

SMB Leaders Need A Mobile Productivity Strategy

Introduction

Information workers are mobile, meaning they require continuous connectivity to do their jobs, and expect their companies to provide connected solutions to help them do so. Workers at small- and mid-sized businesses (SMBs), defined in this profile as organizations with 20-499 employees, think that mobile collaboration solutions are important to their efficiency and productivity, and need safe, reliable access to those applications anytime, anywhere to excel in their jobs. SMB IT leaders know this and are mostly tying their mobility plans to enhancing communication and collaboration in their business. However, they're still missing key opportunities to provide employees tools that keep their workers connected.

SMB IT leaders can ensure employee productivity and effectiveness by deploying managed apps and networks. The current method – allowing employees to use apps freely from consumer app stores – exposes the business to risks from potentially unsecure and unreliable tools. Managed mobility solutions allow SMB IT departments to exert control over apps, ensuring employees have access to the best, most secure tools.

In June 2015, AT&T commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how US SMBs support employees with mobile devices and how satisfied employees are with current connectivity capabilities

SMB Workers Today Expect To Be Mobile-Enabled

Today's business environment requires employees be productive irrespective of their location.ⁱ So, IT leaders at SMBs need to give their employees tools that allow them to access information and communicate with colleagues and experts anytime, anywhere to better serve customers. SMB executives must realize that information workers:

- › **Believe they need to be mobile.** According to Forrester's Business Technographics Telecommunications and Mobility Workforce Survey, 2015, 44% percent of workers recognize that their company needs them to use mobile technologies to support their work with clients and customers (see Figure 1).
- › **Expect their company will provide mobile solutions.** Given many think their companies expect them to be mobile, 60% of workers demand their organizations provide them with the mobile technologies that they need to excel.

MOBILE COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGIES ARE IMPORTANT TO WORKERS

If you're going to put information and expertise at

employee's fingertips while they're on the move, you need reliable communication and collaboration applications. However, information workers use different devices in different settings for different purposes. So, while mobile collaboration apps are important, their importance is tied to the device employees use.

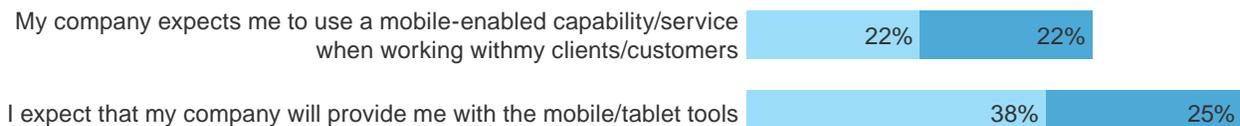
- › **Email is valued on both smartphones and tablets...** Email is a foundational collaboration technology in businesses. It's ubiquity – most people have access to an email account – make it the simplest way to transfer information. So, it's not surprising that smartphone (53%) and tablet (61%) users see it as important to making them productive and efficient (see Figure 2).
- › **...But most productivity and collaboration apps' importance is seen on tablets.** For the rest of the communication and collaboration portfolio, SMB information workers find these apps slightly more important on tablets than on smartphone. The bigger screen sizes, stylus pens, and connected keyboards allow employees to use these devices as adjuncts to or replacements for laptops.ⁱⁱ This makes it easier to use technologies like intranet portals, web conferencing clients, and team document sharing sites.

FIGURE 1

SMBs Expect Workers To Be Mobile-Enabled, Workers Expect Their Companies Will Provide Them The Tools To Do So

"Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements."

