

Smartphones:

A Savvy Strategy for Government Employees

Leading-edge applications and enhanced mobility save money and boost productivity.



With consumer use of smartphones growing by the day, it's no surprise that users are taking them into the workplace as well. Thousands of people already use their personal smartphones for work-related tasks like checking email and calendars when they're away from their desks. And many wish they could do more with their smartphones, given their myriad functions and applications.

Policies regarding the use of personal smartphones vary among organizations, with some hesitant to embrace the widespread use of the devices by employees. Yet there is no reason why government agencies shouldn't take advantage of all that smartphones have to offer. Employed efficiently, smartphones can address several organizational imperatives, including cost savings, greater mobility, increased telework options and sensitivity to environmental concerns.

Popular Demand

While government agencies may be conservative in some technology-related matters, there is an exception: smartphones. And by smartphones, that means BlackBerry® devices, which are “extremely widely used” in the government sector, according to Mark Zentz, director of public sector sales at Research In Motion, the maker of BlackBerry smartphones.

Until recently, however, their use has been mostly limited to senior executives and for “urgent messaging,” Zentz says. But that’s changing as smartphones become

the overall trend. Smartphones represented 14% of total mobile handset sales last year, up from 11% in 2008, according to Gartner.

Workers on the Move

A greater number of agencies could make productive use of mobile data applications—and allow more workers to use smartphones for their work—than probably realize it. At the municipal level, for example, welfare workers travel from neighborhood to neighborhood. State legislators commute back and forth from their districts to their state

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more familiar and as an increasing number of enterprise-level applications become available. “We’re seeing a second life now that the devices are more accepted,” he says.

For example, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush strongly advocated for BlackBerry smartphone use among government employees, especially in connection with emergency response for conditions involving dangerous storms. The Florida Department of Children and Families also embraced the BlackBerry smartphone when it developed a mobile case management system for its field workers. The application uses the BlackBerry smartphone’s camera and GPS capabilities to time- and date-stamp a photographic record of each in-home client visit. Records of each visit are updated automatically in the Florida Safe Families Network database.

According to Carrie MacGillivray, program manager at research firm IDC, government agencies are coming to realize the benefits of smartphones as mobile data devices capable of supporting sophisticated enterprise applications. Depending on the agency and its use of data-oriented applications, smartphones can be an important extension of their IT strategy. “Generally they’re starting to make the migration to devices that support both voice and data services,” she says. That’s certainly

capitals. Many federal agencies have officers working in the field.

What’s more, work-at-home (telework) initiatives in place in many agencies support the aims of diversity, cost savings in terms of physical space and, by cutting down on commuting, environmental concerns. President Obama has expressed his commitment to making telework a viable option for the federal government’s 2.8 million employees.

Yet the public sector has not been as aggressive as the private sector in pushing the advantages of smartphone technology. “Corporations have been dealing with this for a long time,” says Kevin Burden, vice president and practice director, mobile devices, at ABI Research. “They know how to deal with this.” On the other hand, IT management in government agencies is only now coming to grips with a wider proliferation of smartphones. Partly it has to do with compliance mandates. “Government agencies have strict regulations in what they will allow,” Burden says.

Those regulations, in particular as they relate to security, are why the BlackBerry smartphone has become the de facto standard in the government environment. The BlackBerry is well regarded, and justifiably so, for its security, compliance and management features. To a

great extent, those features are a function of RIM's sophisticated management server software, the BlackBerry® Enterprise Server, which is also an important platform for the expansion of BlackBerry capabilities.

The Blackberry MVS Advantage

Fortunately, there is an effective and efficient way to promote smartphone use that is particularly well-suited to government agencies. RIM has introduced a new version of its BlackBerry® Mobile Voice System (BlackBerry MVS) that allows a BlackBerry smartphone to integrate with an employee's desktop phone. The productivity enhancements made possible by this integrated system are

impressive, the cost savings dramatic and the potential uses compelling.

The BlackBerry Mobile Voice System works in conjunction with the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, and is therefore a key component of an evolving BlackBerry implementation. In other words, for agencies already using BlackBerry devices, BlackBerry MVS is a quick step up to greater productivity and effective smartphone growth.

With BlackBerry MVS, calls made to an employee's desktop phone are routed automatically to his or her BlackBerry smartphone as well, making contact more likely whether that person is in the office or not. Conversely, calls made by the employee with his or her BlackBerry smartphone go

A Step Toward Unified Communications

When IT professionals working in the public sector are considering new technology, a solid estimation of the return on investment is a necessity, not an option. So while IT officials might be discussing the hot topic of cloud computing these days, in fact they might do better to consider developing a unified communications (UC) infrastructure to achieve better ROI.

Unified communications is a strategy for integrating various forms of enterprise networking and communications, including voice, video, email, fax, chat and instant messaging. By providing a consistent interface and user experience, a UC infrastructure can enhance efficiency and productivity, and encourage collaboration.

