

# Toward a Definition of Enterprise Mobility, Part 2: Key Questions

By *Dennis D. McDonald*<sup>1</sup>



## INTRODUCTION

My past several consulting projects have involved document-centric information sharing and collaboration via tools like Microsoft SharePoint and Google Docs. While we all still seem to be relying heavily on email with attachments as the “glue” supporting project communication and collaboration, it’s also becoming obvious to me that access to email – and from there access to a project’s many referenced documents – are increasingly being provided via mobile devices such as smartphones.

Even when I communicate with people in the same building during normal working hours, the telltale “sent from my iPhone” signature tag appears in many responses to my emails, a good number of which include links to documents in the project’s document repository.

Not that this trend should be a surprise. The “democratization” of technology in the workplace, as more and more employees rely on their own devices for work and communication, has [long been recognized](#). Just today I participated in a Twitter based chat sponsored by the upcoming [CITE Conference](#) where issues related to consumer tech in the enterprise were discussed. Market statistics continue to show [rapid growth](#) for the mobile technology market.

With this in mind last year I began a series of articles focusing on mobile device planning. In [Toward a Definition of Enterprise Mobility, Part 1: Key Dimensions](#) I described the dimensions that need to be addressed when looking to effectively incorporate mobile devices into an organization’s operation. Here in Part 2 I begin defining in outline form the practical questions management needs to ask about making effective use of such mobile devices, regardless of whether such devices are company- or employee-owned. In Part 3, currently being developed, I will discuss a list of functional requirements for developing an example of a mobile software application that addresses some of these issues.

## KEY QUESTIONS

The following is a discussion, in outline form, of the questions that management should address when planning to make effective use of mobile technologies.

### **1. Which dimension of those listed in [Toward a Definition of Enterprise Mobility, Part 1: Key Dimensions](#) is most important?**

- The “process” dimension is the most important -- as long as it’s aligned with enterprise goals and objectives.
- If people don’t understand or agree on what they want the (new) process to do, there could be trouble, regardless of what the mobile technology is supposed to be doing.
- Don’t be surprised if mobile workers end up changing the processes when new technology is introduced.

### **2. What specific physical characteristics of the mobile devices need to be taken into account?**

---

<sup>1</sup> Published February 9, 2012 Copyright © 2012 by Dennis D. McDonald, Ph.D. Contact Dennis via email at [ddmcd@yahoo.com](mailto:ddmcd@yahoo.com). The online version of this article is available here: <http://www.ddmcd.com/mobility2.html>.

- Even if existing processes or applications will be supported by new mobile devices there may be some physical characteristics that require changes or accommodations.
- Some physical characteristics may be obvious important, such as screen size aligned with the type of information that needs to be displayed.
- Some may not be so obvious or easy to determine at first, as with need to accommodate variations of a physical environment (e.g., temperature, low light, noise, moisture, no power outlets, etc.)
- Either way, physical job requirements need to be supportive of target processes, e.g., a consumer device might need some modification to make it acceptable for mobile work support (e.g., battery augmentation, drop-proof case, etc.)

### **3. How much change on the part of participants will be required?**

- If mobile workers are already familiar with the device (e.g., a Blackberry or an iPhone), device specific training might be reduced.
- If the device basically provides portable access to applications already available on standard desktops or laptops, training may need to focus more on the specific context in which the work is to be performed than on the application itself.
- Don't just focus on the mobile worker but on customers, clients, support staff – anyone who is impacted by what the mobile worker will be doing.

### **4. Are there external factors or players that could impact deployment?**

- “External factors” are those not directly controlled by the actors – weather, government regulations, actions of competitors, vendor reliability, etc.
- Example – what if expectations about video communications are disrupted and voice or text only communications between worker and support staff or management must be substituted?
- If a custom app is going to be developed that will execute on the smartphone or tablet, what kind of approval process will be required to distribute the app via a service such as Apple's app store?
- As with any change involving technology, risk analyses should be performed and backup plans developed and practiced.

### **5. How much new or sophisticated technology is really required to make the mobile worker more effective?**

- “New” might be a relative term that varies from individual to individual and group to group.
- Remember the focus is on improving the process and how the worker works, not on the technology per se.
- Think (and analyze) carefully before adopting bleeding edge or experimental technologies, even when they promise significant process or cost-benefit improvements,

### **6. Does deployment require a controlled "walled garden" to be effective?**

- Think carefully before “exposing” the corporate network to communication with public networks.
- Technologies are available to keep public and private data networks separate, even down to the level of the mobile device.
- The tricky part will come in if communication across the firewall will be required between the mobile worker and local devices that are not vetted in advance for controlled access to the mobile worker's network.
- This might become an issue if ad hoc communities or groups can be formed at the work site to enable the mobile worker to communicate with people with relevant skills or expertise.

### **7. How much training will be required on the new equipment and processes?**

- Not only how much training but how much documentation, support, and ongoing delivery of training as technologies and workforces change?

### **8. How much will it cost and who will pay?**

- Will the use of mobile technologies cost money, save money, or result in a shift of costs from one group to another?

**9. How many different groups or communities need to cooperate to make the new approach effective?**

- Some groups can be identified, vetted, and trained in advance of need (e.g., employees, customers, clients, vendors, etc.)
- Other groups might be defined based on the context of the task being performed (e.g., by taking into account geographic information or special expertise relevant to the problem being worked on by the mobile worker).
- One consideration is the degree to which the different groups need to be managed or controlled, and what the best or most effective method is for making sure appropriate management or guidance takes place.
- This may be a real consideration if adoption of mobile technologies enables a shift in processes that necessitate a change in roles and responsibilities for the mobile workers.

**10. How structured or formal should the enterprise mobility planning process be?**

- Planning is good.
- Planning in situations where there are unknowns requires flexibility.
- Pay careful attention the role of the mobile worker in actively collaborating not only in testing new technology and revised processes but also in collaborating in the development and testing processes.

**11. How structured or formal should the enterprise mobility governance process be?**

- Poor governance can make or break a technology adoption process.
- Lack of coherent and clear governance (management, role definition, clear policies, etc.) will communicate poor management to participants resulting in adoption delays, mistakes, and/or failures.
- Changes to governance necessitated by new technologies and processes may be resisted by those with current governance responsibilities.
- Governance-induced delays may lead to user-initiated adoption of potentially insecure mobile technologies.

**12. How can we do long range planning when mobile technology is changing so rapidly?**

- Move towards a more agile process where incremental improvements and frequent feedback are key elements in the process.
- Make sure to incorporate metrics into the process that both management and participants can use to help gauge progress.

*Copyright (c) 2012 by Dennis D. McDonald.*