

White Paper



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The Importance of Mobile Solutions

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Canon Solutions America

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Introduction

When music legend Pete Townshend wrote the song “Going Mobile,” which appeared on The Who’s 1971 album *Who’s Next*, he very likely had no idea just how expansive the definition of that phrase would eventually become. The term now refers to a business practice that reaps considerable financial benefits, makes the business process quicker and easier, and allows more people to access business content and workflow. Firms throughout the globe have gradually begun to embrace it as a new way of life because of the myriad benefits that it provides.

In fact, mobile technology—which today includes smartphones, tablets, cloud technology, GPS technology, and point-of-sale (POS) mobile credit card processing—is beginning to level the playing field for companies in the United States. Today’s U.S. businesses now have technologies and capabilities that, not too long ago, were available only to the top movers and shakers in the Fortune 500; these devices fit snugly in the palm of just about anybody’s hand.

Mobile technology has begun, and will continue, to revolutionize the way that business is conducted. Some organizations have been slow to embrace it, as is often the case with any significant change, but those that have gone mobile will eventually leave them behind in the dust if they continue to do so.

Business Trends around Mobility

Mobile is pervasive in business and is being driven by the consumerization of IT and others seeking a more efficient workflow. Upper-level management is constantly looking for more productivity from their management and knowledge-workers. Additionally, IT is looking at ways to better support the mobile environment from both ends, and is looking for help from all kinds of service providers. Research has shown that small businesses, in particular, have embraced the concept of going mobile. There are a number of intriguing trends and statistics regarding mobile technology.

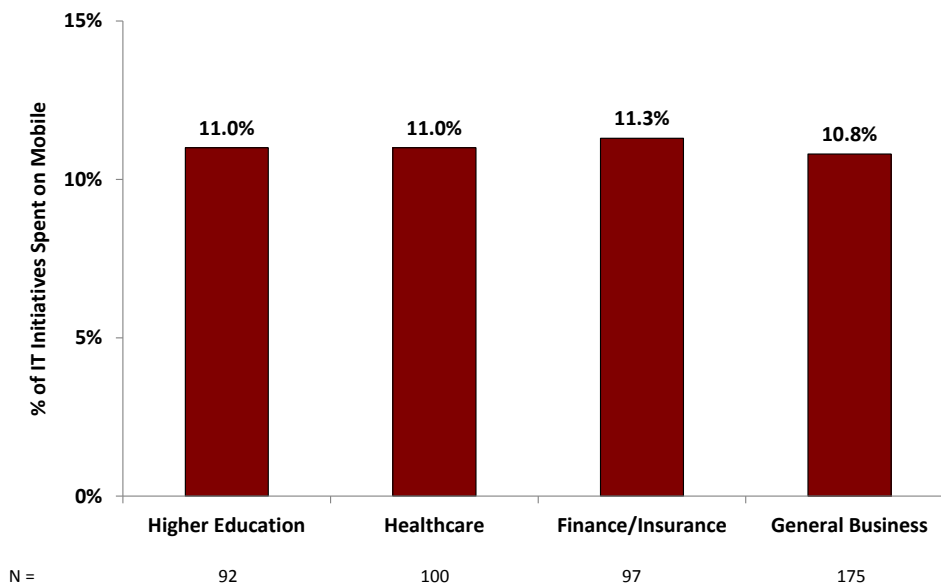
Some of the key findings recently discovered:

- Smartphones and tablets collectively save business owners about 2 billion hours annually.
- U.S. small-business owners save more than \$65 billion annually via their use of mobile technology.
- The number of small businesses using smartphone technology to conduct business rose from 85% in 2013 to 94% last year.
- Most small businesses that utilize smartphone apps to increase productivity report that they save an average of about \$6,000 annually.

- About 67% of small businesses that use mobile apps report that they save at least 150 hours annually.

