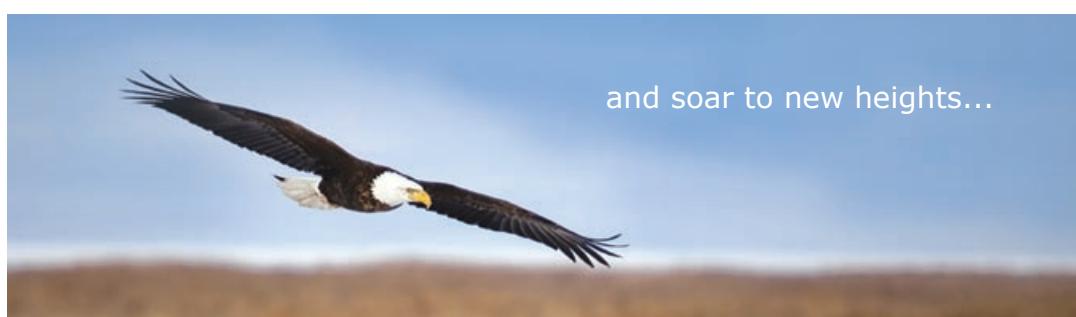


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A White Paper from Consilium Technologies

White Paper from Consilium Technologies

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Time to move...

assessing the business benefits that a mobile working strategy can bring to the local Government sector...

In 2009, the Independent Data Corporation (IDC) expects there to be 878 million mobile workers worldwide. This amounts to approximately 27 per cent of the total workforce. Many businesses are looking at implementing mobile technology to boost productivity and improve the work/life balance for their employees.

This white paper looks at the business efficiencies that could be brought about by introducing a policy of mobile working to the local government sector.

Introduction

Local authorities are expected to respond to the Government's agenda for reforming public services. This has been set out in three key strategies.

Gershon – The 2004 efficiency review, Releasing Resources to the Front Line, requires every arm of the public sector to achieve efficiency gains of at least 2.5 per cent a year. The review recommends making more use of shared services and electronic service channels. The proposals are due to add up to efficiencies worth over £20 billion.

Transformational Government – launched in November 2005, published a long-term strategy for transforming the Government machine. Proposed transformations fall into three strands; Government services centred on the user rather than bureaucracy, extensive use of shared services and more professional management of IT. It intends to lead to an era in which the boundaries between departments, central and local Government, and public, private and voluntary sectors continue to be less important. Rendering boundaries invisible will require extensive use of IT on the front line.

Varney - introduced in December 2006 by Sir David Varney, observes that new digital technology offers new, cheaper faster self-service options for government transactions. In particular he emphasises the potential of interacting with citizens via mobile technology.

The mobile marketplace

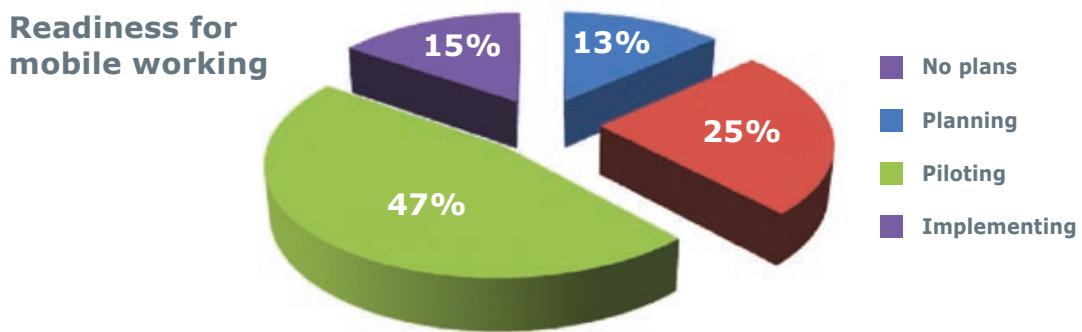
Many organisations are beginning to understand the value in mobilising their workforce. Traditionally field workers have been required to visit an office to receive dispatch instructions and then return there in the evening to hand in job cards, which are then keyed into the corporate systems at some point during the next few working days. This is not productive and takes time that could be spent servicing customer needs. Workers often don't have ready access to information required to complete the service call on an initial visit. In addition, once a service call is complete, the need to complete forms and other documents delays the closing of the service order. This in turn delays providing immediate updates to customer records and reduces customer satisfaction.

