

Enterprise collaboration: Productivity tools

Enterprise collaboration is defined as processes, tools and capabilities to help users interact, share and co-operate to produce business value. We achieve this through employing tools for email, voice and video communication, document sharing and synchronization, application sharing, presence awareness and social networking.

New ways to consume content

Desktops and laptops have traditionally been used as the main devices for collaboration and productivity, with mobile devices limited to email and voice calls. More recently, mobile devices have proven to be excellent tools for consuming content, with content creation and collaboration performed on traditional PCs.

New devices reaching the market

Newer, more powerful devices, when combined with updated mobile productivity applications, can enable efficient content creation and collaboration in the field. This is the next fundamental shift for enterprise collaboration and Gartner predicts that "by 2016 most collaboration applications will be equally available on desktops, mobile phones, tablets and browsers."¹

This creates a challenge for businesses as many users now perform all of their day-to-day collaborative and creative activities via mobile devices. How can the enterprise adapt and facilitate a mobile workforce without losing control of content storage, security and business continuity?

The strategic concerns for mobile enterprise collaboration include:

1. How to facilitate a secure, user-centric, mobile workspace
2. How to synchronize and secure content produced on mobile devices

Mobile collaboration?

A Mobile Workspace must allow the end user to create, consume, store and share content, as well as initiate and execute business processes. Businesses need to create a strategic vision for their mobile collaboration and productivity workspaces to achieve this.

There is now a trend of individual users turning more and more to consumer-based solutions to help them work. This phenomenon of Shadow IT is a risk to businesses and many enterprises are investing heavily into tactical solutions for mobile collaboration technology to address this issue. But time is needed to choose the right solutions; otherwise the problems can be exacerbated.

According to Portio Research, messaging applications are the 2nd most popular application category on mobile devices, following gaming, which demonstrates the desire for rich mobile collaboration using instant messaging, conferencing and file sharing.

Enterprise options for the Mobile Workspace include Virtual Desktop, Local Streamed Applications, or Device Installed, Network Connected applications. The Virtual Desktop is ideal for heterogeneous environments where users have a combination of mobile and fixed devices that require a similar user experience. Local Streamed Applications are best for lightweight deployments of enterprise collaboration applications to business or personal devices.

With a mobile workspace for collaboration and productivity, several questions are raised:

- How to store and access content?
- How to share it?
- How to make it available on other devices and locations?

Content and Collaboration

Most enterprise users have more than one mobile device they use for the same task. According to Gartner, “the average personal cloud will synchronize and orchestrate at least six different device types by 2016.”³ This poses an interesting capacity problem for IT: previously, typically one device synchronized content, i.e. a laptop, but now each user has multiple devices. This significantly increases the capacity and performance requirements for an organization’s IT infrastructure, and businesses that host their own infrastructure need to plan now for this rise in connected devices.

Enterprise file synchronization strategies

Users need to move and share files across multiple mobile devices, PCs, network drives and other storage repositories. Depending on the sensitivity of the content, the strategy employed for file synchronization can involve a private on-premise service, a secure hybrid service, or a public service incorporating external file synchronization providers. With the right mobile collaboration solution in place, businesses can achieve significant productivity enhancements. An example of a mobile collaboration scenario may go as follows:

CASE EXAMPLE

John’s manager sends him an email asking for details of a particular customer’s sales for the month. John receives the email on his smartphone while on the train. He pulls out his tablet and opens the secure container application. Once started, John accesses the sales information from the company’s sales tool, exports it and creates a spreadsheet. John is not sure about the sales numbers so he sends an instant message to his finance colleague Alice to ask. Alice is online, so she initiates a video call with John to discuss this further. John shares his screen with Alice to show her the spreadsheet and they agree on the changes. John saves the spreadsheet to his personal cloud, shares the document with his manager and using his tablet, sends an email back to his manager with a link to the file.

This scenario is very real and demonstrates how productivity can be achieved in otherwise idle time.

The rise of social networks

Rising adoption rates of social networking tools in the enterprise demonstrate how businesses are embracing the concept of communities and blogs for both internal and external use. Social technologies are enhancing, and in some cases, replacing traditional messaging and document-based work methods. Well-connected businesses can leverage the move towards social media to interact with partners and customers as well as accumulate information on competitors. This type of social collaboration is fairly unstructured but can be very powerful in industry verticals such as IT and Retail.

Security

The last thing to discuss (but one of the first to be considered) is security. Corporate content outside business IT boundaries is at a higher risk of loss or leakage, from lost, stolen or compromised mobile devices. Enterprises need to develop a strategy and policies for data protection and compliance in the mobile world. Content needs to be secured by focusing on the content source rather than the device, which can be achieved with a comprehensive digital rights management solution.

¹ <http://www.gartner.com/resId=2572317>, ² <http://www.portioresearch.com/en/blog/what-apps-are-people-using.aspx>, ³ <http://www.gartner.com/resId=2572317>

This is an extract from Fujitsu’s White Book of Mobilizing the Enterprise: Your ultimate guide to Mobility driven innovation. Download the full version from [here](#).

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