Reviewing Your Mobile Fleet- The Considerations

iPhone vs Blackberry and the alternatives

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Overview

This paper sets out to look at options that are open to any organisation looking to review their current mobile provision as well as looking at alternatives. It goes on to talk about Microsoft Lync as a communication tool- if having considered this paper your organisation would be interested in a trial of Lync at no cost, please do contact Auditel.

Commercial Focus

Mobile phone fleets are notoriously difficult to manage and when renewal time comes around, the task of looking at options to move is daunting and can feel like a poor return on time, particularly if you have had no significant issues or other driver to move. A 'sweetener' from your current supplier may be thrown in in terms of free 'group' calls or a hardware fund and due to the multitude of packages and offerings from suppliers; the exercise of making comparisons is long and complex. The task is seen as a poisoned chalice and usually falls to the IT Director or FD's. No wonder most of us renew with our incumbent supplier.

Drivers for change can include:

- To reduce cost
- To improve service/coverage
- To offer increased functionality (emails etc.)
- As part of a strategic change (e.g. to create the ability to work remotely, as part of an enhanced package for staff, or due to increase in 'remote' activity away from office or internationally etc.)

Undertaking a review of your mobile costs will cover many areas but the one that seems to cause most debate and is addressed in this paper surrounds smartphones- in short iPhone or Blackberry? The following information looks at the major contributing factors in reaching any decision, as well as offering information on Android phones, which are making inroads into the market;

- Cost of purchase of hardware
- Cost of bolt ons
- Data compression
- Apps that can be of use
- Integration with existing systems
- "Free" communications
- Durability
- Faults/Drawbacks

Cost of purchase of hardware

As a general rule of thumb, Apple devices tend to be more expensive than Blackberry. When making a cost comparison between the two devices, one should be aware that even allowing for the pun, one is not comparing apples with apples. The Apple market is very much tailored towards the personal market, with a

plethora of games and apps, though there are business related apps available, whereas the Blackberry market is more business orientated. Though Blackberry has had a lot of publicity lately in the personal device space, it is believed that they will shortly be pulling back from this market place and solely concentrating on the business sector.

Android devices on the other hand, can be as much as half the price as an Apple or Blackberry device, the whole concept of Android is the operating system being as hardware flexible as possible. This allows for a much cheaper handset to be used with an operating system that is quickly growing in popularity and proving itself in the business space. Android is able to run across a wide range of hardware ie, HP, Samsung, Dell etc. with the core functionality of Windows 7. This differs from Mac OS, which can only run on Mac devices.

You may think that the best way around this is to utilise the 'Hardware Fund' offered by suppliers. As with everything else, hardware funds should be carefully looked at: an up-front fund means higher monthly recurring costs than that of deals without hardware funds. After all the money has to come from somewhere.

Cost of bolt ons (i.e. BES, data package)

To be able to use the Internet and to receive emails on a smartphone the SIM used in the device will need to have data enabled by the network provider, though more often that not this is the default. There are many ways in which users can pay for the data they use, the most common is a data bundle, allowing them to use a specified amount of data for a set cost, or they can pay for the data as they use it.

Data packages are of very similar pricing between all mobile devices, data after all is data. One benefit that Blackberry holds over others however is that all data over the Blackberry network is compressed and encrypted, through native and third party applications, meaning the overall usage of a Blackberry device is generally less.

It is probably worth pointing out at this point that users should be very careful with applying bolt-ons of any kind. It is often more effective to purchase SMS or Data on a PAYU (Pay As You Use) basis rather than purchasing an oversized bundle to cover it. It's well worth seeing what the OOB (Out Of Bundle) charges are and compare that against your actual usage to get a much better deal. For example, the average data usage for a Blackberry device is 26MB per month, compared to an Apple device, which is 63MB. Bearing in mind that most people are advised/opt for a 500MB data package as they think they will need that much, this seems somewhat excessive.

For Blackberry devices to encrypt and compress their data traffic, access to Blackberry's servers are required as all data passes through here. At the most basic level this requires a BIS (Blackberry Internet Service) enabled. Alongside data encryption, Blackberry also have a direct interconnect with most major online mail providers providing the capability to 'push' e-mails directly to your device, instead of your device checking for e-mails at an interval and having to 'pull' them down

To use the plethora of business grade features available with Blackberry devices, you will require either BES (Blackberry Enterprise Server) or BESX (Blackberry Enterprise Server Express). This will mean an additional service charge, usually per handset, the pricing of which differs depending on the type of installation and various other factors.