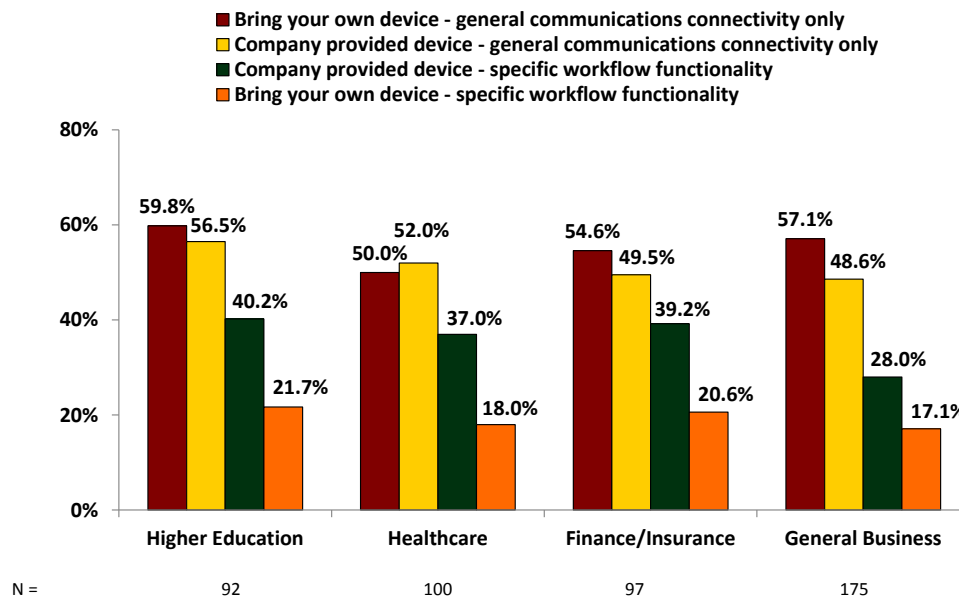
In its most recent study on mobile initiatives, InfoTrends surveyed 464 IT influencers and decision makers across multiple vertical markets (i.e., education, financial services/insurance, and healthcare) and in general business to get their thoughts on the importance of mobility. The study found virtually identical spending in terms of the percentage of the IT initiatives budget spent on mobile initiatives. Finance/Insurance led the way at 11.3%, with healthcare and higher education both at 11.0%, and general business at 10.8%.

Figure 1: Percentage of IT Initiatives Budget Spent on Mobile (Means)



The same InfoTrends survey found similar parity among the markets when it came to mobile initiatives that had been implemented or were being considered. Higher education held a slight edge in this area, which was broken into four categories.

Figure 2: Mobile Initiatives Considering/Implemented



Other key takeaways from the InfoTrends survey:

- Mobile security was most likely to be invested in for higher education, but higher ed also had one of the lowest ratings for printing from mobile devices.
- Healthcare had great concerns for patient record data with mobile solutions, and a high level of interest in mobile workflow.
- Financial services, along with higher education, had a great interest in being able to sign documents from a mobile device, while mobile print was rated fairly low.
- Healthcare and financial services were the most “already invested” in mobile platforms, such as security and device management.
- All verticals showed high levels of integration into their e-mail systems only.

Small businesses utilize mobile technology to help with a variety of functions. When asked how they use tablets, smartphones, and other forms of mobile technology, businesses said they do so primarily for social media marketing and e-mail marketing, although they also use them for advertising, mobile websites, mobile/tablet-based POS systems, and management of operations.

