

Integrating the iPhone into enterprise

Ahead of the planned autumn launch in Europe of Apple's iPhone, and with the availability of the smartphone in the US, a number of mobility solution vendors are positioning themselves to support the device. Mark Blowers, senior research analyst with IT research and advisory organisation Butler Group, points out unapproved devices could compromise corporate information.

As such they must be managed as capably as other assets. But as yet most organisations do not have the management or technical capabilities sufficient to undertake effective mobile device management.

The major challenges that mobile devices such as the iPhone cause enterprises are in the areas of security, management, control, cost, and heterogeneity. The adoption of such devices by employees tends to be in many instances user-driven, as features such as ease-of-use, better screen, email, calendars, and contacts provide greater convenience, and can motivate the workforce to use the new device for corporate use.

If IT organisations do not provide an appropriate security and management infrastructure then there is a risk that unapproved devices could compromise corporate information.

Distinctions narrowed

Over recent times, both personal digital assistants (PDAs) and smartphones have greatly increased the functionality and capabilities offered, and the distinctions between them have narrowed significantly.

With differing degrees of success, many PDAs and smartphones now offer an extensive range of features that can be used to address enterprise requirements, such as better screens, qwerty keypad, choice of connectivity technologies, and client applications. The convergence of PDAs and mobile phones is set to continue, and could well be boosted by the availability of Apple's iPhone with its innovative user interface using its touch screen capability.

With remote working becoming more popular, there will be increasing pressure on the IT department to integrate a growing number of different mobile devices with the existing infrastructure. The iPhone could well be another BlackBerry that the IT manager will be compelled to adopt. There is now a need for mobile middleware to provide a foundation on which to base mobile applications capable of handling a number of different types of endpoint and form factor.

Enterprise perspective

From an enterprise perspective, mobile devices will soon be as important a part of the corporate infrastructure as any of the other computing assets. Most organisations do not have the management or technical capabilities sufficient to

undertake effective mobile device management. As mobile devices are increasingly used by enterprises for critical application delivery, organisations must ensure that they are managed as capably as other assets. Using a managed service to deliver 'know-how' and operational support is one alternative to consider.

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