■ Strongly agree 5 ■ 4



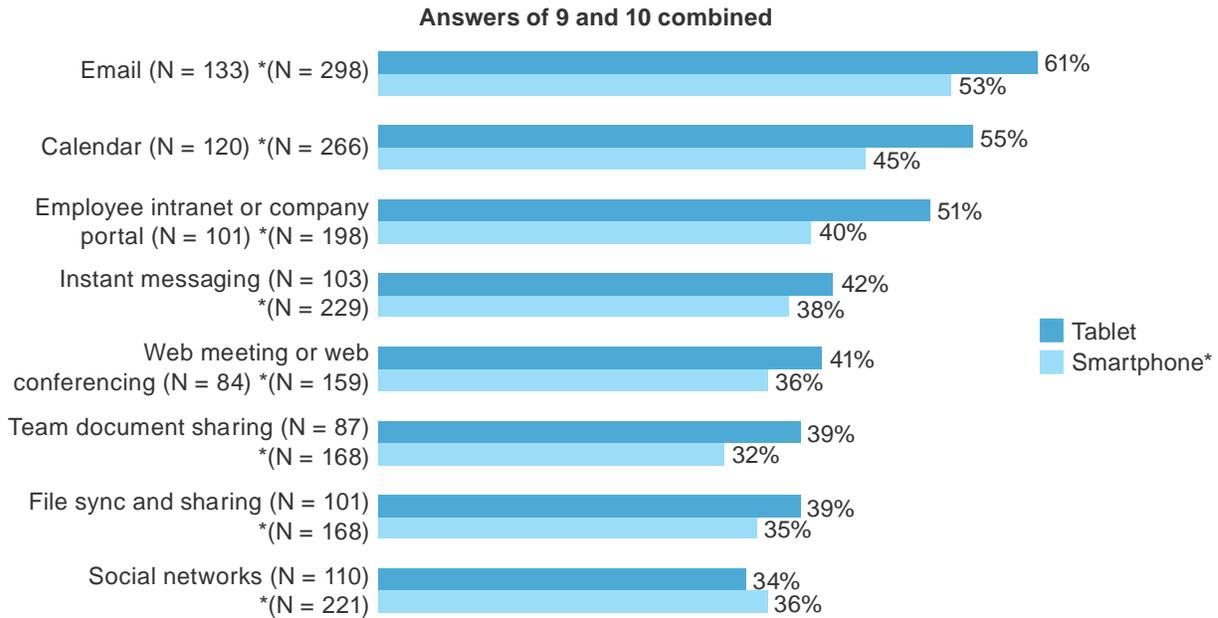
Base: 569 US SMB information workers (20-499 employees).

Source: Global Business Technographics® Telecommunications And Mobility Workforce Survey, 2015

FIGURE 2

Workers Think Mobile Collaboration Technologies Are Important For Efficiency And Productivity

“Thinking about the applications you use on a smartphone for work, how important are these tools to making you efficient and productive in your job?” (1-10 scale, where 10 = Very important)



Base: Variable US SMB information workers (20-499 employees).

Source: Global Business Technographics® Applications And Collaboration Survey, 2014

Keeping Employees Connected Is SMB IT Leaders' Top Priority

SMB decision-makers make providing mobility support a top priority: 55% indicate increasing this support is a critical or high priority (see Figure 3). To do this, SMB technologists are laying the groundwork by focusing on improving bandwidth and finding apps that naturally live outside the corporate firewall. Forrester's technographics data shows:

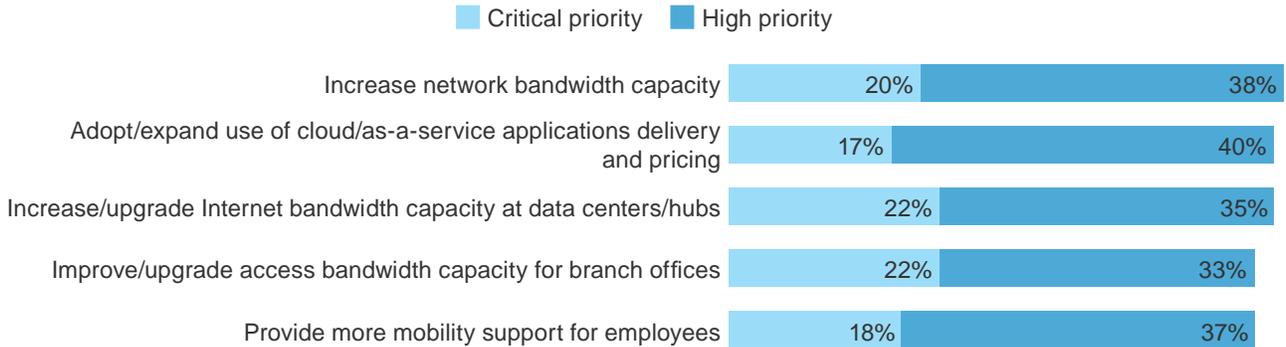
- › **Increasing bandwidth across the board is vital.** If SMBs are going to provide employees access anywhere, they have to ensure the free-flow of data. That's why SMBs are prioritizing increasing bandwidth capacity in their business (58%), as well as increasing bandwidth in the datacenters that deliver their applications (57%), and the branch offices their employees work at (57%).

- › **Bolstering cloud apps implementations is also essential.** Forcing mobile workers to use virtual private networks (VPN) to access information and expertise can bring business processes to a halt if the network is overloaded or if the wifi network the employee uses blocks VPN access. So, a majority of SMB decision-makers (57%) are looking to deploy cloud applications, which simplifies access by making apps available over the public internet.

FIGURE 3

Top Network And Telecom Priorities Include Increasing Bandwidth And Expanding Cloud Apps

“Which of the following initiatives are likely to be your company’s/group’s top strategic network and telecommunications priorities during the next 12 months?”