Advantages of Mobility

The financial rewards derived from mobile solutions, as mentioned above, can be plentiful, but there are a number of other advantages that can be derived from the use of these technological devices. InfoTrends believes that the following are among the most important:

- **Access data in context:** the ability to access pertinent data and content at the point of need. Examples would be accessing specific data about a product when talking to a client, or information relating to a particular machine on a factory floor. Benefits include better customer service, access to crucial knowledge for upskilling and safety, as well as greater productivity.
- **Availability:** the ability to use the device anytime, which allows the user to view content while traveling and provide updates instantly. Benefits include better productivity, employee choice in terms of when to view the content, and delivery of critical operational information.
- **Capture data in real time:** the ability to capture and upload data to systems at the point of recording. One example would be the ability to record factory or machine inspection data in real time directly to systems, rather than having to enter it later as a separate process via the desktop.
- **Geolocation:** the ability to log the position of the device and its user(s), including the use of interactive maps or the recording/logging of location-specific information. Benefits include process improvement and better productivity.
- **Improved user experience:** a streamlined experience compared to the desktop equivalent. An example would be a simpler interface for routine transactions and processes, such as the submission of holiday requests. Benefits include better engagement and higher adoption.
- **Inbuilt camera use:** examples include scanning data, such as quick response (QR) codes, to upload the information into systems, as well as recording videos and/or taking photos for knowledge sharing. Benefits include better productivity and process improvement.
- **Personal ownership of devices:** enabling access to corporate systems via employees' personal mobile devices. An example would be the introduction of "bring your own device" (BYOD) policies so that staffers use their own smartphones or tablets. Benefits include better engagement, higher adoption, and reduced costs.
- **Portability:** quite simply, the ability to use the device anyplace. A key benefit is the extension of digital communication and capability to all company employees, which leads to enablement and engagement.
- **Sharing:** the ability to share the device screen with others, such as customers or colleagues. Benefits include enhanced customer service, as well as knowledge transfer and learning.

- **System independence:** the ability to deliver functionality without impacting other systems (for example, delivering enterprise functionality more quickly than a desktop equivalent would do so).

As just one example of how mobile solutions can improve workflow, consider the traditional method of capturing documents while applying for a home mortgage—which can be slow, tedious, and labor-intensive. With today’s technology, a borrower can begin the process using a mobile app that integrates with existing loan organizations and third-party systems. The automated process is much quicker, reduces errors, simplifies the process of making any corrections that may be needed, and ultimately results in more accurate data. The lender also benefits from bolstered productivity, reduced annual labor, fewer mistakes, and lower costs—all with the use of detailed tracking and analytics that make the process more auditable and verifiable, and better for compliance. Photographing documents with a smartphone or tablet can also help expedite the process.

In another, more specific, example involving the lending process: Atlanta-based lender Kabbage, which specializes in loans for home-based businesses and online sellers, offers Android and iPhone apps that connect to the company’s platform and make it possible for a loan to be approved in as few as seven minutes.

“Our native iPhone and Android apps allow customers to access their funds and make payments remotely,” explained Kabbage Head of Technology Andrew Badstubner. “For example, a customer can take cash and have it delivered via PayPal or through their debit card immediately. They can then use these funds to make purchases that will grow their businesses.”

Asked if there is an eCommerce component to the process, Badstubner said, “There is, in the sense that customers can take cash and make payments.” He added that Kabbage has “several improvements” planned for its apps later this year.

Looking Ahead: Future Plans

For those companies thinking about moving forward with plans to go mobile, one of the first questions to ask is “What should we be looking for in a mobile services provider?”

In its survey of IT influencers and decision makers, InfoTrends learned that companies are primarily concerned with the security of mobile solutions (internally *and* externally). Vendors that are being considered for such solutions were most often chosen for their ability to integrate into other systems securely. InfoTrends agrees with the conclusion that security should be the top priority.

Other things to consider when looking at each vendor: How experienced is the professional services organization being considered? How comprehensive is the set of mobile solutions that it offers? These are also key factors to weigh before making a final decision.

InfoTrends' Opinion

“Going mobile” saves money, speeds up the business process, and allows more people to access business content and workflow. While companies across vertical markets and in general business have been embracing this trend quite gradually, InfoTrends sees the continued adoption of these solutions occurring more rapidly as companies seek efficiencies, better communications, and improved productivity from all sides of the business.

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This analysis was commissioned by Canon Solutions America to help business leaders better understand how today's technology can optimize their business processes and how they can benefit by adopting these proven best practices.

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