

Ensuring the Success of Corporate Mobility

Christelle Sapata

e-business Center PwC&IESE

24/01/07



Adopting mobile technology within a company requires a solid plan for design and implementation, a firm commitment from upper management, choosing the areas that could bring the most immediate benefits and reducing organizational and cultural hindrances.

Investments in mobility are on the rise. According to a report by the consulting firm IDC, Spain has eight million mobile workers, these being employees who spend at least 20% of their time away from their physical place of work. This situation is representative of a global reality. Forrester estimates that 48% of Europe's companies will increase their mobility budget in 2007, while IDC predicts that in 2009 the number of mobile workers will grow to 850 million worldwide.

Mobility brings both tangible and intangible benefits, such as access to information in real time, which should contribute to reaching economic profits in the medium term.

Nevertheless, despite this practice allowing companies to maximize the value of their business, there are still few companies investing in mobility, due in part to skepticism about its success rate. To make it work, a goal must first be defined. In his book *The Mobile Revolution*, Dan Steinbock, a noted expert on the subject, describes two types of innovations in mobility: those geared toward reducing costs and those aimed at creating value for the company.

In the first case, cost reduction is achieved by increasing productivity and, as mobility is implemented and thus more information on processes becomes available, mobile applications will also contribute to more effective management of resources. These innovations geared toward reducing costs are mainly designed for a company's middle management. In general, employees are reluctant to implement these innovative technologies, which they see as a control mechanism for company management.

In order to minimize this opposition it is important to make a progressive change and introduce mobile devices and pocket PCs gradually while explaining the advantages that will come from using them. The training process must involve every level of the hierarchy, as opposed to technology being imposed from the top. If the training is done by middle management, the employees will discover these advantages for themselves, thus ensuring the success of the investment.

In the second case, for instance, where mobility is directed at creating value for the business, managers can be away from the office and still continue to have real-time access to corporate information and thus strengthen the company's business.

In spite of these advantages, members of a company's management often raise a variety of objections when it comes to implementing mobility solutions. As with employees, it is also necessary to convince management that these tools will not entail any interference with their private life or require them to work more. Basically, it comes down to making it appealing, but also to adapt the devices to their real needs.

A preview excerpt from *Aplicaciones de negocio basadas en la movilidad* (Mobility-Based Business Applications), a study currently underway by the e-Business Center PwC&IESE in collaboration with Tempos 21, reveals that managers' satisfaction increases in line with the degree to which tracking has been done on the implementation process for mobile tools, such as email and data exchange.

In any case, whether the goal is to trim costs or create value for the business, mobility should be implemented progressively, starting with the areas of the company where immediate use can be made. Therefore, it is essential to know how to identify which areas make the most sense for promoting it.

Lastly, if the obstacle standing in the way of implementing a mobility plan is economics, then a technology partner must be sought out in order to alleviate the problem. Suppliers need to promote mobility in order to position themselves in the market, which is why they often collaborate by facilitating financial agreements with their new customers.