Base: 240 US SMB decision-makers (director+, 20-499 employees)

Source: Global Business Technographics® Networks And Telecommunications Survey, 2015

SMBS’ MOBILITY PURCHASING REFLECTS EMPLOYEE ASSESSMENTS OF MOBILITY’S IMPORTANCE...

Forrester surveyed 50 US SMB business owners and IT-decision-makers to understand the specific actions they are taking to put mobile technologies in the hands of their employees. Unsurprisingly, they are focusing on the same things their employees are: Over half of the survey respondents make employee mobility purchasing decisions as part of a larger collaboration or unified communications strategy (see Figure 4). This shows the need to put information and expertise in mobile workers’ hands, taking advantage of the myriad mobile collaboration tools cloud service providers pour into the market.

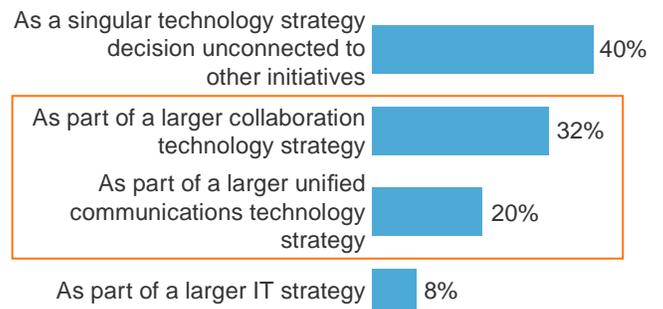
...BUT MANY LACK A STRATEGY FOR PROVISIONING APPLICATIONS

While many SMB organizations prioritize employee mobility support and have a strategic mobility purchasing strategy, they often lack an app provisioning strategy. This can lead to a lack of control over the applications workers are using, and impact both device safety and employee satisfaction with their mobile tools. Our survey shows:

FIGURE 4

Fifty-Two Percent Of Survey Respondents Make Employee Mobility Purchasing Decisions As Part Of A Larger Collaboration Or Unified Communications Strategy

“Which of the following best describes how your organization makes purchasing decisions related to worker/employee mobility?”



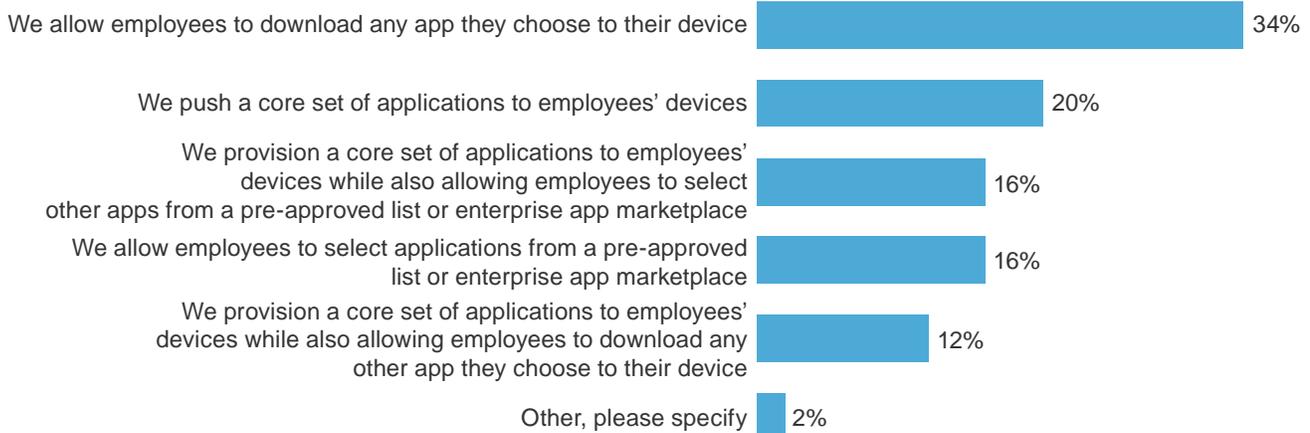
Base: 50 SMB Business owners, IT leaders responsible for mobile device support and network decisions for the organization

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of AT&T, July, 2015

FIGURE 5

Forty-Six Percent Of Survey Respondents Allow Employees To Choose Their Own Communication And Collaboration Mobile Apps

“Which of the following best describes how you currently distribute mobile communication and collaboration applications to worker’s devices today?”



Base: 50 SMB Business owners, IT leaders responsible for mobile device support and network decisions for the organization

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of AT&T, July, 2015

› **Many workers choose their own communication and collaboration tools.** Forty-six percent of the companies we surveyed allow workers to download any apps they choose on their mobile devices (see Figure 5). Without a strategy for provisioning applications, workers are forced to use mobile app marketplaces, and may not be able to find the solutions they need to collaborate and communicate effectively.

