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As companies figure out how to drive an effective mobile strategy, they're encountering some problems with application development and strategy. Enterprise development, the slow and cautious lifecycle of an application deployed to a single platform, is very different from mobile development with its constant revisions and multiple platforms. How can the two get together? Because the future will demand that they do: enterprise applications and business processes need to be exposed to mobile devices if companies are to cope with change today.

How a company approaches this problem is very much tied to how their development environment is structured. Quinton Pienaar, CIO of Mix Telematics, says his company outsourced its development.

"We have architecture and project management following a SCRUM methodology," he says. "Our teams are in two locations and my team focusses primarily on enterprise and business systems development, doing business process and how we manage the customer. We have another team in Stellenbosch that focusses on product development for mobile."

Lindiwe Msila, IT manager at the office of the Gauteng Premier, also has an outsourced model.

"However, we play a major role in building the strategies as well as putting the processes together," she says. "Right now I'm trying to automate our governmental processes so that we can make mobile applications available."

JD Fentie, associate in the project delivery group at Hatch, says that although as an engineering company its core business isn't development, it does have a three-tier approach.

"We buy off-the-shelf products, we do some custom development, either in-house or outsourced where we can, mostly driven out of North America where the head office is. The third is for testing of some of the design tools for the operation."

Gabi Strijp, executive head of Business Mobility, Vodacom Business Services, says the division is actively involved in development, but indirectly.

"What we do is have partner engagements through Vodacom Ventures' innovation hub, which houses a couple of cutting-edge app development houses. We are also actively seeking out partners that can develop and mobilise applications that are bespoke."

Mobile shift

Kamal Ramsingh, director of consulting, Deloitte and Touche, says although Deloitte and Touche is largely a commercial off-the-shelf type of application consumer, as the level of application mobility increases, there will be more experimentation.

"Whether it's some IP solution or portals, we will be using small groups of people to understand and prototype mobile applications."

But the ground is definitely shifting. Christie Olivier, senior consultant at Accenture, says that although his current developer team is application-heavy, that will change.

ENTERPRISE APPS GO MOBILE

HOW DO ORGANISATIONS EXPOSE ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS TO THEIR MOBILE WORKFORCE?

words PAUL FURBER photos KAROLINA KOMENDERA

"We have 200 developers and most of them work on application development. There's a very small team working on mobile, but it's growing. As more of our clients come up with different things they want to do on mobile, that workforce will change drastically. Some clients want to get all their applications mobile. In the enterprise space, things are focussed on Microsoft and SAP solutions because they're well defined. The mobile space is still very focussed and very niche."

Deloitte and Touche's Ramsingh summarises the nature of the change in development practice.

"In classic enterprise application development, the majority of people we serve our customers with have a process bias - that's their strength. But the migration to mobile is very different. There's a particular mindset change about what constitutes an application. So process bias in enterprise apps is strong; you're talking about business improvement and transformation."

Mix Telematics' Pienaar approaches the mobile development systematically.

"We mature the platform to a point where we have a full service foundation and then we bubble up functions that would make sense on a mobile device. We have five or six applications but they're based on our web apps. The mobile developers are not particularly process-centric; they just latch on to what we provide and use it."

Karel Bouwer, IT strategy and planning director, Lafarge, freely admits that being a little slower to adopt mobile has worked to his advantage.

"The mobile platforms we see now have matured: they're carrier-, OS- and platform-agnostic to the point where we can develop once to multiple devices for multiple platforms. Development in terms of the man hours and teams isn't that big of an investment for us. We literally have no compatibility issues between the major platforms we use: Android, Apple, BlackBerry and Windows Mobile. The development tools that we have use high-level scripting languages that any developer can pick up in weeks."

Should applications live completely in the cloud? Pieter Neveling, head of proposal and design architecture at Software AG, notes that when you have an enterprise mobile application in the cloud, it must detect the platform to which it is being deployed.

"If you want to use specific functionality, then if you deploy to a device that doesn't have it, you won't be able to use it. The same thing applies to the cloud. You will still have specific virtual machines for iPhone, Android and so on. The shift comes in where people start saying: it doesn't matter. If they can deploy to any operating system, then it won't matter. If you can deploy something to an iPhone because it works well in a specific situation and then repackage it for another platform



Quinton Pienaar, Mix Telematics

without redeveloping it, it's an advantage."

