

Where the Money Is in **MOBILITY**

INTRODUCTION

If you're not already convinced that mobility is an enormous market, just consider these facts:

- Purchases of mobile devices will grow by nearly 20 percent worldwide in 2013 and account for almost 57 percent of IT industry growth, according to IDC.
- Global outlays on mobility by SMBs will rise 14 percent in 2013, according to analyst firm Techaisle LLC.
- Also from Techaisle: By 2016, mobility will be an \$85 billion worldwide SMB opportunity.

Numbers like that help explain why so many channel pros are eagerly searching for the speediest and most profitable ways to tap into all that spending. This white paper seeks to provide preliminary answers.

CONTENTS

COVER

Introduction

PAGE 2

Mobile Management

Challenges

The masterIT Approach to Mobile Management

Next Steps

Developing Mobile Apps

Challenges

PAGE 3

Mobile Add-ons and Extensions

Development Options

Distribution Options

Next Steps

Developing Mobile Websites

Challenges

PAGE 4

Development Options

Next Steps

Reselling Mobile Carrier Services

Challenges

End-to-End Service Providers

Conclusion



MOBILE MANAGEMENT

As smartphones and tablets increasingly outnumber PCs and laptops in many offices, the need for mobile management services is rising fast. Indeed, 59 percent of SMBs have smartphones on their network already and 53 percent support tablets, according to data from IT community and systems management vendor Spiceworks Inc.

And it's not just mobile devices that must be managed. SMBs need help provisioning and securing the billions of mobile apps running on those devices too. In fact, the number of "malicious and high-risk" apps on the Google Android platform alone will rise from 350,000 in 2012 to 1 million in 2013, according to security software maker Trend Micro Inc.

Best of all, relatively few MSPs and VARs offer mobile management services at present, enabling "first movers" in this market to stand apart from competitors and give clients one less reason to take their business elsewhere.

CHALLENGES

Still, channel pros looking to add mobile management services must cope with considerable hurdles, including these:

- **Buying and learning new tools.** Before they can manage mobile devices and applications, most MSPs must make up-front investments in new software. Simply deciding which systems to use, moreover, can be tricky. More and more remote monitoring and management (RMM) vendors now offer mobile device management (MDM) modules or add-ons, but standalone tools from vendors such as Good Technology, MobileIron, and Zenprise often have stronger functionality.
- **Pricing.** MSPs who provide mobile management services disagree on the best way to charge for them. Should rates be based on the number of mobile devices under management, the number of mobile users, or neither.
- **Margins.** Most experienced providers of mobile management services agree that the rewards have more to do with competitive advantage and customer loyalty than margins, which tend to be slim.

THE MASTERIT APPROACH TO MOBILE MANAGEMENT

MSP masterIT LLC, based in Memphis, Tenn., offers a branded mobile management service called masterPad. The solution provides soup-to-nuts support across the entire mobile device lifecycle, from usage policies and rollout to customization, integration, security, service desk assistance, and even recycling.

Here's how Michael Drake, masterIT's chairman and CEO, addressed each of the challenges discussed above:

- **Tools.** Rather than use a standalone system it would have to purchase and learn separately, masterIT relies on the MDM functionality now available from its RMM vendor. "It really helps us manage everything through a single pane of glass," Drake notes.
- **Pricing.** masterPad is a standard component of masterIT's managed service bundles, so it's not priced separately. The company simply raised the rates on its bundles just enough to cover the MDM licensing fees charged by its RMM provider.
- **Margins.** As its pricing strategy makes clear, margins played little role in masterIT's decision to add mobile management services. "We don't view MDM as a huge moneymaker," Drake explains. "For us, it's more a competitive differentiator and an extension of the help-desk services we provide to our clients."

NEXT STEPS

1. **Create an in-house "mobility lab."** You can't provide mobile management services until you're at least somewhat familiar with mobile form factors and platforms. The best way to gain that knowledge is to buy as many devices from as many different manufacturers as possible and spend time using them.
2. **Choose and learn mobile management tools.** If your RMM vendor offers support for MDM, start there. You can decide whether to replace or augment that functionality with a standalone tool once you have some real-world MDM experience under your belt.
3. **Build mobile management into your managed service bundles.** That will make pricing a little easier while also increasing the attractiveness and value of your offerings.

