



Leveraging the flexibility of BYOD to power mobile workforce management

In the world of mobile workforce management, location tracking, messaging and managing employees in the field is critical to improving productivity. Traditionally, companies used to install telematics devices in vehicles that would help track where the employee was and also help the workers communicate with headquarters. In recent years, smartphone apps have also started to replace traditional telematics with a more comprehensive approach to workforce management.

So if you were asked to come up with a solution to track, message and manage your workforce, what would it be? I would probably come up with an App to do this. As the employee is in the field, the App would enable headquarters to track where the employee was, the employee could signal when they started and completed a job, messages could be sent via the App and a full record all the activities could be saved, reports generated and imported into payroll and other systems.

Now the App could be run on a smart-phone provided to employee by the company or it could be run on the employees personal phone.

Clearly, one of the options for companies is to provide employees with new smart-phones so that they can track usage and maintain the devices with software updates so that only company approved software can run on these devices. But this approach is expensive due to the cost of the devices itself but more importantly the costs of maintaining these devices. Therefore the choice of having employees use their own phones is gaining momentum today and BYOD is fast becoming standard operating procedure.

BYOD or Bring Your Own Device is a concept that initially just happened on its own but now it is turning into a policy that companies are jumping to adopt as quickly as they can. More and more companies are letting employees use their own personal phones at work. However, IT groups have long sought to have control over how employees use their personal smart-phones for company use, especially for security purposes. This is where we need to talk about best practices to implement a mobile workforce management solutions in a BYOD environment.

Coming back to the App, it could run on employees smart phones thus taking advantage of BYOD without needing huge capital expenditure from the company. However, would Apps running on field employees phones be the optimum solution for mobile workforce management?

It turns out that it is not really the most elegant and easy to deploy solutions out there. With Apps, there is still the need for IT to make sure the employees are on

the latest versions of the Apps with the most recent updates and they also need to train employees on how to use them effectively for the organization to leverage the benefits of good mobile workforce management. IT still has to invest in this process and manage the deployment of the App carefully to avoid missteps.

In the quest for a scalable and easy to deploy solution, there happens to be a new kind of solution that avoids the App route altogether. There is no App, you just use the phone, its in-built GPS sensors and its regular text messaging feature. It could be a smart phone or a regular phone. Consequently, there is no need to train employees on anything. You can have them use their own phone in BYOD fashion and be able to track employees in the field in real time, directing them with realtime dispatches and making them more productive, using features like time clocking to replace timesheets and feeding all this information into payroll for a seamless solution.

So what is the technology that enables this no-App solution? It is ingenious that it runs just on the cellular network that all our phones run on. It does this by piggy-backing on the emergency 9-1-1 cellphone location technology in every cellular network to provide employee location, and employees can use GPS-stamped text messages or IVR phone calls to check in and out of a job site, or start or stop their work shift. Lets call this a 100%-Cloud-based solution.

In addition to "active" mobile time-clocking, where you have your employees log in and out themselves, "passive" mobile time-clocking uses the clever combination of auto-tracking schedules and geo-fences at job sites to record employee time and attendance. In this scenario, the employee literally does nothing, and the system can automatically note when they go from job site to job site.

With 70% of small businesses following an informal or formal BYOD practice and workers preferring the least intrusive methods, this elegant 100%-Cloud-based solution is emerging as a worthy alternative to App-based solutions in the market today from a ease of adoption and scalability standpoint.

However, for this Cloud-based solution to gain a firm foothold in the mobile workforce management space, it has to work on cellular networks for all providers such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Sprint, Verizon and many more.

If you are an IT or HR manager looking to adopt a mobile workforce management solution, looking for solutions that complement the flexibility of your BYOD policy will enable you to create a robust and highly scalable solution for your fast growing mobile and contract workforce.

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