How technology will change how work gets done

By Brendan McAravey

17 Apr 2015

More people than ever before are leaving the corporate office behind to work remotely. To address this, the technology industry has had to move fast and, in just the past year, we have seen acquisitions, apps and services developed - all with a single goal: to help make people productive, securely, from anywhere.

Brendan McAravey

As the need to work remotely increases, technology will have to continue to improve.

Here are some of the changes we can expect to see in the coming months and years:

- **Employee requests for mobility are now a requirement**: For progressive companies, remote working is nothing new. But over the past four years, the expectations around mobility have grown. According to Forrester Research, 61% of information workers work outside the office, with Forbes reporting that the number of workers who telecommute will increase 63% in the next five years.

In a recent study into the work-life balance of South African office workers, conducted by FreedThinkers on behalf of Citrix, 54% of workers indicated that they would be very likely or slightly likely to work from home if their employer allowed it.

People are demanding the ability to work from locations that best enable them to get their jobs done. And with this comes increased job satisfaction while also delivering a more flexible and agile organisation that is better equipped to deal with the increased speed of change in today's business climate.

- **Device management is becoming obsolete - workspaces are the new paradigm**: Today's employee has at least three devices that he uses to get his work done - some personal, others corporate owned. Each of these devices is

from a different hardware provider with a different version of an OS. The thousands of device/OS combinations and the diverse ownership make it nearly impossible to manage each device the way traditional corporate PCs were handled. Instead, IT will shift focus to service delivery on any device, without worrying about the device itself. The concept of workspaces that offer a combination of corporate apps and data that are secured by IT and always available to individuals, regardless of the device they are on has already emerged bringing value to many organisations.

- **Business apps will have built-in collaboration, increasing employee engagement**: As more people go mobile, how can organisations keep the same sense of camaraderie and collaboration when employees are in different geographical locations? Social collaboration technologies will become front and centre in 2015, as these tools will become built-in to everything we do. Imagine your email app giving you simple one-touch access to start a video chat immediately. Or, if working collaboratively on a presentation, opening up a white-boarding app within the meeting app, and illustrating your ideas to your colleagues. In 2015, the tools we need to connect instantly with colleagues and customers around the world will be built into the apps we use every day.

- **Extending 'software defined' concepts to the workplace will redefine IT**: The software-defined data centre changed how IT implemented its data centres - it transitioned compute, networks and storage from physical assets to virtual, self-provisioned resources. But this is just the beginning. Organisations will now look beyond the data centre to explore how a software-defined workplace can bring not only operational and technical efficiencies, but also benefits to people and the business as a whole. Instead of focusing on office locations where employees have to be present to get their work done, now people and places can become virtual and work can happen anywhere. This concept will reinvent how IT services are consumed, delivered and managed, giving businesses the agility to capitalise on new growth opportunities and respond to a dynamic and fast-changing market.

In the coming years, we expect a major change in how business and IT enable its workforce. Whether people are working from new and exciting locations, from new devices and OSes, or with new apps that make collaboration easy from anywhere, becoming software defined will reinvent how people work, accelerating business mobility.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan McAravey is Country Manager of Citrix South Africa.

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