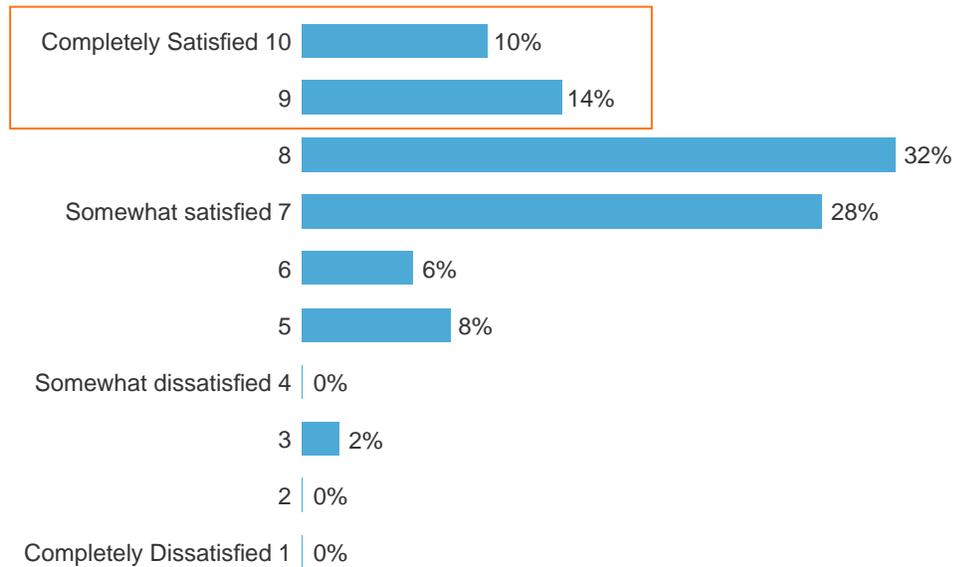
SMB Leaders Believe Their Strategies Have Room To Improve

Only 24% of SMB leaders think their employees are fully satisfied with how they can access and use communication and collaboration apps across their mobile devices (see Figure 6). One way to improve employee satisfaction is to make sure that the tools they use on their mobile devices are the best ones for the job. Providing employees with safe, easy-to-use, centrally managed, and always available mobile apps ensures SMB employees have the tools they need to better serve customers anytime, anywhere.

FIGURE 6

Only 24% Of SMB Leaders Think Their Employees Are Very Satisfied With How They Can Access And Use Communication And Collaboration Apps On Mobile Devices

“On a scale of one to ten, with one being completely dissatisfied and ten being completely satisfied, how satisfied do you believe your workers are with their ability to access and use enterprise communication and collaboration applications on all of their mobile devices?”



Base: 50 SMB Business owners, IT leaders responsible for mobile device support and network decisions for the organization

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of AT&T, July, 2015

Conclusion

SMB employees expect to be mobile-enabled by their companies, and SMBs are prioritizing employee mobility today. However, many SMBs lack a clear strategy to provide their employees with the mobile tools they need, creating a mobile experience that is less than optimal. Unless SMBs take steps towards clarifying their mobile landscape, they will fall short of employee expectations for mobility, as well as their own goals for mobile engagement.

Methodology

This Technology Adoption Profile was commissioned by AT&T. To create this profile, Forrester leveraged its Business Technographics Telecommunications And Mobility Workforce Survey, 2015, Business Technographics Applications And Collaboration Survey, 2014, and Business Technographics Networks And Telecommunications Survey, 2015. Forrester Consulting supplemented this data with custom survey questions asked of 50 US SMB organizations. Survey respondents included business owners/C-level executives and IT leaders responsible for their organization's employee mobile device support strategy. The auxiliary custom survey was conducted in July 2015. For more information on Forrester's data panel and Tech Industry Consulting services, visit www.forrester.com.

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Endnotes

ⁱ Providing mobile solutions that allow employees to access information and expertise gives employees freedom of action. This is important to creating great experiences for an organization's customers. Source: "How To Build A Technology Plan That Sustains Employee Engagement," Forrester Research, Inc., September 16, 2014.

ⁱⁱ Tablets are devices employees can use in transit, while standing, or for specific workflows. Information workers are adding peripherals like mice and keyboards to add flexibility and allow some employees to use tablets as laptop replacements. Source: "Global Tablet Forecast 2015 To 2018: Despite Market Volatility, Tablets Are Big In Business," Forrester Research Inc., July 13, 2015.