

Getting more from mobile

Adopting a whole organisation approach to mobile working in local authorities to save time and money



A corporate approach to mobile working can save local authorities time and money. This white paper will highlight how.

Local government is under greater pressure than ever before to find ways to work more efficiently and make real savings.

There are only two ways of achieving this; by cutting back on costs – which can lead to a reduced service – or by making a strategic investment to change working processes and improve efficiency. This second option can not only deliver the required savings but achieve the ideal of ‘doing more with less’.

The time has come to look at the way councils work and to analyse the processes that are holding them back. Mobile working can reduce the repetition of tasks, unnecessary journeys and time consuming administration, leading to improved customer service and quantifiable savings.

Most local authorities already have mobile working strategies in place. But the technology behind mobile working has now evolved – meaning that council staff can now work even more effectively while out in the field by adopting what is known as a whole organisation or corporate approach to mobile working. This is where the devices and systems can adapt to multiple tasks that the organisation performs meaning greater returns from mobile working and a more flexible organisation.

This white paper will show how a corporate approach to mobile working can save local authorities time and money – and be easy and relatively inexpensive to introduce.

The history of mobile

“In the United States alone, more than 70% of all workers will have some level of mobility by 2011. In Western Europe, more than 50% of the worker population will be mobile by 2011.”

IDC: Mobility solutions in enterprise-sized businesses

Mobile working has come a long way since the yuppies of the 1980s carried around brick-sized mobile phones as status symbols.

In 30 years, devices have thankfully got smaller, and also cheaper.

Mobile phones have also become more complex. And for most of us, a mobile device is now an essential part of our daily personal and working life.

The first mobile working solutions did very little more than the laptops or palm-held devices we used in our personal lives. But soon, industry was demanding solutions for specific staff and purposes.

This spawned what is called a line of business mobile working solution. These solutions are usually linked to a single back office system. They were designed for one specific function and would allow workers in the field to send and receive pockets of information specific to the role that individual carried out, usually narrow in terms of the type of information the field worker had access to or was able to record.

The line of business model of mobile working solution is what most large organisations and local authorities still use today. This is despite huge developments in mobile technology in recent years.

However, a corporate mobile solution is now widely regarded as the most effective way for large organisations to work.

“By 2010, 50 percent of enterprises will have migrated away from tactical mobile silos (supporting a single application) to strategic platforms capable of supporting multiple applications, managing devices and securing data and transport.”

Gartner RAS core research, 2008

As Gartner points out, organisations will move to one strategic platform supporting multiple applications. For a local authority, this could mean that instead of having one system running for the benefits team and another in housing maintenance – each reliant on their individual infrastructures – there is one infrastructure and mobile application platform meeting different mobile worker and departments needs.

The development of mobile working

Mobile phones, PDAs and laptops on contract from service providers.

Line of business mobile applications, designed to do a specific job, running from a server at head office and communicating with one back office system.

Corporate mobile working platforms, designed for each specific department, which communicate with one central server. New solutions can be added to the system effectively without the need for new servers. Mobile workers can communicate with more than one back office systems.

The current situation

Line of business mobile solutions have had their day. It simply does not make good economic sense to adopt one-off tactical mobile applications that support a single function and are not integrated into the wider organisation.

Those who have, are limiting possibilities to create efficiencies between departments as mobile workers cannot easily access or add to the store of information from elsewhere in the organisation.

Until now, it has often been the mobile supplier that has dictated how the mobile officer should work, based on what the technology

can do. However, with a corporate solution there is a single central platform supporting all mobile workers. The application can be customised to accommodate each process or task. And the solution can follow the organisation's existing working processes, rather the processes needing to adapt to the technology. As working processes change over time the solution is flexible and can adapt easily.

There are also a number of IT issues related to the management of line of business model of working:

IT-related risks with line of business mobile solutions

- Higher IT support costs as IT staff have to learn a completely new set of skills every time a new line of business system is introduced
- Complexity in testing multiple systems
- Increased software defects, when applications must co-exist on devices, or conflicts with managing network connections on mobile devices
- An inability to administer security and devices from a central point of control, leading to greater risks
- Reduced battery performance because different applications on different devices are battling for bandwidth on various servers, which means batteries drain faster
- Higher support and service costs

So it is clear that a corporate mobile strategy is preferable. But how can local authorities justify investing in new corporate mobile systems when budget cuts are starting to really bite?

Return on investment – the business case

1. Multiple tasks with one visit

It is not uncommon for customers to be visited by a number of people from a local authority asking for similar information in order to receive the services they require. Local authorities typically organise visits based on each department's own internal needs rather than designing visits around the needs of the citizen.

A common example of this within unitary authorities is with social care and housing benefits. Customers are often visited once by the council's fairer charging team – to assess the contribution they should pay towards care costs – and a second time to collect the information required for their housing benefit application.

One local authority Capita works with estimates that 70% of fairer charging cases are in receipt of housing benefit. There is therefore a considerable scope for savings by aligning the two types of visit.

Let's assume that a local authority undertakes 3,600 new fairer charging assessments each year. The task requires two full time members of staff to conduct eight visits per day, each costing £16 per visit, including transport costs.

70% of these visits, or 2,520, will also require a visit from an officer to assess their application for housing benefit, which will need much of the same information. At £16 each, these unnecessary appointments will cost the housing benefit department £40,000 per year.

By adopting a corporate mobile solution, fairer charging officers could collect the details for the two applications, with the information being sent directly to both back office systems with little or no overhead to the officer gathering the information.

This would enable the authority to save £40,000 per annum – the equivalent of 1.4 full time employees – including an estimated £5,500 saving in fuel costs.

