

# Making 'Mobility' More Than A Buzzword

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**A new kind of business mobility has emerged in today's high-tech business environment, and it differs greatly from the traditional definition of the concept. It's more complex, it's more fluid, and it has yet to be totally defined.**

It's funny how quickly and easily we can oversimplify certain concepts, even if they are ones we think we greatly understand. Sometimes all it takes is a little added perspective to alter our simple-minded view of a complex idea.

I was reminded of this fact during my time at PowerPlex 2012, an annual user conference put on by Plex Systems, a provider of cloud-based ERP for manufacturers. There Plex Systems CEO Mark Symonds described two different kinds mobile experiences that now exist for today's manufacturers and suggested that we've "only scratched the surface" of the value mobile devices can bring to manufacturing enterprises.

According to Symonds, plant floor mobility has long been vital to the success of manufacturers. Devices that allow companies to document plant floor data are hardly new to the manufacturing scene. It always has been, and it always will be, important for manufacturers to be able to use tools like scanners, for example, to get the relevant data in order to accomplish a plant floor task or goal.

But a new kind of mobility has emerged in today's high-tech business environment, and it differs greatly from the traditional definition of the concept. It's more complex, it's more fluid, and it has yet to be totally defined. This creates both a challenge and opportunity for manufacturers, who must determine how to leverage the latest and greatest mobile technology for the benefit of their companies.

Data will still be captured on the plant floor. Materials and parts will continue to be diligently tracked by manufacturers. But the ever-increasing prominence and continued evolution of smartphones, tablet devices, and the applications that run on them means businesses will have to reshape their definition of mobility or risk the consequences of failing to do so.

"With mobile right now, it's mostly about the device and not the other things the device can do," stated Symonds.

That, he said, must change.

According to Symonds, this "second mobility" involves managers and executives using mobile devices to participate in such critical business reviews and approvals such as purchases, changes, and sales orders from remote locations like a customer site, an airport, or even a golf course.

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The devices are everywhere these days, so it's sometimes easy to take them for granted. It's equally as easy to simply accept what these powerful gadgets already do for us. Upon initial consideration, the concept of "business mobility" seems pretty straightforward and easy to understand. However, "mobility" is just a buzzword without a corresponding application, and a mobile device is nothing more than an expensive gadget when it doesn't serve a useful purpose.

Many companies are already hard at work trying to maximize the business potential of these technologically-potent devices, but their work is far from over. They've accepted the challenge of trying to leverage these devices to solve real-world issues because they can imagine the possible payoff of all their hard work. In doing so, these companies have shown a willingness to think deeper about the concept of business mobility and the technology that makes it possible.

"It's about not only delivering information, but really tying in all the components of the device to it," said Symonds. "I think we've only scratched the surface. Now the device is here, so let's dream up things to do to solve real business problems."

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