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Guide to Managed Mobility Services

Introduction

Managed mobility services -- or MMS, as you'll often see it called -- is a vitally important facet of mobile device usage within a business. Without it, many companies will suffer costs far greater than need be when it comes to their mobility initiatives, and efficiencies that might otherwise be gained are lost.

This guide details all of the key areas that are important for a business in managing its mobility, and thus all of the key features to look for when sourcing managed mobility services. These features include device procurement and provisioning, technical support, device and user monitoring, analytics, and device end-of-life retirement. With these features present, mobility is truly managed across the entire device lifecycle -- and without them, as mentioned, a business cannot hope to truly maximize the return on its mobility investment.

Mobile Device Procurement



Be sure an MMS provider can identify the right devices for your needs -- and get them at the best price

Not all mobile devices are created equal -- so true mobile device management begins with properly identifying and sourcing the devices needed by a company in order to fulfill its business objectives. Knowing the capabilities of all of the various devices on the market is critical here, because the right device for a given task may not necessarily be the most modern or the most expensive; rather, determining the right device is a function that involves understanding its intended uses, its capabilities, and its costs.

It might be, for example, that the latest model of a device has new features that make it the right tool for the job, even if the per-unit cost is higher -- but it might also be that an older-model device is actually more rugged and durable for field use, while still offering all of the needed features to get the job done. Or it might be that a phone with a larger screen will suffice over a more-expensive tablet -- or conversely, that tablets are absolutely necessary to accomplish a given task.

Figuring out that right mix of devices is thus job number one for an MMS provider -- but it's followed closely by job number two, which is actually sourcing and procuring the required devices at the lowest possible costs. Thus, anytime you're considering an MMS provider, make sure they have both capabilities: To identify the right devices, and to actually get them at the best price.

Provisioning

Be sure an MMS provider ships devices to you ready to use, with all needed updates, security, and software in place

Once the right devices have been procured, it then becomes important to ensure that they are ready to do the work for which they have been purchased -- which is what is meant by the provisioning of devices. You should look for a prospective MMS provider who will do all of the device provisioning that's required, which includes finding the right network and the right plan, and then activating the devices accordingly.

Typically, though, proper provisioning doesn't stop with activating the device on a network. There are often device upgrades and patches that were issued in the time between when the device left the factory and when it was purchased, and since those very often involve fixes and security updates, getting them installed before a device reaches the hands of an end user is important -- and should be a part of the provisioning services offered by an MMS provider.

Aside from device updates, companies will also very often have software that needs to be installed on a device before it's ready for use. Such software might be what's known as mobile

device management (MDM) software designed to enhance device security, but other software might be required as well -- things like diagnostic software for use by a field service technician in accomplishing their jobs, for example, or software that allows home health workers to securely access and update patient records.

Whatever the case may be, look for an MMS provider who will activate devices and install all needed updates and software before shipping them, ready for use, to the end users.

Support

Be sure an MMS provider provides a help desk for mobile devices, so that your own IT department doesn't have to


Regardless of the size of your company and the number of mobile devices you're deploying, those devices and their users are going to occasionally need some kind of tech support. The way that this is often approached in companies that are not using an MMS provider is to turn their IT departments into mobile device help desks whenever a mobile device user has an issue.

The problem, though, is that doing mobile device support work is not the highest and best use of an IT department: It detracts from vital IT tasks that

they should be doing, and puts highly-skilled (and often highly paid) IT staff on help desk duty -- and very often, because the IT staff isn't trained for mobile device support, can lead to poor outcomes.

A smarter solution is to look for an MMS provider that can offer its own help desk support for all of the devices that they're managing. Such support should be all-encompassing, and able to handle everything from password reset requests to malfunctioning devices. Not only will such a solution be able to quickly resolve issues and get users up and running, the costs -- and the headaches -- of using your own IT staff will not be an issue.

Monitoring



Be sure an MMS provider can help you define mobile usage policies, and then help you monitor and enforce those policies

All though it's not usually due to any kind of malfeasance, mobile device users within a company will sometimes misuse to varying degrees the mobile devices which they've been issued. The first step in preventing mobile device misuse is to be sure that employees actually know

what misuse, from the company perspective, entails -- and that means that a company should have clear policies in place that spell out what constitutes both appropriate and inappropriate device usage.

An experienced MMS provider can help upfront with defining those policies. Through their experiences over time and with many companies and their mobile policies, they know what constitutes efficient mobile device use, what lies outside of the bounds of typical usage, and what kinds of mobile policies will be effective for a company in achieving its desired goals.

