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Top Five Benefits of Modernizing and Mobilizing Enterprise Applications

Employees are more productive using enterprise applications that have been modernized to run on their phones and tablets with a first-class user experience.

TOP FIVE BENEFITS OF MODERNIZING AND MOBILIZING ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS

Enterprise desktop and web applications were designed for employees sitting in front of their computers, and were often created and customized for the specific needs of a company. That frequently means, unfortunately, cumbersome workflows that can take 10 or 15 screens to carry out a routine task.

Enterprise software is designed around functionality—not around tasks or workflows. There's rarely an application, for example, designed to create a new customer account or let a manager quickly approve pending orders or customer requests. Instead, there's a general-purpose customer management application or an order management application that must be laboriously navigated in order to execute routine tasks.

What does that look like? Enterprise software has multiple screens designed around a fixed display size, a keyboard and a mouse. It often includes drop-downs that aren't touch-enabled, and don't work on a mobile device; and frequently, data must be entered multiple times. It's a productivity disaster when the employee is in front of a standard PC. It's a nightmare or worse when employees try to work remotely or on a mobile device. This is often enabled through virtualization, which provides a frustrating user experience for mobile users—if it works at all.

THE ANSWER

Modernize those enterprise applications to focus on a more seamless experience for completing tasks and workflows, while also supporting mobile devices as well as desktop computers. Focus on commonly used tasks, and bypass all of those enterprise application screens. This will boost employees' productivity, and let them concentrate on what needs to be done, rather than on how the software requires them to work.

When it comes to mobility, that's how an increasing percentage of employees want to work anyway. They demand the flexibility of portable devices of their choice, as well as the rich user experiences, touch-enabled actions, sensors and notifications offered with smartphones, tablets and even wearables.

Plus, mobilizing enterprise applications boosts efficiency. Employees can work at a customer site on a laptop, from a coffee shop on a phone, or on the factory floor using a tablet, rather than handwriting notes to use when accessing the enterprise application later that day, or whenever they get back to the office.

Why modernize? We recently talked to hundreds of enterprise software developers and managers, and they shared their top five benefits to mobile-enabling their legacy enterprise systems. Here's what's driving their motivation for modernization.

2

1 IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AND SATISFACTION

There are two big challenges to employee productivity with enterprise applications: First, they are forced to use inefficient applications that include everything but the kitchen sink. Second, they are tied to a traditional user desktop experience with a traditional desktop computer that might be hard-wired to the network.

Employees want to focus on tasks and workflow, not on the screens envisioned by the enterprise application designer. Having a modernized application that is task-oriented, rather than screen-oriented, will let them handle their work more quickly, with less frustration.

Being able to manage workflows on a mobile device—including receiving and responding to notifications of pending tasks and immediate needs—will not only make the employee more efficient, but will also keep the task moving through the system, so that other employees and customers aren't left waiting. In addition, employees can be empowered to work wherever makes the most sense, making them more efficient and reducing delays in accomplishing tasks.

2 MODERNIZE FASTER AND MORE COST-EFFECTIVELY INSTEAD OF REPLACING

If the existing systems of record are inefficient and not built for a mobile workforce, why not replace them? It's a daunting proposition. Writing new business applications from scratch is complex, expensive and time-consuming. It's also unnecessary. Those monolithic applications already exist, are customized to the needs of the business and have the required functionality.

The better choice: Modern those applications with new front ends, which can be fast and inexpensive, especially when leveraging a modernization platform that already contains the capability to place a new task-oriented user experience in front of even the most complex Windows and web-based applications. Modernizing and mobilizing existing applications can take days instead of months; the process requires far less time from software architects and developers. It begins with understanding the users and what they need to accomplish. From there, workflows and user experiences can be fine-tuned for any device.

3 FULLY UTILIZE MODERN DEVICE HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE CAPABILITIES

The list of input and output capabilities in modern mobile devices and laptop computers is impressive—and is completely foreign to legacy enterprise applications. Those old multiscreen programs can handle mouse and keyboard input, and that's all. By contrast, modernized applications can leverage all of the capabilities of the employee's hardware, operating system and user experience, whether it's Apple's iOS, Google's Android or Microsoft's Windows. That means using a camera for photos or to scan bar codes, a microphone for voice notes or speech-to-text, GPS for location-based notifications, or a fingerprint reader for secure and easy access. Plus, phones, tablets and some laptops (particularly many models with Windows 8.x or Windows 10) have touchscreens, perfect for quick drawings or for collecting signatures on the glass.

Allowing employees to use all of the hardware capabilities and built-in functionality of their mobile devices boosts both productivity and user satisfaction, especially for younger workers who have become accustomed to using their mobile devices for just about everything. It's a win-win for user satisfaction and employee efficiency.

4 MEET STRINGENT NEW SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Every CEO, CFO, senior manager and general counsel is concerned about cybersecurity—and for good reason. Hackers, whether state sponsored, part of a criminal gang or simply malicious, are targeting major corporations and other organizations. Employees are falling for phishing emails and installing malware, no matter how much training they receive. This places the organization at risk for protecting its intellectual property and ensuring compliance with privacy and financial reporting requirements.

When employees access legacy applications through a modern front end, the existing security parameters are preserved and most of the time enhanced. All communications are encrypted, which may not be the case with some business software. Devices can be authenticated to ensure that only approved equipment can access the application. The user's location can be verified, and the device itself can be geo-fenced ("Is that office worker really trying to access the payroll system from halfway around the world? Access denied!"). In addition, user credentials can be authenticated using fingerprints, and tied into an organization's LDAP, Windows Active Directory or Kerberos system.

In short, modernizing an enterprise application using a state-of-the-art platform will enhance its security, reduce business risk and help ensure compliance.

5 SUPPORT MODERN BACK-END SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE CLOUD

Many enterprises are embracing the pay-as-you-go economics and near-unlimited scalability of cloud computing; resources can be utilized rapidly, and the cost of spooling up a new cloud server or database is an operational expense, not a capital investment. A state-of-the-art application modernization platform can take advantage of cloud computing, enabling new mobile or desktop-friendly apps that talk to both legacy on-premises software and newer cloud-based resources, including software as a service (SaaS) and infrastructure as a service.

Refactoring or re-engineering legacy applications to directly understand those new compute and database resources would be difficult or impossible without a near-complete rewrite. Beyond all the benefits discussed earlier regarding improving employee productivity and satisfaction with a superior user experience, modernization can allow critical business applications to work in modern architectures, embracing on-prem, cloud and hybrid data centers, and SaaS. In some instances, modernization may be the only practical way to proceed into the next phase of enterprise computing: the cloud.

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Despite today's mobile-first, cloud-first world, most organizations face a sizable challenge in modernizing and mobilizing their application portfolio. IT departments confront increased pressure to design, develop and deploy line-of-business apps for a vast array of mobile platforms. However, due to the time, complexity and cost associated, most organizations struggle to deploy meaningful apps.

With PowWow Mobile, your organization can eliminate business-IT friction and drive mobile productivity, enabling an anytime, anywhere workforce. The solution allows enterprises to rapidly modernize and mobilize their business-critical applications, disrupting the speed, complexity and economics commonly associated with delivering mobile business apps. For a fraction of the cost and time of traditional development, users can easily leverage the drag-and-drop visual editor, SmartUX Studio, to design and deploy personalized, intelligent and secure apps that run anywhere, on any device (PC, laptop, tablet, phone or watch) and any OS (iOS, Android, Windows 10 or HTML5).

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