



# Liberating productivity: how to mobilise the desktop

*There is a new generation out there: Generation AO, or Generation Always On. Membership of this generation is not defined by birth date, rather it is an attitude and a way of life. As mobile devices become more sophisticated, more of us are joining the ranks of Generation AO and the enterprise needs to keep up. **Clare Coulson** spoke to three experts about the different options for taking the enterprise mobile...*

**W**e are hooked on information and interaction. Hardly a conversation goes by when we don't reach for our phones or tablets to Google something, check our email and social networks, or add something to our to-do lists. It's a world of instant action and immediate results so it is no wonder that we become frustrated when work applications can't support this mobile lifestyle.

The mobile revolution and the BYOD culture have triggered a new working culture and level of productivity that can be transformative. The CEO's panacea is a world where staff are always available and able to take action from wherever they

may be whether they are at home, in an airport lounge or in a lovely green field! Seriously though, for the work-anywhere concept to become reality organisations need to mobilise the desktop and extend it beyond simple email and calendaring capability. Here we speak to three experts in workforce mobilisation; Dimension Data, which was recently appointed to the all-of-government desktop-as-a-service panel in New Zealand; Jade Software which uses its Joob platform to deliver digital experience to the enterprise; and Xero which has proven its mobile credentials time and again. »

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**James Walls,**  
technology  
manager at  
Dimension Data  
New Zealand



Virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) has given organisations the freedom of flexibility. Using VDI employees can work in their preferred style, while being supported by the business. In essence, VDI is desktop infrastructure hosted at a central server and distributed to multiple autonomous virtual machines each running a desktop operating system. Providing staff have got access to the company's network (usually via the internet), they can log in to their corporate desktop at any time, on any device, and from anywhere. Cost management and centralisation used to be the central driver for VDI, but now workforce flexibility is a powerful motivator.

#### **IT ALL BEGINS WITH BYOD**

Productivity benefits and cost-savings on hardware make 'bring your own device' or BYOD compelling from a business perspective, while employees are satisfied that they're using the device they prefer and work on most efficiently. It's a win for the worker and a win for the employer. But policy issues do need to be addressed first, and that's why some companies are looking at the 'choose your own device' (CYOD) option as a work-

around - limiting the range of devices to help them better manage their overall systems and security.

There's also the issue of insurance. If we are using our home device for work, we could be seen as using it for work purposes and therefore may not be covered under our home insurance policy. Plus there's the moral obligation: should businesses be (potentially) exploiting their workers in terms of them buying their own equipment, or should they be paying an allowance?

Aside from the inherent benefit of BYOD, VDI has real cost efficiencies from an infrastructure management perspective. With all updates managed by your IT department from one core system, which then filter out remotely to each individual desktop, you achieve an efficiency gain for the business as a whole.

#### **THERE ARE SOME LIMITATIONS**

VDI is not a universal panacea for IT. It works well for many organisations where as much as 80 percent of their fleet may be able to use VDI as the primary solution. For others, this may be as low as 20 percent. Either way, VDI cannot be the only solution.

We don't have ubiquitous broadband internet connectivity in New Zealand and because VDI relies on a connection back to the central server, it isn't great if your employees are located where they can't be connected.

The technology is also still not quite up to scratch with regard to streaming full screen video, so IP telephony with video, or unified communications with video (e.g. Skype), is problematic unless you choose some very specific devices.

#### **TOWARD THE CLOUD-BASED DESKTOP**

Consumption management highlights an issue with VDI and a benefit of desktop-as-a-service (DaaS) which may see the cloud-based alternative

supersede the former. In fact many companies see VDI as a first step on their journey to the cloud.

When you first set up VDI, you must buy at scale to prepare for when you're going to be the busiest. Not many organisations can be confident that their infrastructure needs will remain steady, which is where DaaS comes into play.

DaaS solutions, like Dimension Data's 3D Workspace, allow for scalability and real cost-efficiencies. It's a consumer-based VDI model that allows you to scale up and down by virtue of being multi-tenanted in the cloud, operating as part of a larger cloud infrastructure. Working on the ebbs and flows of multiple clients at once, it's a benefit of scale that allows aggregation of demand to provide sufficient capacity at all times - basically, you only pay for the resources you need and only when you need them. DaaS also brings the price benefits of economies of scale, and reduces capital expenditure, for large and small companies alike.

We like to say that DaaS gives your business better control, better flexibility for your people to choose their moment of work, and better value for all involved.

