

WHY MOBILE WORKERS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE

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Employees in many industries increasingly are performing their jobs outside the office. More than one third of 1500 executives worldwide recently surveyed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said that during the next two years they plan to increase the number of hours they work in locations other than their traditional workspaces.



Why the impending mobile revolution?

Employers are encouraging their employees to have more face-to-face contact with customers and prospective customers, suppliers, and partners. Equipped with a laptop or other mobile device with access to the Internet or corporate intranet, an employee can research the background of a prospective customer while en route to a meeting, for example. And it's possible to access a remote database for inventory status, prices, or other information while in a conference or at a job site, which can help close a sale.

In short, being mobile often means being where customers, partners, prospects, and suppliers are. And of the highly mobile employees who responded to the EIU survey (defined as those traveling 50% or more of the time), 50% said that mobility yielded improved customer satisfaction—a critical business success factor.

Empowering Mobile Workers

Given the increasing mobility of employees, it is imperative for both employers and the networking community at large to empower the workforce with robust mobility tools. Wireless client devices and ubiquitous, secure mobile network connections, for example, are essential for improving productivity as workers spend more time off site.

Without mobile voice capabilities and data access, a productivity chasm immediately forms when workers leave their desks, according to the EIU research. And about 73% of respondents, independent of geographic region, said that gaining access to mobile tools in places where they currently have few or none would increase their efficiency and reduce response time to problems.

Productivity Gains

The Omni Consulting Group LLP measured the productivity gains of workers who benefit from use of mobile tools, and the gains are impressive. Consider, for example:

- Insurance field claims adjusters handle an additional 7.4 claims per worker per week using mobile devices and wireless networks
- Financial services agents execute approximately 11.4% more trade options with wireless data services and achieve an average nominal 3.1% portfolio performance
- Field sales representatives in the healthcare and pharmaceuticals industries conduct about eight more physician briefings per week when equipped for access to data and voice

Similarly, in the EIU study, 86% of people reporting that they were “very satisfied” with the way their companies helped them work when on the move tended to view mobility as crucial to job success.

But only one quarter of respondents reported satisfaction with the mobile support provided by their employers. Clearly, companies must work harder in this area, realizing that the productivity of untethered knowledge workers without network access drops sharply.

Corporate improvements might constitute a willingness to allow individuals to expense the cost of a mobile device and mobility services, such as cellular data services, hotel broadband Internet access, and “Wi-Fi” wireless LAN hotspot services. Or it might mean IT taking a “top-down” approach to mobile device deployment, management, network service, and security.

The Industry at Work

Convergence—on many levels—will further boost mobile workforce productivity. Devices, networks, and applications are each evolving to handle multiple functions that interoperate, freeing users from time-consuming complexity. For example, 74% of the EIU respondents stated that they believed a single phone

number for use wherever they were located would go a long way in making them more productive.

When users are on the go, productivity is hindered if they must check multiple mailboxes for messages and boot up several devices built specifically for different applications. Mobile workers also become frustrated with adjusting device settings when they change networks; for example, from a mobile data service to a Wi-Fi hotspot.

Chip and device makers, network operators, and software developers are hard at work integrating network connections, applications, and billing systems to create a unified experience—one that simplifies the use of tools for the mobile worker. These integration efforts will soon make workers more productive when away from their traditional workspaces.

PRODUCTIVITY GAINS OF MOBILE DATA SERVICES QUANTIFIED BY OMNI CONSULTING GROUP STUDY

Businesses worldwide are realizing the competitive advantages that mobile data services can bring to their bottom-line. By applying a cross-section of data spanning multiple macroeconomic and microeconomic categories to a customized econometric model, this study has identified a positive correlation between mobile data services and increased workforce productivity.

The study, entitled “Affirming the Mobility Quotient: How Wireless Connectivity is Shaping Worker Productivity,” measured the change in Total Factor Productivity (TFP) of organizations that invest in mobile data services. An average increase of more than 13 percent per week for each full-time worker was attributed to investments in mobile data devices, applications and services.

Highlights of the vertical industry benefits of mobile data services uncovered by the study:

- Insurance field claims adjusters handled an additional 7.4 claims per week and improved payout ratios by an annual yield of over 6 percent.
- Customers of hospitality services were 70 percent more likely to select a location with mobile internet access when given a comparable option. Hotels with broadband equipped facilities were able to charge almost 7 percent more per room.
- Law enforcement agencies increased their arrest rate by almost 4 percent in 2003–2004.
- The use of RFID wireless technology in manufacturing and logistics industries eliminated 6 percent of logistics errors within the warehouse operation.
- Financial services agents using wireless data services executed 11 percent more trades and improved portfolio performance by 3 percent.
- Healthcare and pharmaceutical field sales representatives conducted an additional 8 physician briefings per week.