

# More and more SA companies going the mobile work route

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More than half of South African companies of all sizes have rolled out mobile business solutions to up to 25% of their workforces, but only 20% have mobilised 50% or more of their workforces. This is one of the key findings of a 'Market Opportunity for Mobile Solutions' study recently conducted by IDC on behalf of Research In Motion (RIM).

The research canvassed representatives from 350 South African companies of all sizes from the retail, manufacturing, financial services and services sectors. Only 8% of the companies that participated in the survey have no mobile workers at all.

The research results indicate that mobile business is now mainstream in South Africa, although most companies could still benefit from more investments into mobile solutions.

The research also shows that companies who already have significant proportions of mobile workers are keener to invest in new technologies than those that don't. This points to high levels of satisfaction with mobile business solutions among the companies that have adopted them most aggressively.

According to the IDC research, two-thirds of the companies surveyed prefer to allow staff to use one device for personal and business use, while the rest prefer employees to have one device for business use only. Most companies are prepared to cover the full cost of a mobile device used for work for their staff members.

## Working patterns are changing

Companies are recognising that working patterns are changing as employees become less tied to their desks. In a world where the lines between personal and work time are blurring, mobile devices ensure that employees can be in contact with the office wherever they are. Employees can be flexible to the company's needs and work in a way that allows them to balance their professional and personal life in an optimal way.

The mobile workforce is on the rise across the world, and is expected to grow by more than 20% to more than 878 million workers over the next four years, according to separate research from IDC. RIM is seeing similar trends take place in South Africa.

Currently, mobile voice dominates the mobile solutions arena. However, a growing share of employees in most companies is using mobile data applications such as mobile email. Small companies currently have a significantly lower adoption of mobile data services than medium and large companies but are more likely to invest in such services than the others in the

next 12 months, according to the research.

In the past, mobile technologies were the domain of managers and directors, and were regarded by many as expensive executive toys. But for many companies, especially in the services industries, they're turning into essential productivity tools.

Mobile business applications have evolved beyond email, with an almost limitless choice of applications available, ranging from solutions like CRM to salesforce support, and navigation to time management.

By mobilising the workforce, companies can allow employees in the field to make fast and informed decisions, which translate into benefits such as better customer service and higher productivity, and efficiency.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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