

What Enterprise Mobility Means For The Supply Chain

Enterprise mobility is an increasingly-relevant and ever-changing issue for today's manufacturers. What are some of the key trends driving the supply chain market for 2012, and what can manufacturers expect in the future? Grant Woolf, Vice President of Strategy and Business Development [TAKE Solutions, Inc.](#) [1], attempts to answer those questions and more in this exclusive interview with [Manufacturing Business Technology](#) [2].



Grant Woolf, TAKE Solutions, Inc.

***MBT:* There are a lot of things evolving when it comes to enterprise mobility; things are sort of changing all the time. How are companies adjusting to an ever-changing landscape over the course of the last several years?**

Woolf: What people are struggling with is that mobile devices are not set up to be managed by corporations. They are really set up to be managed by the individual that owns that device. In response, we're seeing two approaches. One is that traditional IT-centric approach where IT has standards and either supports a BlackBerry, an iPhone, or whatever, with these apps. Some other fairly large IT organizations say the reality which is coming is that people are bringing their personal devices into the enterprise and that we should let people use those devices. I wouldn't say the whole industry is going that way, but there is some strong evidence it is, or eventually that's where it's got to go just by the nature of the devices and what companies like Apple are making the market do. The

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

challenge with that is you're kind of living by Apple's rules and not IT's rules. You have a smart phone sitting there with access to email and corporate data. What's the best way to control that? Can a corporation push things like secure passwords that have to be changed on a regular basis? And it goes beyond just the email side of things. When you look at our collaborative apps, there are actually business implications to transactions. There are pretty big business events where you want to make sure the person executing that event is the person with the phone or the tablet in their hand. I'd say that's one of the biggest challenges.

MBT: Every company, no matter the industry, has different needs. When you mention the power is in the hands of these technology providers, does that make things hard in terms of the devices or applications not being flexible to the needs of a specific kind of company?

Woolf: I don't think it is so much a question of whether the functionality is there. I think the fear is whether the functionality is under control. Are we creating things where the user is creating one thing and the device is interpreting that as something else? Does the user really understand what they're doing with that application? These things have financial implications. It goes back to that lack of control by the corporate entity. Are corporations going to get into the business of developing their own applications for their end users? Absolutely. There are already companies out there that are doing that. The problem is that same user can go and download another application and do their work.

MBT: It is quite a competitive environment out there when it comes to some of these devices and applications. Do you feel that competitive atmosphere has only raised the bar in terms of what is being offered?

Woolf: I think some of that goes on, but I think you have to understand a bit about our perspective. Because we're in the supply chain space, we try to stay up on the latest and greatest of what devices can do. What we see is the devices are way ahead of the technology needed for the spaces we traditionally play in. So from a supply chain perspective, the devices aren't really the limiting factor. I'd say they are less of a factor than the applications sitting behind them. The supply chain, in general, is more on the conservative side.

MBT: Where do you feel enterprise mobility is headed in the future? Where do you see this going and some of the ways this is going to grow in terms of how companies use it to their advantage?

Woolf: I think one of the biggest things we are seeing a shift in is field apps. A lot of the applications that people use—and again, this is more of a supply chain side—the applications don't assume connectivity. Things like invoicing and re-ordering in real time are a challenge given that environment. As you see the wireless networks getting further built out, not just from a coverage standpoint, but from a network bandwidth standpoint, we see a lot of growth there. Those service people out in the middle of nowhere without service, that is eventually coming. That real connectivity is driving a lot of changes going forward. The other thing is the line between those personal devices and corporate devices is already highly eroded and will be gone. I

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think most people accept that. The question is how they will deal with it.

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