Avoiding chaos on the mobile transformation journey

Barriers to true mobile transformation.

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Introduction

The growth of smart phones and tablets has led to a surge in the demand for mobile access to business data, processes, tools and communication. Lines of Business (LoB) leaders have been swift to seize the opportunity to leverage mobile channels and drive business outcome. The quick adoption of mobile solutions has given them the early-mover advantage. But the advantage has not come without its own set of snags. Today, inconsistent user experience is impacting customer satisfaction along with performance and scalability issues. In several instances the impact is more serious - security is under threat and revenue goals are being impacted. The early siloed initiatives have begun to hinder attempts at enterprise-wide mobile transformation. That is the unfortunate reality.

The scenario is familiar to scores of businesses attempting to shape a cohesive enterprise-wide mobile strategy. A recent study that examined the adoption of enterprise mobility across North America, Europe, Asia Pacific and the Middle East found that 72% of enterprises had a mobile strategy. Of these, 35% of IT managers felt that their approach was insufficient.

The most obvious problem they face is a simple one. Many of the early and well-intentioned mobile initiatives taken by independent lines of business – Sales, Marketing, HR, Operations, Supply Chain, etc. – have resulted in chaos. Their applications have been rolled out on multiple platforms with multiple versions running across multiple networks. Vendors for the mobile applications are different; infrastructure is mixed; and there is a lack of common standards. Put bluntly, the mobile landscape is in disarray within large enterprises.

This paper outlines the urgent need for a Mobile Centre of Excellence (CoE) in addition to creating the role of a Chief Mobility Innovation Officer (CMIO) under the control of the Chief Information Officer (CIO). With mobility becoming the backbone of an enterprise, the CoE and the CMIO should be chartered with the creation and implementation of a cohesive, standardized and integrated enterprise-wide mobility strategy.
First step to the solution: Understanding the chaos

Businesses that are either threatened by the resultant chaos or are rapidly headed towards it must quickly find solutions. They need to bring focus to creating and governing their global mobile strategy, innovation around mobile technologies and processes, infrastructure, assets and operations. Creating a way to do this requires an understanding of the seven key hurdles that have led to the chaos and handicapped most businesses:

1. Apps rolled out on multiple mobile platforms: With the growth in the types and number of mobile devices that employees want to use, enterprise apps, say a mobile app for CRM, could have been rolled out on different platforms. The user experience and, more importantly, capability of the app could be different across various devices.

2. Multiple development tools and frameworks deployed to build mobile apps: Different swaths of a business have opted for Native, Hybrid, Mobile Web Scraping and HTML 5, depending on their demand, to build their mobile apps using a variety of frameworks such as Sencha or jQuery.

3. More than one Mobile Device Management (MDM) platform in use: Different geos or lines of business could have independently implemented an MDM platform such as Airwatch, SAP Afaria, MobileIron.

4. Inadequate attention to security: With mobile adoption seen as a business initiative rather than an IT one, end devices, servers, networks, applications and data are vulnerable to security threats. Mobile technologies distribute enterprise content (information and data) beyond its secure perimeters. In addition, because of the BYOD trend, mobile transactions are largely conducted on personally owned devices and the transactions are vulnerable. This means security should be the number one item on the agenda of a business’ mobile strategy.

5. Adoption of multiple middleware and frameworks: Ad hoc and siloed decisions around mobile application adoption have led to diverse approaches, frameworks, tools and practices. The multiplicity leads to complex operational barriers and poses severe challenges to a unified strategic approach. Mobile applications that need to scale, or go from a bunch of users to several thousand, benefit from enterprise standard platforms to create, test, deliver, analyze, innovate, upgrade and maintain.

6. Creation of siloed back-end systems, infrastructure and tactical web services: Separate lines of business taking independent decisions based on needs, budgets and rudimentary technical assessments, would have created a legacy of isolated systems, infrastructure and services that lack performance and demand improvement in security standards.

7. Partnerships built with several vendors of mobile technology: With the lack of a business-driven and enterprise-wide strategy, technology vendors and partners could become a management overhead headache, and co-ordination between them to integrate mobile initiatives could become a nightmare.

The outcome of the above is poor user experience, a lack of scalability, challenges to end-device, network, application and data security, complex and expensive integration initiatives, complexities in operational control; and the lack of an integrated financial and technological view of the impact of mobility investments.
An imperative: The Mobile Center of Excellence

Given that mobile technologies will increasingly become the backbone of all enterprises it is imperative that organizations create adequate standards and structures in order to support their mobile strategy.

Broadly speaking, organizations would do well to create a Mobile Centre of Excellence (CoE) under the Chief Information Officer. The mandate of the Mobile CoE should be to drive a holistic approach to implementing an enterprise-wide mobile strategy.

Driving focus: The role of the Chief Mobility Innovation Officer

To bring close and unremitting focus to business needs, organizations need to think of creating the role of a Chief Mobility Innovation Officer (CMIO) under the CIO. The overall role of the CMIO should be to define mobile strategy, implement it and deliver ROI on mobile investments.

To assist the CMIO in strategy and execution, it is advisable to set up three relevant and distinct support groups:

- **Strategy and Architecture Group**
  - Define the charter for the CoE.
  - Define mobile strategy, policies and guidelines.
  - Re-architect existing IT systems (apps, network, security, database) to enable mobile compatibility.
  - Socializing CoE with LoB stakeholders.

- **Process Innovation Group**
  - Engage with LoB stakeholders to understand process change.
  - Work with cross-functional teams to implement new process change.
  - Drive enterprise-wide collaboration for process innovation.

- **Integrated Solution Group**
  - Evaluate solutions (pre-packaged vs custom developed).
  - Evaluate MDM, MEAP.
  - Finalize mobile solutions based on business need.

The strongest ally of the CMIO in this endeavor will be a competent strategic mobility partner who ensures that the vision and goals of the CoE are implemented. This will leave the CMIO free to develop the enterprise roadmap for future mobile initiatives.
Faster go-to-market: Engaging with a partner

A strategic mobility partner is the key to success. Typically, the partner should be involved with creating the strategy which is driven by business process transformation, prioritizing application development as well as technology evaluation and standardization. In an ideal scenario the partnership should also extend to include rapid prototyping with reusable components for faster go-to-market and to keep costs under control. Finally, the partner could also be made responsible for implementing security processes, integrating back-end services, supporting (and provisioning) enterprise mobile infrastructure and providing and deploying tools for testing, validation and certification.

The benefits of a Mobile CoE combined with a strategic mobility partner are self-evident. The approach immediately brings structure to the enterprise mobility strategy. Scaling and security are assured through standard mobile policies, guidelines and enterprise grade mobile infrastructure. Above all, the approach brings efficiency to mobile investments, reduces chaos and helps to measurably improve ROI. This will help enterprises to achieve business benefits.
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About the Author

Alex has more than 10 years of experience in Strategy, Business Development, Alliances and Sales in the Global Enterprise Mobility Ecosystem.

In his present role as a part of Wipro Mobility Solutions Group he is responsible for driving mobility alliances globally, marketing initiatives and key programs execution in launching new products and services, business strategy, go-to-market plans as well as sales operations.