbucks did the same in 2011.

The user chooses an outlet and makes an order remotely using a web app on a mobile device and paying by credit card. On arrival at the chosen store, the customer simply swipes a QR code and picks up the order — avoiding the need to queue. The key to its success, clearly, is the improved customer experience enabled by mobile technology.

While much of the IT itself is anything but new — the first mobile phone call, after all, was made 40 years ago — more and more organisations are not only talking about mobility, but seeing the potential business benefits and wanting to tap into the possibilities.

Trevor Connell, managing director of Siemens Enterprise Communications, notes that rich multimedia technology now bridges the miles, with multiple dimensions introduced into geographically dispersed workplaces.

“The Motorola DynaTAC was nine inches tall and had a talk time of 35 minutes. Now we expect our smartphones to last the working day and fit into our pockets,” he confirms. “We have seen a raft of advances in telecommunications in the past 40 years. The mobile phone industry is the fastest growing in the world.

Consumerisation of the mobile phone has not only changed the way we communicate, it has changed the way we work. Videoconferencing means mobile teams can now interact and collaborate.”

Mobility is no longer a trend that organisations — or the channel partners that serve them — can afford to ignore. Gartner research points to ongoing massive expansion for mobility across many facets — including big data and business analytics. Getting business intelligence that is actionable, after all, is only possible with a complete picture of business activity — including what happens out of the office, and on a multitude of devices.

As Rita Sallam, research vice president analyst at Gartner, says: “A large enterprise makes millions of decisions every day. The challenge is that companies have far more data than people have time, and the amount of data that is generated every minute keeps increasing. In the face of accelerating business processes and myriad distractions, real-time operational intelligence systems are moving from ‘nice to have’ to ‘must have’ for survival.”

Gartner has also noted that it is the convergence of social, information, mobile and cloud that will deliver business value, so these trends should not be considered in isolation as market forces. Cloud, mobile and social technologies enable the distribution of information; social media usage and behaviour drive mobile and information offerings; and cloud can be a foundation for information, social and mobile implementations.

## Holistic overview

A three-dimensional, holistic overall approach has to be taken to achieve tangible business benefits — while complying with increasingly stringent regulations on data handling, and defending all systems against a range of threats while maintaining a user experience that enhances rather than reduces productivity. It hardly needs to be added that this represents an uphill battle for most businesses, and more than one or even two technology suppliers can achieve alone.



It's a job, in other words, for the channel, but the magnitude of the task and all its carefully judged, related requirements suggest VARs themselves will increasingly need assistance from partners.

Darren Briscoe, technical director at channel-only support services provider Comms-care, says mobility is a massive area to discuss but the message for success remains clear as it is always ultimately about delivering what the customer really wants. And this requires a large, and regularly changing, volume of disciplines and skill sets.

"You're looking at skills around mobility solutions, applications, the OS, wireless expertise, security, virtualisation (both client and server), data protection — it's endless," Briscoe says. "We, however, now have access to those with all our engineers, who have notched up massive expertise in all those areas."

For the right support to be provided to a channel partner engaged in a mobility project, it is important the provider has the accreditation that gives both the customer and ultimate end user confidence and quality assurance. Increasingly, this means incorporating ISO 20,000, the international standard for IT services management, and ISO 27,001 for information security management systems.

"Partners are saying to us that they cannot get into this business without these accreditations. That is the minimum standard that has been required, and not just around mobility. ISO 27,001 is not unique in itself but it is relatively unique in the channel. Lots of our partners do not have it," confirms Briscoe.

For example, Comms-care has seen a sharp rise in requests for virtualised desktop infrastructure (VDI) platforms that can support BYOD deployments and cloud services. Briscoe says VDI is also useful for allaying security

## // The issues are much larger than just mobile device management. What is the mobility value proposition and how do you drive value? //

Dave Ellis, Computerlinks

fears, as an alternative to storing information and data on a local — perhaps mobile — client gadget, itself one of the biggest challenges facing channel partner customers.

"Two years ago it was barely a topic of conversation. Now we get more than 20 requests a week for VDI support. This will become more popular over time with the rise of big data and the need to store it," he says.

The launch of 4G services and improved broadband access is likely to increase the popularity of remote working as well. So Comms-care is offering fully managed services to VARs that encompass server infrastructure, networking kit and firewalls, covering product from the likes of VMware, Cisco, HP, IBM, Dell and Juniper. Data encryption can also be included in a package that can be sold to end-user organisations for a fixed monthly fee. Mobile environments, notes Briscoe, can actually increase the internal security risk.

"More than 90 per cent of the greatest risks to data, such as malware and hacking, are done by people taking things away on a USB or downloading them to personal devices. This cannot be prevented but it is always advisable to encrypt data to offer an extra layer of protection in the cloud," he says.