Unfortunately, many organizations are woefully behind. "There are tons of legacy PBX" systems in various agencies, says Mark Zentz, director of public sector sales for RIM. But there's little work being done in terms of unified communications. "It's a discussion point now, but not a lot of action on it," he says.

The entry point for a UC infrastructure is a rationalized smartphone strategy, Zentz says. Indeed, the BlackBerry Enterprise Server has been providing customers with a mobile, integrated communications solution (email, presence, applications, etc.) for several years. If you're a BlackBerry smartphone user, that means you're already partway there.

Implementing the newest version of BlackBerry Mobile Voice System (MVS) is another big step toward sophisticated unified communications. Because the BlackBerry MVS server works with BlackBerry Enterprise Server and integrates with an organization's legacy PBX system to create a seamless interaction between the BlackBerry device and a user's desktop phone system, the two telecom infrastructures act in concert.

The latest version of BlackBerry MVS incorporates Wi-Fi® capability, allowing BlackBerry users to tap into hotspots wherever they are. It also works in conjunction with Cisco's Unified Communications Manager, thereby supporting the multimedia interface standard SIP, and integrating with any SIP-compliant systems and applications.

For example, a major energy utility recently acquired two BlackBerry MVS 4.6.1 servers to support its unified communications strategy. The utility's approximately 1,500 BlackBerry users can exploit BlackBerry MVS' unifying capabilities, such as a single corporate identity across the integrated telecom infrastructures, and productivity enhancers like extension dialing and conference calling.

Unified communications may not have the "sex appeal" of cloud computing, but it can provide down-to-earth benefits for organizations looking to enhance their network, telecom and mobile capabilities.

5 Ways Smartphones Offer ROI for Government Agencies

Assessing needs, feasibility, budgets and resources are just some of the factors that lead to intelligent IT decisions. But it all comes down to return on investment. Here are some reasons why smartphones are a smart decision for the government sector:

- 1. MOBILITY.** Employee mobility is integral to the workings of many agencies, from land officials to local community organizers, and smartphones support that agenda. For example, federal law enforcement agencies use BlackBerry smartphones for communication and access to mission-critical applications from the field.
- 2. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES.** Smartphones speak to several important government initiatives, such as telework, disaster preparedness, environmental concerns and increased use of the Internet.
- 3. PRODUCTIVITY.** In general, smartphones represent several productivity enhancements: real-time communication, increased collaboration, presence awareness and access to Internet applications that use GPS.
- 4. IDENTITY.** By using the BlackBerry Mobile Voice System (BlackBerry MVS), a government agency can integrate cellular and PBX-based telecom systems to create a single calling identity and, at the same time, preserve the privacy of smartphone users.
- 5. UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS.** A sophisticated smartphone strategy can be the entry point to a unified communications infrastructure. By integrating PBX-based and smartphone systems, a government agency can bring together wireless, telecom and management capabilities to support a variety of mobile applications.

through the organization's telecom network. That means that many of the features available via a PBX system, such as extension dialing, caller ID, conference calling and direct-to-voicemail functionality, are available to the BlackBerry user. What's more, BlackBerry MVS allows users' voicemail to be consolidated into one voicemail system (the corporate voicemail) by always giving out the work number for work purposes.

The latest version of BlackBerry MVS, due to its redundant architecture, also guarantees high availability—a relief for users tired of dropped calls.

With a single phone number, mobile employees are accessible almost everywhere, which cuts down on the number of calls made to try to reach workers on the road. For example, a state transportation agency recently acquired the BlackBerry MVS server to support its workforce of hundreds of bus drivers and railcar operators. These employees need to be accessible whether they are in the corporate office or out on their routes. BlackBerry MVS provides them with the productivity benefits of being able to access PBX-like features from their BlackBerry devices, and their supervisors have peace of mind knowing they can reach their employees wherever they are.

The same access advantage applies to telework. Workers who can use one phone number at both their home office and their workplace are more productive and easier to reach. What's more, having a single phone number can cut down on the expense and hassle of setting up a home office, especially for those who plan to use it only part-time.

Pandemic Preparedness

Telework is also a major element in the federal government's efforts toward disaster readiness, which the 2009 H1N1 flu threat brought into sharp focus. A single point of access is important for business continuity planning. Zentz refers to this as "pandemic preparedness," and the combination of BlackBerry smartphones and the BlackBerry MVS is the conduit to that single point of access.

Government agencies at all levels are better able to coordinate contingency and disaster plans if emergency workers and first-responders can be reached via a single phone number. The same advantage applies to being able to reach office workers in case of a developing work-altering situation, such as a violent storm or a community

emergency. In that scenario, the benefits of having workers able to work at home and still stay in touch with colleagues are obvious.

“There’s no shortage of talk about business continuity,” says Zentz. In an emergency, it is important for people to be able to reach government officials easily and directly, and that’s where the BlackBerry MVS can offer a real life-and-death advantage. With BlackBerry MVS, “you can reach somebody wherever they may be,” he says.

