

BUILDING A SPECIALIZED PRACTICE IN MOBILITY

By Edison Peres, Vice President of Advanced and Core Technologies for Worldwide Channels

A recent survey of 1500 executives worldwide, conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit, found that nearly half of respondents already spend 20–40% of their work time away from their primary work space. As those figures continue to rise, so too will demand for solutions that enable worker mobility.



Mobility solution providers have two options: support mobility as part of their general business practice or build a practice that specializes in mobility. Given the complexity of today's network infrastructures—and the seemingly continuous advances in networking products and technologies—more organizations with a mobile workforce are beginning to look for solution providers specializing in mobility. An increasing number also want those providers to have experience in their particular vertical market.

NeTeam, a designer and developer of wireless system solutions, has established itself as one of the premier mobile solution providers for the healthcare, educational, and financial services industries. Edison Peres, vice president of Advanced and Core Technologies for Worldwide Channels at Cisco Systems, spoke with the President of NeTeam, Brian Gilbert, about the benefits of building a specialized practice in mobility.

Edison: Why did your company choose to specialize in mobility?

Brian: We believe the next great wave of growth and value in the networking industry is in the mobility sector. The research is clear: progressively more end users are pushing their employers to offer mobile solutions, and employers are beginning to realize the value of these solutions to their business. But mobile products and technologies are so complex that it takes specific training and expertise in order to successfully bridge the existing wired network and the mobile application. Most corporate IT staffs aren't that specialized—they haven't had to be—and so there was a real need for solution providers that could support large, complex deployments with a particular focus on mobility. That's where we came in.

Edison: What have you done to build a successful business around mobility?

Brian: We started by focusing on a manageable number of vertical markets. Healthcare, education, and financial services will have the greatest demand for mobility solutions over the next few years because those are the sectors in which the return on investment will be the greatest. So, those are the industries we decided to target. But building a successful business is more than just selecting your target market. It's also about the value of the solution you offer. We believe that mobility will continue to provide higher levels of value over time, and we've already seen that come to pass. Our business has been expanding rapidly because mobility also drives sales of security, core infrastructure, VoIP, and other solutions that must be integrated into the wireless network infrastructure.

Edison: How does having such a specialized practice enable you to help your customers?

Brian: Because we focus on mobility, we have the knowledge and skills required to select and deploy the most appropriate products and technologies for the project at hand. Our vertical market concentration also gives us the experience and expertise that is absolutely necessary when designing and implementing solutions for such customers as the Washington Hospital Center, Case Western Reserve University, and the New York Stock Exchange. As a result of our highly specialized practice, we are able to provide the kind of robust, scalable infrastructure that our customers need in order to work effectively.

Edison: You've done a lot with the healthcare industry lately. Can you discuss the demand for mobility solutions in healthcare?

Brian: Most hospitals were built before networking technology—not to mention wireless technology—came into its own. Because the physical requirements of network infrastructures weren't considered by hospital architects, the future scalability of hospital networks can be severely limited. Since moving, adding, or changing components within a wired network can cause problems, many hospital networks simply function with outdated equipment rather than risk network performance. Additionally, the network itself takes valuable space that could otherwise be used by doctors or staff, which impacts patient care and hospital revenue. Going wireless can resolve all of these issues, so the return on investment is tremendous and, as a result, demand is high. Our previous experience with hospitals and clinics makes us a natural choice for helping healthcare providers implement mobility solutions.

Edison: As a mobility specialist, what advice do you have for companies that are considering implementing a mobility solution?

Brian: First, they need to be clear about whether or not they actually need a mobility solution. Mobile employees need mobile solutions; if employees are not mobile then the company should look at alternative



solutions that can meet their needs. Once a company determines that a mobility solution is required for the business, then the most important decision is the choice of a solution provider. Mobility demands a well thought out infrastructure, so it's critical that companies work with providers that have networking expertise, experience in their vertical market, and a strong knowledge of wireless standards. In my opinion, companies are at an advantage when they select mobility specialists to build a new network or expand the existing network because wireless products and technologies require a certain level of expertise for optimal effectiveness. Also, it is often the case that the wireless solution must be specifically designed to work with a wired network, which also must be specifically designed to support it. A partner that specializes in mobility can manage all of these issues.

Edison: How have mobile solutions benefited you and your employees at NeTeam?

Brian: We use a lot of the same mobility tools that we provide to our customers—wireless networks, mobile phones, tablet computers—and so we've experienced many similar benefits: faster data access, improved communication, and, of course, increased productivity. The productivity gains are especially critical, whether you're a nurse in a hospital retrieving information about a patient, a trader at the stock exchange accessing real-time pricing for a trade, a student on a university campus doing research for a project, or a NeTeam engineer accessing customer information for an implementation project. Mobility solutions make a tremendous difference. We believe in them for ourselves and for our customers, and that's why we'll continue to focus on mobility for the future.