It’s time for organisations to embrace cloud first, mobile first strategies

By Paul James

With worldwide sales of mobile phones still surging – Gartner predicts they’ll reach 2.1 billion in 2019 – organisations that don’t have a mobile and cloud strategy will be left behind.

Not only are customers expecting services via their phone, but it’s becoming clear that simply offering mobile apps isn’t the best response.

‘Cloud first, mobile first’ is emerging as a new best practice because it can streamline all kinds of processes and transactions, and offer organisations and their customers a more complete service than mobile apps alone.

By combining cloud and mobile, organisations can access their enterprise software from any device, without needing to log in to a device-specific app that offers a cut-down version of the full system and requires frequent updates. This is true Software as a Service (SaaS), allowing users to simply sign on for a service they can use anywhere, any time and on any device.

Employees can move across different devices throughout the course of the day, with the data being accessed flowing seamlessly on to the device being used at the time. This means users can access the software as they move from using their mobiles on the train into work, to their desktop at work, or an iPad whilst out in the field, without needing to sync their device or download updates.

SaaS greatly simplifies the decision to adopt smart mobile devices throughout the organisation – because with the right software, this capability is provided as standard from the cloud.

Through SaaS, organisations no longer have to worry about running or updating their software and infrastructure - the software provider takes care of all of that for them, while also managing the security, compliance and risk. By removing the burden of maintaining its computing environment, the organisation can focus on business, rather than the supporting technology.

For example, Noosa Council has saved millions of dollars in capital expenditure, depreciation and in-house IT staffing costs by implementing enterprise SaaS.

"It is difficult enough to run a council without worrying about ageing servers, downtime and disaster recovery. None of this is our core business, so it makes perfect sense to outsource all of that to an expert while the council gets on with serving the Noosa Community," said the council’s CEO, CEO Brett de Chastel.

“This has freed up our operational IT team to focus on driving new functionality, rather than just maintaining infrastructure.”
The benefits of cloud first, mobile first

Enterprise systems are only as good as their data. So it follows that the easier it is to enter the data and use the system, the more organisations will achieve widespread adoption.

This approach of embracing consumer concepts saves time and money. For example, councils are using mobile systems to pinpoint the location of field workers. This helps them quickly allocate tasks to the most appropriate teams. Managers can approve leave, update budgets and check real-time financial information while away from their desks, allowing them to make faster, informed decisions and get more done each day.

Employees can easily request leave, enter timesheets, update personal details or check their payslips from anywhere and any device. This saves the payroll team a significant amount of time and effort by removing duplication of data entry and paperwork, while also making it a more user friendly experience for employees.

Adopting a cloud first, mobile first strategy helps organisations react quickly and improve services for their customers. Community workers visiting the homes of people in need are responding to family crises by searching for available shelters or short term housing on the spot. Mobile sales staff are answering customers' questions immediately, rather than calling back later.

It changes the conversation organisations are having with their customers. The conversation shifts to be about solving a customer's problem, rather than finding out information about the problem which should be available from previous discussions.

To compound this, we all expect everything to be available online. Developers want to be able to lodge development applications online and see them progress quickly. University students expect to enrol, manage tuition and pay course fees online. The current digital native generation entering the workforce has grown up using smartphones and expects to use them at work.

For organisations that want to take advantage of these opportunities, the time to adopt a mobile and cloud strategy is now.

Why cloud and mobile are a package

For an organisation to be truly mobile, users need to be able to connect their devices to back office systems. Businesses can deploy mobile apps, but this approach is not without its challenges. It might be difficult to find business apps that meet all requirements, and connecting the business systems and supplying apps to staff can be complex and time-consuming.

On premise software can also be complex to roll out on mobile devices. There are a number of considerations, including infrastructure, security and ongoing management of the system and updates.

Cloud simplifies roll-out to mobile, by enabling businesses to avoid the burden of paying for and maintaining servers, developers, support staff and other costs that go along with running back office
software. The organisation isn’t responsible for hosting the software, leaving it to concentrate on its core business.

True SaaS solutions will enable organisations to adopt emerging technologies such as smart mobile devices, and future proof their business.

That’s why a mobile strategy goes hand in hand with business SaaS. Combining the two cuts costs and makes it easier for organisations to run their business. It allows employees to reap the benefits of the ‘anywhere, anytime’ world, transforming the way they interact with customers and the community.

The future is a world built around cloud and smart mobile devices. It’s a simple, flexible and cost effective model of computing, and organisations need to embrace it now in order to future proof.

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About Paul James

Paul James is TechnologyOne's General Manager Cloud, driving the vision for TechnologyOne's cloud business to meet the needs of a rapidly growing customer base. Paul has more than twenty years' technical and management IT experience, and most recently, founded and operated a highly successful cloud business for the public sector.

About TechnologyOne

TechnologyOne (ASX:TNE) is Australia's largest enterprise software company and one of Australia's top 200 ASX-listed companies, with offices across six countries. We create solutions that transform business and make life simple for our customers. We do this by providing powerful, deeply integrated enterprise software that is incredibly easy to use. Over 1,000 leading corporations, government departments and statutory authorities are powered by our software.

We participate in only eight key markets: government, local government, financial services, education, health and community services, asset intensive industries, project intensive industries and corporates. For these markets we develop, market, sell, implement, support and run our preconfigured solutions, which reduce time, cost and risk for our customers.

For 28 years, we have been providing our customers enterprise software that evolves and adapts to new and emerging technologies, allowing them to focus on their business and not technology. Today, our software is available on the TechnologyOne Cloud and across smart mobile devices.

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