DEVELOPING MOBILE APPS

Writing mobile apps can help you strengthen client relationships and distinguish yourself from competitors every bit as effectively as managing them.

CHALLENGES

First, however, you must overcome some obstacles, such as:

- **Truly new ideas are rare.** If you're hoping to make big money selling a hot new mobile app to the general public, you might want to think again. There are hundreds of thousands of apps available on mobile marketplaces these days, and the odds are good any concept you come

up with has already been tried.

- **Distribution can be a headache.** The most common means of distributing mobile apps is through public storefronts like iTunes and Google Play. Getting an app listed on those sites takes time, though, and requires that you share revenue with the storefront operator.
- **Margins.** The mobile apps market is a volume business with low margins. You'll need to make a lot of sales before seeing any meaningful impact on your balance sheet.

MOBILE ADD-ONS AND EXTENSIONS

Issues like those explain why most channel pros developing mobile apps focus on privately distributed solutions that add mobile functionality to existing systems or serve targeted, industry-specific needs. Here are some good examples:

- Apps that provide mobile access to content stored in on-premises collaboration systems like SharePoint
- Apps that provide mobile access to line-of-business solutions without mobile features of their own
- Apps tailored to the unique needs of salespeople, lawyers, doctors, or others

Though selling such systems is unlikely to generate much money, deploying, integrating, and training people to use them are all potentially lucrative sources of project work. Offering mobile apps can also increase your "stickiness" with existing clients and help you land new ones. In fact, some MSPs use mobile apps to establish relationships with new customers before getting them on a managed service contract.

DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

There are two main ways to develop mobile apps:

1. **Do it in-house.** If you already have the required coding skills, handling development yourself is usually the most affordable way to go. If you don't have the relevant know-how, you'll need to spend time learning the basics of XAML and C#. Alternatively, you can use commercial tools like MonoTouch, from Xamarin Inc., or free open source frameworks like PhoneGap to simplify development.
2. **Outsource it.** If acquiring new development skills doesn't interest you, consider hiring a contract programmer instead. It will raise up-front costs for your mobile project but probably get your product to market faster. You can find experienced contract developers at sites like these:
 - www.odesk.com
 - www.elance.com
 - www.guru.com

DISTRIBUTION OPTIONS

There are three ways to sidestep the hassles of distributing apps via public storefronts:

1. **Use the private distribution option on public storefronts.** Apple, Google, and Microsoft all offer options for publishing apps privately via their public storefronts. For more information, see:
 - Apple: <http://ow.ly/huriJ>
 - Google: <http://ow.ly/hurlW>
 - Microsoft: <http://ow.ly/huron>
2. **Distribute directly to users.** The major mobile platform vendors also offer procedures for distributing apps to end users without using a storefront at all. For more information, see:
 - Apple: <http://ow.ly/huriJ>
 - Google: <http://ow.ly/hurva>
 - Microsoft: <http://ow.ly/hursq>
3. **Use a private app storefront.** Companies like Verizon and AppCentral offer private storefronts that look and function like public ones, but are available only to users you authorize. For more information, see:
 - AppCentral: www.appcentral.com
 - Verizon: <http://ow.ly/hurIw>

NEXT STEPS

1. If you will be developing in-house, start mastering languages and tools.
2. If you will be outsourcing development, hire a contractor.
3. Identify one existing solution many of your customers use that's in need of mobile extension, and begin development.

DEVELOPING MOBILE WEBSITES

Developing mobile websites may be as big an opportunity for channel pros as developing mobile apps, given facts like these:

- More people globally will access the Internet via mobile phones than via PCs by the end of this year, according to analysts at Gartner Inc.
- Just 34.5 percent of U.S. SMBs have a mobile website at present, according to analysts at SMB Group Inc.

Channel pros can also supplement the money they make creating mobile websites with hosting and management services.

CHALLENGES

Developing mobile websites takes skills and tools new to many VARs and MSPs. In addition, IT providers don't have this market to themselves. Full-time, professional website designers are actively selling mobile websites to SMBs as well.

DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

There are three viable ways to enter the mobile website development space, some of which will sound familiar:

- 1. Do it in-house.** If you're new to website development, you can familiarize yourself with languages and frameworks like HTML5, CSS3, and JavaScript, or streamline the development process with the help of tools such as:
 - Joomla (www.joomla.org)
 - Mobify (www.mobify.com)
 - Adobe Dreamweaver (www.adobe.com)
- 2. Outsource it.** You can also hire a website development firm or contractor to build sites for you. The pros and cons will be about the same as with mobile apps: Your new service will probably get up and running faster but may cost you more to launch.
- 3. Become a mobile website reseller.** Perhaps the easiest path into the mobile website market is to partner with a mobile website vendor. Numerous makers of online platforms for turning traditional websites into mobile ones have reseller programs with discounted pricing. Some even offer white-label branding that allows you to attach your own name and logo to their service. For more information, see:
 - DudaMobile (www.dudamobile.com/duda-reseller-program)
 - Onbile (www.onbile.com/resellers/)
 - mobiFriendly (www.mobifriendly.com)
 - MotiPLY (www.motiPLYpartners.com)

NEXT STEPS

1. Choose which development option you'll use.
2. Hone your skills by creating a mobile version of your own website.
3. Find a client willing to serve as a test site.

RESELLING MOBILE CARRIER SERVICES

Your clients already buy PCs and servers through you. Why not supply their mobile devices and voice and data plans as well? You'll not only take home a sliver of the \$1.2 trillion that mobile carriers collected in 2012, according to analyst firm Ovum, but please your customers by providing one-stop shopping for all of their hardware needs.

CHALLENGES

You'll also have to clear these significant barriers, however:

- **Confusing plan and device information.** Every carrier has different offerings with different rules and specifica-

tions. Resellers must either master all of those intricacies or limit customers to one or two options.

- **Complex commission schemes.** When and how resellers collect commissions also varies from carrier to carrier. Generally speaking, though, you can expect payments to begin arriving well after the sale and in small recurring amounts.
- **Third-party billing.** Mobile carriers usually insist on handling customer billing themselves, rather than through their partners.
- **Risk of channel conflict.** Some channel pros worry about mobile carriers selling directly to their clients.
- **BYOD is reducing demand.** In case all of that wasn't enough, thanks to the rising popularity of "bring your own device" policies, a declining share of SMBs are providing mobile devices or plans to their employees.

END-TO-END SERVICE PROVIDERS

One way around many of those issues is to partner with a provider of end-to-end mobile solutions such as distribution giant Tech Data Corp. with its TDMobility offering and Equus Computer Systems. As intermediaries between mobile carriers and resellers, such companies provide centralized access to a range of mobile devices and plans as well as streamlined billing, activation, asset tracking, and management. See:

- TDMobility (www.techdata.com/tdmobility)
- Equus Computer Systems (www.equuscs.com/mobile-solutions-network)

CONCLUSION

Mobility is one of the hottest markets in IT. Channel pros who fail to join in are both missing out on added revenue and rendering themselves less relevant to their customers. This white paper provides practical advice for capitalizing on four of today's top mobile opportunities. Newcomers to mobility should make pursuing at least one of them a top priority for the current year.

This white paper is based on input from:

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- **Kelly White**, principal, Silvertail Software LLC (www.silvertailsoftware.com)

WHERE THE MONEY IS IN MOBILITY GAME PLAN

Make your move into mobility by taking these suggested actions. Details about all of them are available in our “Where the Money Is in Mobility” white paper on the preceding pages.

IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS ...

1. Create and stock an in-house “mobility lab.”
2. Begin researching mobile management tools.
3. Decide which of these additional mobile services you will eventually deliver:
 - Mobile app development
 - Mobile website development
 - Reselling carrier services

IN THE NEXT 60 DAYS ...

1. Select mobile management tools.
2. Get your technicians trained on mobile management tools.
3. Decide on a mobile management pricing strategy.
4. Build mobile management into your managed service bundles.
5. If you will be developing mobile apps:
 - Start learning languages and tools or hire an outsourced contractor.
 - Identify one existing solution many of your customers use that’s in need of mobile extension, and begin development.
 - Research distribution options.
6. If you will be developing mobile websites:
 - Research in-house development vs. outsourcing vs. becoming a mobile website reseller.
 - Decide which option you will use.
7. If you will be reselling mobile carrier services, research end-to-end service providers.

IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS ...

1. If you will be developing mobile websites, hone your skills by creating a mobile version of your own website.
2. If you will be developing mobile apps or websites, find a client willing to serve as a test site.

IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS ...

1. Revisit and refine mobile solution pricing, based on what you learned about delivery costs during test deployments.