The global workforce is becoming a more mobile unit. This means there is a demand for technology, which provides secure anytime/anywhere connectivity in a robust fashion. A great deal of investment has been made in supporting mobile workers, particularly for the Retail and Engineering sectors. Its now time for this learning to be applied to public sector by organisations who understand how the public sector operates and how it needs to change.

The wireless age

Around 80 per cent of all UK councils believe that wireless technology will help them achieve the stringent efficiency targets widely expected in the public sector over the next few years, according to the report – ‘Transformational Government - A comprehensive report on Mobile and Flexible Working’, published by the Mobile Data Association (MDA). Furthermore, councils with experience of wireless technology are even more confident, with some 90 per cent convinced of achieving efficiency gains as a direct result.

The majority of respondents to the research agree that mobile working can help authorities improve services and operate more efficiently. Approximately 75 per cent of respondents to this survey also felt that mobile working would lead to more responsive and better service for citizens. To date, the vast majority of UK local authorities have at least experimented with mobile working. Approximately 85 per cent of respondents say that their local authority has some project under way, with 24.8 per cent at the planning stage, 46.6 per cent piloting and 15.3 per cent implementing. However, despite the pressure to change, 13.3 per cent have no plans or do not know of any plans to implement the technology.



Those implementing are equipping their staff with laptop computers, personal digital assistants (pda's) and smart phones. As a result benefit officers are now processing claims, social care workers are assessing needs in homes and building and health inspectors are doing their work on the spot rather than having to return to headquarters to complete paperwork. However there is a wide variation in the types of solutions implemented. Some are based on replacing paper forms with an electronic version, while others cannot work without a continuous connection to the back-office. As we have seen in the Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) space, there is a lot of learning still to happen!

There is huge variety and choice in the types of infrastructure and devices that can be deployed. This in turn can lead to the wrong choices being made if the customer just opts for the newest technology. Proper advice and guidance is critical, as is the supplier's ability to prove where potential problems lie.

Two examples spring to mind. Firstly, a regional housing association who were “sold” on 3G as the newest technology. Unfortunately it was so new and coverage so poor, that the solution was unusable. Dropping back to GSM solved the problem. Secondly a customer who had severe coverage issues in a particular area. By working closely with Consilium they were able to document the issues and map the problem to the point where the mobile service provider increased the number of masts in the area to solve the coverage problem.

Counting the cost

There are many benefits to be found in the deployment of mobile technology. These include receiving job or visit updates wirelessly in real time, the on-screen input of job data, automatically updating back-office systems, reduced reliance on handwritten notes and improved data accuracy.

Scheduling and managing visits is a major headache for organisations, whether for engineering and repairs or for professional staff. Changing schedules (in the event of an urgent priority for example) is slow and complicated if the systems are paper based. It also involves a lot of administrative effort liaising with the mobile operative and the customer. Some organisations have relied upon telephone communications between the office and field workers, however this increases call centre costs and often reduces the level of service as customers essentially competed for call centre resources; and there is still the problem of getting information about the new job or visit out to the field.

Using mobile technology correctly allows organisations to improve their productivity, while at the same time providing a better level of service to the customer and improving the employee's work\life balance. Mobile applications need to support those employees who work away from an office by helping them work more efficiently. Many of these people do not use any of the council's current computer systems in their job, so merely giving them access to these systems is not likely to improve the situation. However a properly constructed solution will ensure workers arrive as scheduled, with the right information, skills and tools needed to do the job. This in turn reduces head-office costs and increases productivity.



Savings can be made across a number of areas, particularly time, travel costs and duplication of effort. For example, many council's have relied upon staff to visit a depot to pick up their dispatch instructions for the day before heading out to carry out their first visit. Using mobile technology allows a worker to log onto a mobile device so they can view their workload and go straight to their first customer.

There are also savings to be made by reducing paper costs. Using mobile technology means there is no need for expensive multi-part stationery. This reduction in paper also means reduction in administration and duplication. Information is no longer captured on paper by one individual, only to be keyed into a computer system days later by a different person. In addition to improving speed, this also reduces the likelihood of error. Computer based systems can also be configured to ensure that all the required information is captured and input before a task is "finished", ensuring that everything that needs to be documented is indeed documented.

There are also key environmental benefits to be gained from deployment. There is a reduced need for stationery, office space and a reduction in wear and tear on vehicles, and savings in fuel costs through the reduction of unnecessary journeys.