International Roaming Data Charges

For organisations where staff is UK based with occasional visits overseas for meetings, to assess projects etc., the costs of Roaming Data must be taken into consideration. From July 2012, new caps were put into place on charged within the EU. It should be noted that the only measure that will help anyone travelling outside Europe is the £49 cap on data. In this case, travellers will get a warning text message, email or pop-up window

when they are nearing that threshold, or another pre-agreed level. Consumers will then have to confirm they are happy to go over this level to continue data roaming
For information, the price limits (excluding VAT) that now apply on roaming charges in the EU are:
Data: Capped at €0.70 (56p) per megabyte from July 2012, €0.45 from July 2013 and €0.20 from July 2014.
Outgoing calls: Capped at €0.29 per minute from July 2012, €0.24 from July 2013 and €0.19 from July 2014. Was €0.35.
Incoming calls: Capped at €0.08 from July 2012, €0.07 from July 2013 and €0.05 from July 2014. Was €0.11.

Texts: Capped at €0.09 from July 2012, €0.08 from July 2013 and €0.06 from July 2014. Was €0.11.

Data compression

As discussed above, Blackberry's do benefit from data compression as opposed to other devices. The compression ratio is around the 2.5:1 ratio, but a lot depends on signal strength and the type of signal available as well as for which purpose the data is being used. A good tool to look at approximate comparisons is: http://web.telusmobility.com/data_calculator/. Historically, accessing data whilst overseas either temporarily or on contract/project basis has resulted in alarming data charges, particularly where large documents are being moved, or where 'hungry' items such as film/photo has to be exchanged. This is where the data compression of a Blackberry can be a distinct advantage. With native data compression overseas usage is reduced resulting in less data being used overbroad.

Bearing in mind however that Wi-Fi connections do not eat into data packages and are becoming more common abroad, there is an argument that the need for data abroad is mitigated and in some instances can be nullified altogether.

Apps for business and associated costs?

Both Blackberry and Apple devices have a lot of apps that are good for businesses and individual users. If internal security is of a concern to the business, Blackberry is the advised route. BES & BESX servers allow security polices to be passed down to the handsets, such as blocking certain websites. This can be of particular advantage if your organisation employs/tolerates a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policy.

App's however do rely heavily on user input to develop the applications which are not for specific products (Word for example). In this respect Blackberry appears to be slightly less popular than Apple with more developers working on Apple products. The android app market however seems to be booming, moving to a position where it will overtake Apple in terms of the number of developers working on Apps. This is in all likelihood due to its open nature and the much lower fees charged for the ability to offer apps.

Ability to integrate with email/calendar

All devices have full integration with email and calendar services across the common platforms (Outlook, Gmail, iCal etc.). The only noticeable difference would be that BlackBerrys have 'push' technology (the email is forced down to the device by the email platform) whereas Apple and Android often uses 'pull' (the phone checks at intervals for e-mails). Push e-mails generally arrive slightly faster than pull, but this can be at the expense of battery life and data usage as a connection needs to be open for e-mails to be pushed down. However, opinion varies based on experience and some BlackBerry users do not feel there to be any significant impact on the battery life.

Ability to communicate i.e. BBM /Facetime

Both devices have native applications that allow some kind of 'free' messaging, be it via text, audio or voice, which can help to offset the cost of the contract. There are third party applications however that allows the

same functionality but cross-platform (i.e. between Apple, BlackBerry and Android), allowing most smartphones to communicate in this way. A point of note is that both the native and third party applications use data in some way to achieve this, so using Wi-Fi is the best option for connectivity to ensure data usage charges are kept to a minimum as well as achieving optimal quality for voice and audio calls.

Durability Issues?

Officially, there are no durability issues with most up to date models of any device. However, anecdotally Apple devices tend to be the most liable to issues with a particular vulnerability around the screens.

Commonly found faults in both models

The most common complaint is in regard to battery life. Users making the transition from an older to phone to a smartphone often comment on how much fast the battery drains. It's a little disingenuous to class this a a fault; smartphones have significantly more advanced hardware and do more at any single point that older phones do. Currently battery technology hasn't evolved at the same pace to keep up with the durability that some people are used to.

