

IT mobility: enabler or stumbling block?

 By [Tony de Sousa](#)

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Effective mobile solutions are vital and inevitable in today's business environment. With mobile devices now an ever-present and fundamental part of doing business as well as in employees' and the general public's personal lives, security has become a concern and accessibility a necessity.

Employees are now able to access a host of business applications from a mobile device, leading to higher productivity and service levels. In the mobility and social media world one has to move fast. Disparate or multiple technologies are a nightmare to manage and no business can afford to operate without an integrated mobility platform.

Monitor and deploy mobile apps

Businesses have no choice but to efficiently monitor and deploy mobile applications. They require the ability to manage mobile users, the applications and the devices in a seamless and integrated manner.

There is no doubt that existing business models will come under a lot of pressure to change in order to keep up with the trend and lower operational cost models. Soon there will be a host of new businesses that operate exclusively via mobile devices. The trend will be towards smaller companies with limited financial and human resources, who will leverage the fact that they don't have the legacy that large enterprises do.

The new mobile business will include mobile banks and other service based organisations, with much smaller staff components reaching a much wider audience. With over 50 million devices in South Africa, organisations can not only reach a wider audience at a lower cost, but also enable bi-directional communication with the end user.

Disruption brings opportunity

Mobility brings disruption to existing systems, and the disruption brings opportunity, which in turn makes progressive companies look at the possibilities.

We asked the question: 'How do we support mobility?' and our answer was the mobile platform, *mobileIT*, designed to be an effective, integrated all-in-one mobile platform equally capable of operating on smart- and feature phones. Built for Africa, it enables enterprises to fully and comprehensively plan, implement and manage all aspects of mobility from a single integrated mobility platform, that simplifies everything mobile.

We have the technology to build native applications for all phones and for all platforms. Device specific applications present

a problem in the sense that consumers want to choose their own devices and do not want to be dictated to. Many consumers also tend to have more than one device and not the entire same brand.

The inclusion of smart- and feature phones is an important aspect of doing business in Africa, because contrary to the situation in Europe, feature phones still make up a large percentage of mobile phones on the continent. In South Africa, 82% of all mobile devices are feature phones that for obvious reasons need to be included when applications are developed.

Computer of choice

In Africa everyone has a phone, which means that companies and government have a way to reach people and have a dialogue with them. This impacts hugely on the business models and processes of companies. As is already the case with banking, generating invoices, executing transactions and logging incidents or complaints with government, IT and IT processes are leaving the building, becoming increasingly mobile. Of course, this increases security concerns.

While employees who are able to access a multitude of business applications from a mobile device are likely to be more productive and deliver efficient and improved service levels, security becomes an obvious concern in the management of these devices and applications, as they can be used to access sensitive information external to a company's reach and control.

The cellular phone will soon be Africa's computer of choice, and is already the preferred way to access the internet via 3G, therefore, IT departments must apply the same rigour and governance standards that they have used in traditional IT, but across multiple devices, multiple mobile operating systems and multiple mobile applications.

ABOUT TONY DE SOUSA

Tony de Sousa is Executive: product sales and marketing at Gijima, a South African communication and technology group.
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