In all, mobile working is likely to increase the organisational efficiency of a local authority. Using technology allows organisations to track jobs, visits or activities and provide real-time updates to customers, review job completion rates and assess whether targets are being met, all at the click of a mouse.

Facing up to a cultural change

Government-funded body Project Nomad is a centre of excellence for mobile and flexible working in local Government. Its aims are to analyse, demonstrate and evaluate the potential benefits and savings that can be made by introducing mobile working technology solutions. It has urged authorities to look at mobile technology and help the way a team functions together.

Workers can become more independent in a well-managed mobile technology change programme. As an organisation changes the way people work, the relationships around the work will automatically change.



Changing behaviour and culture in any business demands focus, determination, strong leadership, and buy-in from everyone involved. Typically, organisations hold the belief that the impact on relationships will be minimal to non-existent when introducing mobile working. In reality, organisations need to recognise that to underestimate the impact of mobile working on working relationships is a key cause of failure for many pilot projects. As with any organisational change project, communication and change management are key elements in successful delivery. Mobile working projects need to be approached with the same rigour as the transformational change projects we hear so much about, otherwise the people dynamics will cause them to fail.

Mobile working can also impact upon the interaction between the organisation and business associates such as suppliers, customers and partners. Research suggests that this comes as a surprise for many organisations when it happens, which, in turn, suggests a lack of planning for and management of this situation.

Effective training and education enables effective cultural and behavioural change. Businesses should not underestimate the volume, scope and duration of training and education activity required to support an effective, successful implementation of mobile working initiatives. Training in the use of a properly thought out and constructed mobile solution should be straightforward. If the supplier understands the local authority market and has taken the time to learn what is required to make the operatives life easier, then the application will be intuitive and should make sense to those using it. However, the temptation and opportunity for individuals to dismiss the changes and revert back to old ways of working at the first sign of problems should not be underestimated. Therefore it is important to spend time explaining why changes are being made and what this means for the authority, the citizens and the employees. If the employees understand how the changes help them do a better job and (hopefully) make their working life easier, then they are much more likely to work through any teething problems and suggest improvements.

The profile of people in the organisation has a significant impact on the successful implementation of change programme. In a mobile technology context, age, personal technical competence and previous experiences of employees have proved to be of particular significance.

Maintaining a team balance

Many organisations see mobile technology as a key enabler of workers spending less time at a central, internal location and more time with or around end-users or customers. In many ways it is easier to build and maintain relationships with colleagues you see every day in the office, and you will need to work harder at relationships with employees you do not see. This presents significant behavioural and cultural challenges as many workers look towards the work environment as a key source of social contact and interaction. Authorities will need to find alternative ways of reinforcing the team's culture, and motivating people to stay part of it. This may mean setting up regular social events and electronic ways of exchanging news, views and opinions about each other's work. This will be especially important for new recruits.

With mobile working it is easy to assume that the training needs revolve solely around the new technology to be used. However, other considerations are required. Management should talk to employees individually to ascertain their existing skills in a skills audit, and then compare these with the skills they will need. The gap identified forms the training need, and is likely to be different for each person.

The more people work away from the office the greater the duty of care on the organisation to ensure they are properly trained, managed and monitored. Any mobile solution should enforce this duty of care by making available the necessary policies, procedures and alerts to each individual, dependant on the type of work they undertake. The solution should also support the lone worker protection policies of the authority.



Finally there's the impact of changing business processes. This can have even greater impact in the back office than in the field. This is generally because mobile solutions are designed to support the field worker and streamline their working practises. As a result the back office and supervisor functions often fundamentally change. Much of the manual intervention is removed and supervisors have more time to advise and support as they spend less time chasing updates and collating information.

South Somerset were so convinced of the potential for change in the back office that they took the decision to streamline the front line service and roll out across all the operatives before even assessing the impact in back office savings. By doing this they speeded up implementation and were able to re-design their back office processes in one pass.

"Had we changed front line and back office processes together I'm convinced that this would have resulted in additional risk and effort. Based on what we learned from the front line implementation, we would undoubtedly have had to do all the back office work over again"

Rob Barker, Finance Manager - South Somerset Works.

Where it's working

Swindon Commercial Services (SCS) is a division of Swindon Borough Council (SBC). SCS employs 200 operatives to deliver a maintenance service for 10,800 properties. They also deliver highways maintenance and refuse collection services for SBC. One of the constraints for SCS was the inadequacy of the current IT solution and lack of IT investment, which had impacted the ability of commercial services to win new work or retaining existing work.