Vodacom Business's Strijp points out that IT departments like the mobile hyper-visor approach.

"I think it resonates with IT managers because it allows them to do what they like to do: control, standardise and buy devices in bulk. So it does address that need but it's horses for courses and perhaps we've missed a step, which is: who are you developing these applications for and why are they using them?"

The right approach

That's a good question. Deloitte's Ramsingh says the problem should not be approached from the technical side.

"If you look at this opportunity from a purely technical perspective, you have to also deal with the consumerisation of IT and the trend towards 'bring your own device'. I think you need to start the other way around. The maturity of

the devices is making changes to business processes and business models that have never been possible before. So you have to start by asking: why mobility? If there then becomes a viable business case, dealing with the investment required becomes more palatable. It's not how many operating systems or platforms there are but why are we doing this? A CIO could decide that a certain section of his workforce, based on its role, would need some functions of his enterprise applications - and the business case is different."

Msila says it has to be a combination of people, process and technology.

"You may have an organisation that is behind when it comes to technology. But the role of the CIO should be to support the organisation and ensure a mobile strategy is implemented. The Premier of Gauteng, for example, is never in the office and needs access to information on her mobile because of the nature of her



Karel Bouwer, Lafarge; Kamal Ramsingh, Deloitte and Touche; Kuben Naidoo, Sun International; and Pieter Neveling, Software AG



Lindiwe Msila, Officer of the Gauteng Premier



JD Fentie, Hatch



Michael Greer, Chubb

"ENTERPRISE MOBILITY IS MAKING CHANGES IN BUSINESS PROCESSES THAT WEREN'T POSSIBLE BEFORE."

KAMAL RAMSINGH, DELOITTE AND TOUCHE

stages of mobile enablement. But it will mature. The platforms and the consumerisation will be dealt with. The bigger challenge will be mobile corporate data. You still have to deal with assets moving around. Either way, the change is on us: either you have to take enterprise applications and mobilise them or you have to move mobile apps and make them enterprise grade. And on top of that, you have the security and tracking challenges."

Vodacom Business' Strijp says the new generation will force the change through.

"The people we're employing in the workforce are deciding what devices are coming in. They're educated knowledge workers who don't care what companies are telling them to do. They're outcomes-based and produce work at their own pace. The approach should be deciding what it is you want to achieve and then build your strategy around that. There are any number of ways to achieve an outcome, whether it's using cloud or specific mobile solutions."

The most popular application on the mobile platform today is e-mail, followed by Angry Birds. For that to change, companies will have to figure out what they really want to do with their mobile devices. ■

work. So we need IT as a tool to drive business but it can't be on its own."

Michael Greer, CIO of Chubb, says that from the CIO's perspective, things are simpler.

"Developers worry about platforms and operating systems. CIOs have it a bit easier. We want something and want to know what platform will give us what we want. We go to service providers and ask whether they have it. We leave companies like Vodacom to deal with the teething troubles. We've

decided BlackBerry is it. Our reaction officers now have BlackBerries and can use the devices to transmit pictures of incidents back to head office. Our customers are our clients so we can do it this way."

Lafarge's Bouwer has a different approach because of the company's focus.

"We have a different approach because we see the convergence of business to employee and business to customer coming. We need to get our applications out to our customers on mobile so they can interact with us. So we cannot standardise them. That's why carrier, device and platform agnosticism was important to us."

Software AG's Neveling says there are two distinct schools of thought when it comes to development strategy.

"One is where IT companies standardise on a particular

technology so that they get operational advantage on things like maintenance. A technician going out knows what he's going to deal with. Also, you can compete on price because you're dealing with volumes. There's another way: companies are starting to ask whether their business is really the process. How do we deploy our processes without caring what the infrastructure or the applications are? How do we sell that where people can interact with it without exposing it? That's the exciting part of mobility: where it can enable processes and interaction."

Maturity beckons

Deloitte's Ramsingh says that it's early days.

"I think we'll be having some of these discussions for a couple of years, largely because we're at the very early



Christie Olivier, Accenture