Auditing and Tracking

With its auditing and tracking capabilities, the BlackBerry MVS is particularly suited to the strictures of government, and can accommodate an expanding agenda in today’s security-conscious environment.

For example, many agencies are required to maintain complete call logs. Calls made via the BlackBerry MVS are anchored through an organization’s PBX system; a single BlackBerry MVS server can support up to 10,000 users. Because all calls, including smartphone calls, are routed through the PBX system, agency officials can record the details of all those calls. BlackBerry MVS also can help make sure that organizational policies are enforced; calls can be logged and audited to enforce risk management policies and help ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

Because the BlackBerry MVS server works with BlackBerry Enterprise Server, it can take advantage of the management software’s 450 IT policies and use the encrypted data channel to ensure all communications are secure. These policies can be applied, for example, to help meet regulatory mandates and protect private information, including the ability to direct all mobile calls (inbound and outbound) through the PBX system. This ensures that calls are auditable and trackable, as required by various mandates.

Cost Savings

Given today’s economic uncertainty and pressure on IT budgets, cost is a consideration when deploying any technology. Fortunately, the BlackBerry MVS offers a number of benefits on this point.

First, the savings made available through the proliferation of smartphones throughout an organization are real and quantifiable. In general, smartphones make workers—

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whether they’re in the office or working from another location—more efficient and productive by extending working hours beyond the traditional 9-to-5 work day. The ability of employees to communicate proactively and effectively is driving down costs. Organizations that are aggressive in their use of smartphones are realizing productivity benefits to the tune of 13 to 21 hours per week, according to a 2009 Forrester Research study.

Second, the BlackBerry MVS server amplifies those cost savings by integrating smartphones with the organization’s phone system, which provides all the productivity benefits of familiar phone system features. Also, with BlackBerry MVS, smartphone users can make calls that essentially originate in the organization’s phone system, rather than the cellular system, which can save on long-distance charges.

Ultimately, it is a strategy of multiplying returns. The cost savings available through the use of the BlackBerry MVS server should allow government agencies to justify getting BlackBerry devices into the hands of even more employees, compounding those cost savings across the organization.

Wi-Fi Advantages

One of the most significant advances in the latest version of the BlackBerry MVS server is the effective use of voice-over-Wi-Fi capabilities. The new MVS, in conjunction with Cisco’s Unified Communications Manager, lets BlackBerry users connect to their desktop phone system over a Wi-Fi network, whether it is in the organization’s headquarters, the users’ homes, or accessed through hotspots around town or around the country. This can represent substan-

tial savings over cellular carrier minutes and roaming charges, particularly in a global environment.

For example, a major state university recently implemented the BlackBerry MVS server to accommodate approximately 150 staff members. BlackBerry MVS will provide needed access to these staff members, either single-number or single-voicemail access, whether they are at their desks or elsewhere on campus.

In addition, the BlackBerry MVS server will allow

activities while still protecting their personal contact information. "When calling from your cell phone, people can note your caller ID and call you whenever they want," says Don Deacon, senior product marketing manager at RIM, who notes that with BlackBerry MVS, the security of the caller's cell identity can be maintained.

There are other features in BlackBerry MVS that help keep work and personal life separate. Caller restriction allows smartphone users to specifically block or allow

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workers to employ voice-over-Wi-Fi calling capability to help reduce the cost of domestic wireless minutes, whether through the expanded campus network, home Wi-Fi networks, or through public hotspots. It also gives them the ability to route long-distance calls made on their BlackBerry smartphones through the PBX in order to leverage their negotiated PBX rates for those calls.

Segregating Work Life and Home Life

One of the most common concerns regarding the use of smartphones in the workplace is the intrusion they represent on people's personal time and space. RIM seeks to maintain the balance between work and home. With BlackBerry MVS, BlackBerry users can segregate their personal and work identities. This is especially important in the public sector, where dedicated workers—police officers, teachers or nurses, for example—often extend themselves and their personal lives in helping others.

BlackBerry MVS allows BlackBerry users to take work calls on their smartphone without giving out their mobile number, as well as make calls that display their work number rather than the smartphone number. This enables people to use their own smartphones for work-related

certain callers. Caller ID alerts them to the identity of a caller, so they can decide if the call requires immediate attention or can be sent into voicemail. Another feature allows users to know whether a call is coming in to their personal line or business line, enabling them to answer the call appropriately. Call scheduling permits users to schedule when their work line is available.

Any organization that seeks to boost productivity, manage employee schedules and cut costs needs to employ all the available technology advantages. And government agencies are no different. That's why the intelligent use of smartphones, in particular the BlackBerry smartphone, is an imperative in the public sector.

The BlackBerry smartphone already is an integral communication device in many agencies because of its security and management capabilities. Now, the BlackBerry MVS server—with its promise of greater connectivity, single-number capabilities and multiple other features designed to enhance productivity for employees wherever they are—makes the BlackBerry smartphone an even greater technological asset for government workers.