Once you have well-defined, clear policies in place, you should also look for an MMS provider that's capable of monitoring mobile devices for usage that lies beyond policy limits. An effective way to do this is through a dashboard-type of reporting and alerting that can tell you at a glance which users have exceeded which limits.

For example, an effective MMS system might be set up to highlight devices in yellow that have excessively long calls, or in red if their data consumption is outside of policy. Such a system can help you visually see when there's a problem, and take whatever corrective action, if any, is needed. This, in turn, helps both to control costs and to potentially improve worker efficiency -- so be sure, when you're sourcing MMS providers, that those kinds of strong monitoring capabilities are part of the package.

Analytics

Be sure an MMS provider can give you the analytics and the understanding you need to make your mobile usage as efficient and cost-effective as possible

It's always important to know where your company's mobile initiatives stand in terms of costs and usage. It's possible, for example, that you're paying every month for cellular data capacity that is never used -- or even for extra devices that are not used. It's also possible that you may be overpaying for cellular plans, are not optimally making use of connection pooling, or are simply not using your plans in the most efficient way.

For those reasons, you should seek out an MMS provider that can show you all of the analytics you need to make sound business decisions about your mobile device fleets. You should, for example, be able to see the projected charges for your current mobile bill cycle, as well as be able to compare those charges against prior billing cycles so that you can see at a glance if current usage is out of line with your norms. Further, you should also be able to break out those charges by department, by business unit location, and even by carrier, you're using multiple networks, to give you a clear idea of where your various costs are being generated.

Knowing where your costs are being generated, along with the usage that's generating those costs, is of course an absolutely essential part of keeping those costs under control -- so be sure that an MMS provider not only can give you those kind of analytics, but also provide you the support to truly understand and act on those analytics.

Device Retirement

Be sure an MMS provider manages devices across the entire lifecycle, including what happens when a device is due for retirement or put out of service

All mobile devices will eventually come to the end of their lifecycle, be it through breakage or the fact that they become too outdated to efficiently accomplish the tasks for which they're needed. But just because a device is at the end of its life doesn't mean that it should simply be tossed into a trash or recycle bin: Doing so can be bad for the environment, for your security, and for your costs.

Rather, look for an MMS provider that has experience with the end-of-life stage of the mobile device lifecycle. The MMS provider should be able to track the lifecycle of all of your fielded devices, let you know which are due for retirement, and track for you which devices have been received for replacement, as well as those that should have been received but weren't, thus eliminating the

security threat posed by devices that were not properly handed in.

Furthermore, after receiving a device that's ready for retirement, the MMS provider should be able to wipe it and restore it to factory default settings, ensuring that no company data or connectivity authentication is left on the device. Once that's done, the MMS provider should work to get you the best possible ROI on your old device by selling it, if possible, for the best price -- and if it's not salable, the MMS provider should also work with responsible recyclers who ensure that the lead, mercury, arsenic, and other toxins in a mobile device are handled in a safe and environmentally-friendly manner.

By choosing an MMS provider who can handle all of the above at the end of the device lifecycle, you'll be doing good for the environment -- and also improving your company's security, as well as potentially recouping some of the costs of the device itself.

Conclusion

The mobility lifecycle encompasses everything, from pre-implementation planning to proper device disposal at end of life. It's a lot to manage, whether you're a small company with few resources to do so or a large company with thousands of devices -- and that's why companies and organizations of all sizes choose to gain efficiencies and reduce costs by using a managed mobility services provider.

Because a full-featured MMS provider will be involved with your company throughout the mobile lifecycle, it's important to choose one that has all of the capabilities -- device procurement and provisioning, technical support, device and user monitoring, analytics, and device end-of-life retirement -- detailed above.

But it's also important to choose an MMS provider with experience, and who will actively engage with you in making your mobility initiative efficient and profitable. At Wireless Watchdogs, we have many years of successful experience as an MMS provider -- and with a client retention rate of well over 90%, you can be sure that we're doing all of the right things for our clients. If you'd like to learn more, be sure and visit www.wirelesswatchdogs.com and check out everything that we have to offer -- and you'll be on the way to reduced costs, increased efficiency, and a better bottom line for your business.

Ready to learn more about the benefits of a managed mobile solution?

Please contact us for more information about how Wireless Watchdogs can help make your future less costly and more secure.

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