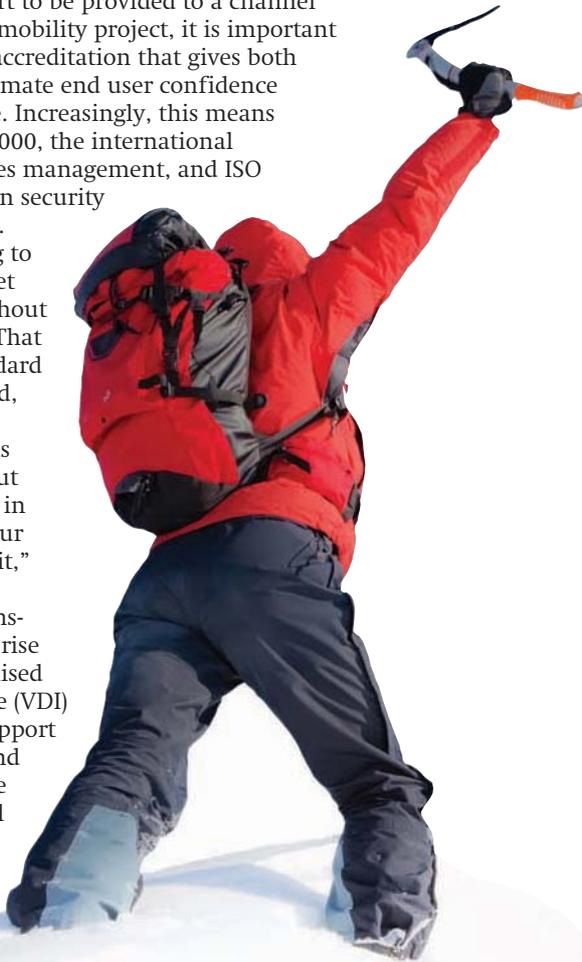
### A helping hand

To date, Comms-care is supporting 400 resellers, representing about 7,000 end users around their WAN, LAN, datacentre, wireless, security, unified communications and storage technologies. And the company is continuing to grow strongly — last year another 50 per cent year on year by turnover — with this holistic, adaptable support services approach, says Briscoe.

With the right support, small resellers can compete effectively and offer top-of-the-range service levels even to large public-sector customers. Back-office support, contract and warranty management, project management, and services delivery are all on offer. The provider even offers full support through the bidding and tendering process as part of its standard service offering.

"We are helping partners with sub-£2m turnovers win business that will double the size of their own company," he says. "The first thing we usually do is check there is nothing in the contract that precludes them sub-contracting all or part. Then they can ask us to fill in the tender as if it were coming from them, and then they put their name on it — we've got a whole bid team here... We do hundreds of tenders a year."

Dave Ellis, director of new technology and services at specialist distributor Computerlinks, says mobility and security are definitely front of mind for many business customers right now. Not only are related issues under consideration, but increasing →



numbers of end users are seeking to address them, he adds.

“It’s not just about the devices themselves, but the number of devices, how to deliver a good end-user experience, and deliver value via these devices and the wireless and other infrastructure that supports the devices,” Ellis says.

“Then you obviously need to ensure the security and management of these devices, and think about how you deliver traditional desktop apps to them.

“The issues are much larger than just mobile device management. What is the mobility value proposition and how do you drive value?”

VARs will also need to be looking at multiple vendors and their offerings’ equally diverse requirements to deliver a so-called “complete solution”, without having the luxury of considering the WAN, applications, security, and service delivery in isolation and putting them all together at the end. Often, Ellis says, 70 per cent of a solution will be able to come from one vendor, but the other 30 per cent might be selected from a varied range of alternatives.

“So I think there is a really good play for the channel here,” he says. “Perhaps even three years ago, I wasn’t sure there would be, but I am convinced there is now. And it’s much bigger than BYOD.”

Alan Haley, managing director of IT marketing

## MOBILITY AND DATA IN US HEALTHCARE – A VERTICAL SNAPSHOT

- Most healthcare organisations surveyed suffered at least one data breach in the past two years, and about half discovered more than five incidents. The average number of records lost was 2,769 per breach.
- The average impact of data breaches to US healthcare organisations is about \$2.4m (£1.6m).
- About half of all data breaches were traced to a lost or stolen computing device, followed by employee mistakes or unintentional actions, and third-party snafus. About a third of breaches were a result of criminal attacks.
- Many or even most health organisations permitted employees and medical staff to use their own mobile devices such as tablets to connect to their networks or enterprise systems.
- Many organisations did not secure medical devices, and most had embraced cloud services.
- Only 40 per cent said they were confident of preventing data loss or data theft.

Source: ID Experts’ Third Annual Benchmark Study of Patient Privacy & Data Security, Ponemon Institute, December 2012

and sales development consultancy Europa Communications, suggests that many questions must be answered by industry players before they can devise their mobility strategy. Organisations want mobility, but the sort of deployment that will deliver what they want varies case by case.

“I’m talking to a large bank at the moment, at stage one on mobility,” Haley says. “And every time I speak to them, I’m getting a different image of things. I have a lot of questions, such as what are the devices and what are they used for, is it for mobile apps and mobile device management or is it simply devices for the convenience of mobile users, and whether it is just for email and Office, and so on.”

One other important question, he suggests, is what level of trust – first having figured out what that really means in the context of the particular mobile deployment – will be required from each part of the system, each partner or provider, and each user. Who will be responsible for managing each service, at each layer, and how will they be managed?

How will each user deploy and actually leverage the system and its devices? Ways of working vary by individual and by department, and this can affect specific elements of the deployment in different ways – not to mention its ultimate

RoI and effectiveness.

It is incumbent on the IT provider to explore all these questions and figure out how best they may be answered. And the final response to what is a continually changing picture of seemingly overwhelming complexity may well be best facilitated by forming partnerships with a range of resellers, vendors and support providers, he agrees.

Not least because the changes happen too quickly for most VARs and technology providers to adapt quickly enough to stay up to date, in resource terms, in-house.

“It’s different work from what many an IT department is used to,” Haley says. “And you certainly have the security risks; there is more availability at the end point on the network.”

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