2. Staff organised by area not function

The above example demonstrates that as corporate mobile solutions can communicate with multiple back office systems, the use of multi-skilled staff becomes feasible.

One advantage of this is that workers can be organised by area rather than their function, further reducing mileage and travel time.

In the local authorities Capita works with, officers typically complete eight visits per day, travelling 20 minutes between each visit and around 45 miles per day. This time and mileage equates to £9,500 per annum. By performing multiple tasks when onsite officers can attend more visits in the same area reducing the time spent travelling.

If an authority experienced a 25% reduction in travel time due to mobile working, this would save £2,300 of staff time per officer, per annum and reduce their fuel costs by £1000 per officer, per year.

3. Lower implementation and running costs

A corporate mobile solution helps to minimise the costs associated with setting up and running a mobile working IT project.

Set-up costs

Setting up a mobile solution incurs a number of costs including hardware, installation services and training IT staff, costing up to around £15,000 in total. If individual line of business solutions are adopted, these costs are incurred each time a new mobile project is undertaken. A corporate approach enables each line of business to utilise the same infrastructure, dramatically reducing implementation costs.

Corporate mobile strategy also proposes an evolutionary approach to implementation. A tailored mobile solution can be introduced in one department at a time, making use of existing processes and systems then rolling it out from there; adjusting it perfectly to each

new department's needs. This allows the development of best practice to be adopted as new departments come on board and the cost to be spread over time.

Annual support costs

A corporate approach also leads to lower support costs as each department is using the same infrastructure for mobile working. Most suppliers operate a sliding scale of support charges where the cost per user decreases the more users you have. As all users will have the same platform for mobile working this will lead to savings.

Internal IT support costs are also reduced. Line of business solutions require a local authority's IT staff to be jacks of all trades, knowledgeable on a whole raft of mobile platforms. A corporate approach enables staff to become experts in the administration of one platform, enabling them to operate more efficiently. In addition, training costs are reduced as IT staff only need to be trained in one mobile application.

Due to their larger customer base, corporate mobile solutions tend to come with more sophisticated mobility management solutions to track and monitor the devices, which lead to further efficiencies. Strategy analytics research by The Enterprise Mobility Forum has shown that organisations which have deployed mobility management solutions, including device management and security, have seen a 35% improvement in the speed and ease of remote user provisioning, and a 25% improvement in the speed and ease of remote device maintenance.

4. Other benefits

Security

Information security is clearly of paramount concern for local authorities that send large volumes of data over mobile networks. By using one platform for all mobile devices with a robust authorisation procedure and data encryption, security risks are greatly reduced.

Fully functioning applications

When working offsite, applications should be available to users in an appropriate form enabling them to perform tasks as efficiently as they could in the office, and should allow workers to continue working when there is a break in connectivity.

Better management information

With one platform across the board, it is possible to monitor field worker locations and schedules in real time. This accurate information stream enables managers to allocate workload more equitably, to react more swiftly to changing circumstances and to make the best use of resources.

Easier expansion

An enterprise platform allows greater adaptability. It is possible to work with a wide range of mobile devices or networks incorporating existing software applications and communicating with a variety of back office systems. So it can be rolled out at a pace, scale and budget to suit individual needs.

The results

Local authorities that have adopted a corporate approach have noticed a much quicker return on investment than with line of business mobile working.

After introducing a corporate mobile strategy, housing specialist, Chelmer Homes:

- *increased productivity by 40% as each worker completed one more job a day than they used to*
- *has brought £90,000 of work back in house that it used to have to contract out*

Workers have been able to save significant amounts of time each day by cutting out unnecessary tasks.

The introduction of corporate mobile working technology transformed the efficiency of the visiting process for revenues inspectors at Conwy County Borough Council. It has reduced paperwork, resource intensive procedures, duplication of tasks and hours spent inputting information collected.

Eryl Rowlands, Head of Revenues and Benefits, says, "The team has saved about an hour and a half per person, per day as we no longer have to manually input data. The information is now completed in the field and downloaded straight into our back office systems."

"Massive savings are being made to the amounts of paperwork being generated and the subsequent hours spent scanning and

reviewing. This has enabled the team to take on further work which was previously undertaken by external resources."

Corporate mobile working is also proven to reduce transport usage dramatically – cutting CO₂ emissions and costs. In addition, there are savings to be made in stationery costs.

Swindon Commercial Services saved £30,000 in stationery costs and £20,000 in fuel costs by eliminating unnecessary journeys.

Conclusion

Lean times call for lean working. It does not seem viable to send field officers from different departments to the same site on different occasions – if all the relevant information could be gathered and recorded the first time around.

As local authorities move into an era of intense service and cost pressures they need to find more sustainable ways to optimise their performance.

Mobile workers must be equipped with all the tools necessary to do a thorough job when they are out in the field. Visiting officers should have access to all the forms, case histories and information that they would use at their desk. This way they can serve the customer effectively and local authorities can make significant savings.

At a time when local authorities are more accountable than ever for the budgets they spend and the decisions they make – there can only be one choice – to see the bigger picture with a corporate mobile solution.

Let Capita TotalMobile help you to see the bigger picture

Capita is renowned for its success in helping public sector organisations across the UK deliver high quality, cost-efficient services.

Our extensive knowledge of public sector infrastructure, service obligations, financial pressures, and strategic objectives is built on practical experience. Capita TotalMobile is provided with Capita's highly comprehensive support and expertise.

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08701 631800 or email cssenquiries@capita.co.uk

CAPITA

Capita Software Services
Manvers House
Manvers Street
Trowbridge
BA14 8YX

08701 631800
cssenquiries@capita.co.uk
www.capita-software.co.uk

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