

White Paper

Small Business Mobility: Enabling your team to work anywhere, anytime



According to a UK Office for National Statistics study most homeworkers (2.4 million) used a telephone and computer to carry out their work. Of these, 2.1 million could not work from home without using both a telephone and a computer.

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 maximise 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, enabling you to conduct business anywhere, anytime. Mobility solutions provide mobile and remote access to your company data and email.

How can your 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: WiFi (Wireless Fidelity), Mobile Phone Internet, and Bluetooth technology.

- **WiFi:** is the most widely used wireless technology.
- **Mobile Phone Technology:** Technologies such as GPRS, (General Packet Radio Services) EV-DO (Evolution Data Optimised).
- **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 mobilise your business, you will need to connect your mobile devices such as mobile phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and wireless-enabled (WiFi) laptops to your company network using any of these wireless technologies.

MOBILE DEVICES FOR YOUR BUSINESS



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- **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 built in wireless capabilities and can connect to the 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 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 mobile phones, and may or may not provide phone capability. A SmartPhone is basically a mobile phone and PDA combined. Smartphones have advanced capabilities and PC-like functionality such as internet access, email, faxing, and remote data transfers. Smartphones often come with a preinstalled operating system, such as the Windows Mobile, RIM BlackBerry, and the iPhone.
- **Tablet PCs:** The Tablet PC and Pocket PC perform all of the functions of a mobile computer.

THE 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 realise by adopting these mobile solutions.

- **Maximise 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. This ensures that time spent out of the office or on the road is not wasted, making them equally effective wherever they are located.
- **Improved customer satisfaction:** A quick response to customers' emails and queries is essential, as it can make the difference between winning and losing a contract. This can be a difficult task when you're out of the office. With mobile computing devices you can respond almost instantly to urgent customer requests.
- **Improved communication and collaboration:** Effective communication is essential for collaboration. Through mobile computing devices your employees can send and receive emails whilst 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 choose.
- **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 TRENDS 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 the US.
- **Business functions moving to mobile:** Research³ has shown that a growing number of small businesses are deploying mobile devices for much more than phone and voicemail. More than 80% of small and medium businesses (SMBs) enable their employees to check email via mobile devices, 64% use mobile devices for remote computing, and more than 50% of SMBs enable employees to access applications and business data via mobile devices.
- **Benefits of mobile technology for 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 other locations. More than 60% report increased productivity and improved access to critical information as key business advantages. More than 45% report increased customer responsiveness and faster/better decisions and collaboration as main benefits to their organisations.

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 email and voice mail on the road, they also empower you to immediately access important information for the benefit of your business.

NOTES

- 1 - Office for National Statistics study, "Home-based working using communication technologies," 2005
- 2 - Nokia White Paper, "The State of Workforce Mobility," 2006
- 3 - bMighty Research Report, "Mobility in Small and Midsize Companies," 2007

www.aztechIT.co.uk
email: info@aztechIT.co.uk
phone: 01908 571 510

First Floor Unit E & F
Old Stratford Business Park
Falcoln Drive, Old Stratford
Milton Keynes
MK19 6FG

aztech
IT Solutions