It was therefore necessary for SCS to invest in the right IT infrastructure to allow the organisation to improve its services, modernise its working practices, drive efficiencies and generate savings across the service directorates. SCS required the workforce to be equipped with mobile technology, integrated job management systems and modern call handling technology as part of the workforce modernisation programme.

The new system was introduced in February 2006 after a sustained effort to carry out the necessary training, data collection and input, setting up all interfaces and implementation of the mobile solution.

A number of key activities were put in place to facilitate the change: a temporary IT training suite, specialist training for all relevant staff, service area champions (a point of contact for system queries and responsible for raising jobs when the system went live) and familiarisation workshops for handheld technology.



"From procurement right through to implementation the whole process has been extremely successful and I put this down to the working relationship we have with Consilium Technologies. Challenging milestones have been achieved, the live date met and the whole project is on budget, this means our staff can focus solely on making the division commercially successful."

Bill Fisher, Director - SCS

An 18.4 per cent improvement in completion of jobs on the housing repairs contract was achieved within the first three months of go-live. This is equivalent to 5 employees' work per annum, or £144,000 a year. There was a notable reduction in travel and decision-making time achieved by using mobile working practices and further efficiencies of five per cent in productivity have been identified, equating to another £67,500 per annum.

Additional savings have been made in fuel costs (£20,000) due to a reduction in unnecessary journeys and there was a direct saving of £30,000 a year by removing the need for multi-part stationery. All in all, SCS estimates that once Consilium's solution is fully implemented it will generate quantifiable savings of over £300,000 per annum.

The solution supports over 200 users responsible for a range of council services such as street cleaning, waste and recycling, highways maintenance and housing maintenance. The new

working practices support a number of improvements including; financial and service efficiency, service performance, jobs completed per day and right first time and customer satisfaction. There is also a marked potential for dividend return through increased opportunities to win new work and retention of existing work.

Looking to the future the organisation is looking at e-purchasing and handheld technology, intelligent route planners, handheld diagnostic tools and vehicle tracking.

Conclusion

The MDA report highlights the fact that lack of consultation with expert organisations and end-users could result in a majority of pilots failing due to lack of proper planning and understanding. This is a major concern which could result in the failure of 50 per cent of the current pilots and projects.

All local authorities, as part of their business case development should undertake a formal information gathering exercise. It is vital to produce good information and metrics on current performance and then compare this with the outcomes after implementation. One way to do this is to capture base productivity and customer satisfaction measurements beforehand and then use these in conjunction with the proposed business process changes to estimate the potential savings and critical success factor improvements to be gained over the next six, twelve and eighteen months.



Typical elements that can be measured include:

- Number of appointments per day
- Percentage of productive time per operative
- Percentage of tasks completed first time
- Consumption of materials, fuel, consumables etc.
- Improvements in customer satisfaction, staff morale
- Improvements in BVPI results

End user input is vital to any mobile project. It is important that authorities move away from the view that mobile working is about technology. To gain the benefits available the focus needs to be on how working practices can change to make working away from an office the most efficient way of delivering services to the citizen. Those who spend their time out in the community have a great deal of knowledge to impart on how changes to procedures would make them more productive and improve how they feel about getting up for work in the morning. Projects that do not engage the mobile community will at best provide a partial solution and at worst will fail as users deem them unworkable.

It is also important that local authorities keep at the forefront of their minds the customer relationship management strategies and make sure they look across the entire enterprise. Using technology and applications that can be accessed by everyone across the entire organisation will also prevent information getting lost in silos.

By mobilising the workforce authorities can reduce costs and increase worker productivity by enabling the real-time flow of information between those in the community and the back office. Customer satisfaction will also increase due to the reduction in turnaround time on service requests and up-to-date reports on what is happening where and when. Any system must ultimately look at providing benefits to the citizen, while giving staff the tools to provide a better service.

Working together local government and the mobile technology industry have an opportunity to drive efficiency and transform the quality of services provided.

"Moving to a mobile solution not only improves our efficiency as an organisation, but gives our employees far more flexibility. Our staff can now fully embrace a mobile working option, which improves their work/life balance on a daily basis and gets rid of the constant to-ing and fro-ing between home, the properties and HQ, which was forcing them to spend unnecessary time on the road. Now the staff can give their full attention to the jobs that need to be completed onsite."

Rob Barker, *Finance Manager - South Somerset Works.*



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