**David Lindsay,**  
managing director for  
Jade Software



Today employees expect to bring their own smartphones to work, intending to increase productivity and mobility. This BYOD trend may increase enterprise mobility, but it also raises associated complexities. Managing this scenario is the number one IT priority for most companies here in New Zealand and overseas. A report by IDG showed that 65 percent of employees who use personal mobile devices for business also experience greater productivity. No longer are companies able to dictate what type of technology is used by their employees.



So what are some of the ways in which you can effectively mobilise your workforce and provide a mobile desktop experience for your employees?

### **START WITH A DIGITAL STRATEGY AND ROADMAP**

At the start of your journey, it is important to develop a digital strategy and roadmap outlining how you will deliver an engaging mobile experience which provides the digital products and services that add value and will drive business results. Your focus then turns to rolling out the selected digital solutions that deliver on this vision and result in streamlined business processes and improved employee productivity.

### **INTEGRATE**

Ensure your employees get the same quality of access to information in real time so that key tasks that can be done on the desktop are equally possible on mobile devices through the integration of back-end enterprise systems and front-end digital applications. This means having applications that are innovative, intuitive, and developed specifically for each workforce – one size does not fit all!



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CHRIS RIDD, MD, XERO

### DESIGN INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

We often see clients that want enterprise solutions that allow workers to manipulate data as they would at their desk between different screens and sources – however it is one thing to access client emails, ERP, CRM, or financial databases using a keyboard at a workstation and another to do the same on a smartphone with one small screen. Designing innovative solutions allows you to work out how best to re-engineer the desktop experience so checking, for example, lists of leads / qualifiers and budgets on one screen becomes clear and easy to use.

### SECURE AND RESILIENT

Employees on the move should be able to work from their mobile devices even when out of network range. This means an application needs to hold data while offline with the data being sent when the phone re-establishes a network connection. All the data stored on the device and transmitted over the network should be encrypted, and provision also needs to be made for handling lost and stolen devices.

### PROVIDE GREAT USER INTERFACES

Lastly the key to a productive mobile desktop experience is being able to deliver

brilliant interfaces and digital experiences for all employees. To do this, it pays to use the full range of user interface options available. Any integrated enterprise-to-mobile platform should provide a library of options to allow applications to be linked to a common server – including HTML5 and JavaScript if an organisation wants a single user interface to work across many different mobile devices.

Integrating enterprise systems with mobile devices requires an innovative approach that is designed with the end user in mind so they can get the best out of a range of applications that they need to use day to day.

**Chris Ridd,**  
managing director  
for Xero



As an increasing number of businesses take advantage of doing business in the cloud, inevitably we start asking: “what’s next on the horizon?”

The short answer is: a vast and growing ecosystem of apps. Since the early days of games, ring tone editors, calculators and so on, apps have progressed in leaps and bounds. Today, it’s safe to say there’s an app for just about everything.

There are, however, always people inspired to explore new ideas and smarter ways of working and this has led to the creation of the add-on ecosystem. This new way of sourcing and plugging together software means that integration is done vendor-to-vendor, eliminating integration headaches for customers.

At Xero we are embracing this brave new world, forging relationships with companies on the cutting edge of developing apps and add-ons for

small business owners and their financial partners. The Xero API (Application Platform Interface), which launched in 2008, is a digital platform that enables all kinds of add-ons to connect seamlessly to the Xero platform.

In the context of a SME business owner, an app ecosystem enables them to tap into add-on apps that help them work even smarter. So, at the end of a job, a plumber, for example, can sit in his (or her) work ute and invoice for it immediately via an online business platform in the cloud, using their mobile. He/she can also use add-ons, like Shoeboxed, which scans receipts, invoices and documents for secure storage online, or Receipt Bank which converts the information on paper receipts into usable data without any data entry, to make doing admin even easier wherever they are.

The add-on ecosystem takes the hassle out of software updates and integration headaches for SMEs (and their accountants or bookkeepers). Simplified IT, is the mantra behind this new way of working, and the key to success comes down to a seamless integration of apps and add-ons into one easy-to-use platform.

If you are a business-owner or manager seeking to improve efficiency, reduce operating and IT costs (and headaches), the world of apps, add-ons and cloud computing is a sure fire way to go. It not only enables you and your team to connect with data, anywhere, anytime, it gives you the capacity to create a powerful online platform of software, without the hassles of managing different systems, upgrades, backups and firewalls.

Making the move into the cloud, and into the world of apps and add-ons, needn’t be a daunting exercise. Do your homework: talk to other users, read the wealth of content online, try free demos, chat with companies and colleagues, and immerse yourself in the app ecosystem to see what kind of add-ons you can use to enhance your existing digital platform. ■