Points to note

- Android should be regarded as a major competitor to Blackberry and Apple and certainly deserve to be seen as a major contender.
- Windows Phones are far behind the development schedule- it is reported that the software is proving a difficult fix.
- 4G, the next generation of Mobile Data Connectivity will completely change how mobiles are used. In short, the 4G launch will see massively faster, most likely cheaper data connectivity to mobile devices. Recently Ofcom (the body that regulate telecommunications of both a fixed and mobile nature) have awarded the 4G licences to Everything Everywhere (T-Mobile and Orange) for a period of one year before it becomes available to other network operators.

FMC (Fixed Mobile Convergence) is becoming more and more popular, this is having the mobile and fixed line traffic with the same carrier. It allows a seamless transition from a mobile network to a landline network without hanging up i.e. the call carries on on the same platform. The major benefits are not only cheaper / free minutes between the two but a single number for a customer / client to remember. This is very good for home workers (Regional Fundraisers for example) as it also allows routing of numbers; e.g. a Head Office number can be routed seamlessly to any designated number (i.e. a member of staff's home phone)

An alternative view to consider:

Does your organisation really need to renew the contracts on its entire fleet of phones? You may want to consider how and what phones are used for and based on that decide who really needs to have a phone. Once allocations have been made an objective stock take of existing hardware should be undertaken. If a phone is deemed to need replacing then a list of criteria should be determined before a decision is made on hand sets. Hardware choice can yield the biggest savings of all.

An analysis of call records should allow you to determine what calls are employee to employee or between other sites within the organisation (including international offices). These calls could potentially be replaced by

an integrated communication interface at a much lower cost; what follows is an overview of the current, market leader, Microsoft Lync.

What is Lync?

In response to today's changing work styles and the need for real-time collaboration, organizations are looking for integrated productivity tools that enable users to communicate from anywhere in a cost-effective and secure manner. Microsoft Lync™ Server 2010 is an intuitive platform that brings together the different ways people communicate in a single interface. It is simple enough to facilitate rapid user adoption, while the ability to support a range of communications from a single platform reduces both capital and operational costs.

Where can it be used? (Overseas projects/ multi sites)

As a hosted platform the only requirement is an Internet connection. The functionality available depends on the quality of connection available. For example, don't expect to have a multi person videoconference on a dial-up connection. Mobile App's are available though at this moment in time the official apps do not accept custom built servers, so users need to be careful what versions of apps they use. (We can recommend third party apps for certain devices). Microsoft provides a Lync application made by themselves, however not every provider will run this. For example, a Lync server may be hosted in a data centre rather than using Microsoft's Lync server. Therefore settings may need to be changed in the Lync App to tell it to look at a different server to Microsoft's. Apps for Lync have also been made by parties other than Microsoft, which will allow the use of a different server.

What are the advantages?

Integrated interface platforms can bring huge savings in time and money and as with most IT systems, the better the adoption, the better the result. Rather than staff and senior managers having to take time to travel to meetings, the use of Video Teleconferencing (VTC) can enable a better use of time as well as cutting out completely the expense of travel and subsistence. The ability to share desktops enables proposals to be explained and functions such a "whiteboard's will allow all participants to have input to projects/plans. The meeting conversation can also be recorded so all parties have a copy to log. Whilst no replacement for face to face communication it is a valuable and viable alternative where appropriate. Conversations can be saved and filed for reference or as a part of a Full Cost Recovery programme with IM conversations able to be saved in Outlook (or alternative e-mail client if compatible). For Video calls and upward there is a separate recording utility that allows the entire conference for example to be recorded. These are all saved locally.

How does it enhance mobile communications?

The extent to which Lync can enhance mobile communication relies on various factors, such as connectivity and the hardware that is running. If the device for example had a camera and Wi-Fi access, it may be possible to hold a free video conversation whilst on the move.

Can it replace mobile communications?

Integrated platforms such as Lync are designed as a collaboration tool and not solely as a communication tool. It could certainly replace a mobile on the road if the user were to have a laptop or similar device, but that alternative device would of course need a Wi-Fi connection and the device was on and they would only be able to contact others on Lync for free, breaking out to an external line would still cost. The real opportunity comes in being able to a) reduce the number of calls made b) removing mobiles only used to make internal calls c) having a much greater functionality without necessarily having to use a higher end smart phone.

If you would like further information on any of the issues mentioned above, would like a trial of Lync in your organisation at no cost or have any other queries, please do get in touch:

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