Government Executive

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TRENDS IN MOBILITY

In August 1971, during the era of vinyl recordings, one of the world's great rock bands, The Who, released one of the genre's great albums, *Who's Next*, that included a raucous little number called *Going Mobile*.

Forty years on, in the era of mp3 file sharing, U.S. Chief Information Officer Steven VanRoekel is bringing a full-throated, Roger Daltrey-esque brio to his promotion of the federal government's pursuit of mobile solutions: "Going mobile doesn't just increase productivity but it's a huge cost saver too," VanRoekel wrote on the Office of Management and Budget blog in January. "Within a year, I expect the government to change the way we work—to start embracing mobility-enabling technology across the federal workforce in a coordinated way."

You can practically hear the roar of the crowd.

VanRoekel promised the release of a detailed mobility roadmap within the next two months. Whether or not government changes the way it works within the year, as he predicted, most observers of federal IT agree that 2012 could very well be a tipping point for mobility in government.

Here are five big trends in the mobile world.

THE "BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE" WAVE

As more smartphones, tablets and other devices find their way into the hands of federal workers, the demand to use them at work will intensify. The influx will create ripples that touch everything, experts say.

"Millions of mobile devices will be added to federal networks over the next several years," forecasts Anthony Robbins, vice president of federal sales for Brocade.

Those devices "offer unprecedented opportunities for advanced communications in government.

Finding a mobile solution that achieves the balance between durability, versatility and security is a priority," says Gary Schluckbier, director of Motorola Solutions' Secure Products Group.

"For 2012, we foresee a lot of government organizations starting to pilot BYOD initiatives," says Raffi Tchakmakjian, vice president of product management and business development for Wyse Technology. Moreover, "BYOD will be the dominant trend in many civilian agencies," predicts Chet Wisniewski, senior security advisor at Sophos Canada. Budget pressures are driving the trend, says John Dickson, CEO of Denim Group.

In addition, "2012 will be the year that tablets become firmly embedded in the government space," predicts Eric Kintz, vice president and general manager of Logitech for Business.

"Government workers are bringing their own devices to work," says Sam Ganga, vice president of DMI Enterprise Solutions. "This isn't going to stop."

THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY

VanRoekel has cautioned against allowing security concerns to derail the mobile revolution in government, saying that "we shouldn't make the false choice between security and innovation." IT experts nonetheless caution that the proliferation of mobile devices will create security and privacy challenges.

"The government needs a solution that achieves the balance between feature-rich commercial technology and the robust security expected for critical and security communications," Schluckbier says. "Finding a mobile solution that achieves the balance between durability, versatility and security is a priority."

"Multiple forms of authentication will be required" on mobile devices, predicts Scott Goldman, CEO of TextPower. "Remote data wiping will be a necessity and incorporated into every mobile device."

"With the ever-increasing cyber security threats, federal agencies will begin to adopt and implement the logical access use of their PIV [personal identity verification] credentials," says Nick Urick, vice president of federal sales for F5 Networks.

"We could see the feds make a much larger move into virtual desktop technology, [providing] a better security posture because none of the data will actually reside on the mobile device," says Nick Urick, vice president of federal sales for Network Instruments.

"We are likely to start seeing more effort to find universally accessible encryption tools that will protect data if it is accidentally posted to cloud file-sharing sites," says Wisniewski.

"The key to security will be the ability to define and contain government data and asset access without necessarily affecting anything that is consumer-oriented on the device, especially for personally owned devices," says Tchakmakjian.

"The right security model for BYOD is to move the security perimeter back from the device itself and to focus on protecting the individual applications and especially the enterprise APIs they are connecting to," says Matt McLarty, vice president of client solutions at Layer 7.

But beware: Phil Lieberman, president of Lieberman Software, predicts that "a mobile virus will attack key government data via the use of a personal device being used for government shared use."

MORE MOBILE SERVICES

On the consumer side of the mobility equation are more mobile services for citizens. “The American people expect us to use technology to provide the same level of service they experience in their everyday lives,” says VanRoekel. Apps such as My TSA, developed by the Transportation Security Administration, “provide passengers with 24/7 access to the most commonly requested TSA information on their mobile device.” Expectations for greater mobility, among end users and federal employees, are unlikely to abate anytime soon.

“Agencies, both civilian and DoD, will pilot ‘doing my job better’ apps … especially [for employees] who work in the field in a data collection capacity,” says Tom Suder, President of Mobilegov.

“Agencies will use social media outlets to provide information to mobile constituents,” predicts Dan Cornell, chief technology officer of the Denim Group.

“The reality is that there is no money to increase budgets, so government will need to leverage connectivity and social medial to deliver some services,” says Paul Moore, senior director of mobile product management at Fujitsu America.

MORE MOBILE WORKFORCE

At the heart of the federal mobility initiative is VanRoekel’s assertion that “we need to increase the mobility of the federal workforce.” The implications of worker mobility are vast, experts say.

“Collaboration workspace becomes critical,” says Cunningham. “If we don’t offer these services, we’ve made you mobile, but we’ve reduced your ability to collaborate.”

“Productivity, reactivity and efficiency of federal employees will benefit from mobility,” Pattinson says.

Of course, operating with many more employees on the go raises a lot of questions. “If my whole workforce is mobile,” muses Cunningham, “what does the new government data policy look like? Who is responsible for the data?”

MANAGING MOBILITY

VanRoekel encourages government “to be bold” in seizing what he calls “the mobile opportunity.” But he acknowledges that boldness must be tempered by the “need to address the massive variations in the way we pay for mobile services and … how we build applications and services.”

“A potential logistics labyrinth in accommodating millions of users will spawn a cottage industry of outsourced device and service management companies,” predicts Goldman.

“Mobile adoption presents a unique cultural challenge,” says Maria Horton, CEO of EmeSec. “The old ‘purchase and control’ model will start becoming obsolete in 2012 if BYOD continues to accelerate.”

“Desktop virtualization will continue to be a hot trend in 2012—enabling federal IT to deliver a cost-effective ‘mobile secure desktop’ that enables agency workers to easily access the same PC at the office, from home or on the road,” says Raj Mallempati, director of virtualization at VMware.

“The BYOD trend is going to force executives to evaluate employee policies and perhaps create reimbursement programs for devices,” says Sudhir Verma, vice president at Force 3. “IT must revise mobile policies and deploy a set of management and security tools to support multiple platforms.”

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