

Small Business Mobility

Enabling your team to work anywhere, anytime



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Mobile technology is becoming increasingly vital to your small business as the number of employees working from home or away from the office is growing significantly. More than 50 million US workers are considered mobile, spending at least 20% of the time away from their primary workspace¹. Some of your employees, such as your salespeople or representatives, may be constantly on the move.

Today, productivity in and out of the office is imperative to keeping your small business running efficiently and gaining a competitive edge. For example, when you or your team are away from the office without connectivity and need important information, that time often proves to be unproductive and wasteful. However, if you connect your mobile workers to your company network through mobile devices such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs), you can enable them to maintain a continuous workflow on the road or from home. Investing in mobility solutions will maximize the productivity of your employees. Mobility is essential for your business since your employees and your customers require anytime/anywhere access to each other and vital information.

What is Mobility?

Mobility is the ability to access your office information and data remotely, and to conduct business anywhere, anytime. Mobility solutions provide mobile and remote access to your company data and e-mail.

¹ Yankee Group Study, "Maximizing Mobile Worker Productivity," 2008

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Onward Computer Systems (OCS) provides businesses with simple, affordable and reliable technology solutions that help increase sales, reduce costs, and improve communications – technology solutions that grow as your business grows. Established in 1991, we offer large company IT/Networking expertise to businesses of all sizes. OCS does this while maintaining a small company attitude about service and costs. Supporting local Ontario-based businesses ranging from one person offices to companies with 200 PCs and multiple locations, we are your go-to partner for IT solutions.

How Can Your Small Business “Go Mobile”?

Today’s technology offers a broad array of solutions to the various mobility needs of your small business. One of the areas your employees can greatly benefit from is wireless technology solutions. There are three main wireless technologies in use today: Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity), Cellular Internet, and Bluetooth technology.

- **Wi-Fi:** Wireless Fidelity is the most widely used wireless technology.
- **Cellular Technology:** Includes technologies such as GPRS, (General Packet Radio Services), EV-DO (Evolution Data Optimized).
- **Bluetooth:** Used for short-range wireless connections (up to 10 metres). Bluetooth can be used for connecting your office computers, printers, and other peripherals.

To mobilize your business, you will need to connect your mobile devices such as cell phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and wireless-enabled (Wi-Fi) laptops to your company network using any of these wireless technologies.

Mobile Devices for your business

- **Mobile Phones**—Your employees can use their mobile phones not only for voicemail and SMS, but for email also. Every Internet-enabled phone can provide your employees anytime/anywhere access to their mail. Most mobile phones connect through cellular technologies such as GPRS and EV-DO.
- **Laptops**—Today most laptops (mobile PCs) have inbuilt wireless capabilities and can connect to internet using wireless technology called Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity). While on the road, they can locate public Wi-Fi “hotspots” and easily connect to your company intranet and access important information. These Wi-Fi hotspots have a wireless base station that

“...Wainhouse Research¹ has highlighted that collaboration solutions such as audio, video, and web conferencing are reducing the need for travel eliminating airfare, taxi, and hotel expenses.”

transmits signals to Wi-Fi-enabled devices.

- **Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and Smartphones**—A PDA is a handheld computing device with a larger screen and many more advanced applications than most cell phones, and may or may not provide phone capability. A SmartPhone is basically a cell phone and PDA combined. Smartphones have advanced capabilities and PC-like functionality such as internet access, e-mail, faxing, and remote data transfers. Smartphones often come with a preinstalled operating system, such as the Windows Mobile, RIM BlackBerry, and the iPhone.
- **Tablet PC/Pocket PC**—The Tablet PC and Pocket PC perform all of the functions of a mobile computer.

Impact of Mobility on Your Business

Mobility can help small businesses like yours work more productively and effectively by improving communication and collaboration. Having mobile and remote access to your company information can give you a competitive advantage. There are a number of business benefits your company can realize by adopting the mobile solutions

- **Maximize overall productivity**—If your mobile employees are given access to the same company information they have when they are in the office, this can significantly increase their productivity. Your employees can rely on their mobile devices to access vital information or databases while they are away, so time spent out of office or on road is not wasted, making them equally effective wherever they are located.
- **Improved customer satisfaction**—A quick response to customers' e-mails and queries is essential as it can make the difference between winning and losing a contract. This can be a difficult task when you are out of the office, but with mobile computing devices you can respond almost instantly to urgent customer requests.

- **Better communication and collaboration**—Effective communication is essential for collaboration. Through mobile computing devices your employees can send and receive emails while on the go, resulting in better collaboration.
- **Flexible work environments**—By providing your workers with mobile computing tools, you can create a more flexible environment for your employees and empower them to work from home or any other place they like.
- **Creates a paperless environment**—With continuous access to network information and resources through mobile devices, the days of travelling with a heavy load of printed documents and files are gone. However, when printed documents are required, such as printing a contract for a client on the spot, you can print on demand with portable printers.

Emerging Trend among Small Businesses

- **Mobile devices in use**—A study conducted by Nokia² has shown that mobile phones, laptops, and PDAs are the three most popular mobile devices used by employees of smaller companies in US.
- **Business functions mobile devices are being used for**—Research³ has shown that a growing number of small businesses are deploying mobile devices not only for phone and voicemail. More than 80% of small and medium businesses (SMBs) enable their employees to check email via mobile devices and 64% use mobile devices for remote computing, and more than 50% SMBs enable employees to access applications and business data via mobile devices.
- **Benefits of mobile technology to smaller companies**—More than 90% of smaller companies report that mobile technologies have provided more flexible environments to their employees by empowering them to work in the field, at home, and any

other location. More than 60% report increased productivity and improved access to critical information as key business advantages, and more than 45% report increased customer responsiveness and faster/better decisions and collaboration as main benefits to their organizations.

² Nokia White Paper, "The State of Workforce Mobility," 2006

³ bMighty Research Report, "Mobility in Small and Midsize Companies," 2007

“...More than 80% of small and medium businesses (SMBs) enable their employees to check email via mobile devices and 64% use mobile devices for remote computing, and more than 50% SMBs enable employees to access applications and business data via mobile devices.”

Conclusion

Today's customers demand immediate replies to their inquiries. Since meeting this need can be a challenging task if you are away from your office, mobility is becoming imperative to gaining a real competitive advantage. Mobile solutions not only provide you with the ability to check e-mail and voice mail on the road, they also empower you to immediately access important information for the benefit of your business.

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