Best Practices for a Mobility Center of Excellence
Keeping Pace with Mobile Technology
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How can your enterprise embrace the advance of mobile devices in the workplace – and continually keep up with rapidly evolving technology? How can the IT organization support the business proactively and deal with the many issues, from infrastructure and security to app provisioning? The answer: a mobility center of excellence that serves as the fulcrum for these initiatives across the enterprise.
As cross-enterprise adoption of mobile technology continues at a rapid pace, IT organizations are trying to deal with the following challenges.

First, mobile technology is constantly changing. In fact, the pace of change in innovation and technology in mobility is faster than in other IT areas. This rapid pace of change—in terms of requirements and technology—results in the need for greater alignment between lines of business and IT on mobility initiatives to prevent duplication of effort. The enterprise also has to deal with a proliferation of devices, vendors, and services: iPhone, iPad, Google Android, BlackBerry, Windows Phone, and more.

Mobile devices are everywhere and used by everyone. This pervasiveness creates opportunities to make employees more productive, engage with customers in a more targeted and personalized manner, and streamline collaboration with partners. This means that enterprise IT needs to plan for and be ready to meet a diverse set of requirements (end users, engagement modalities, use cases, security, scalability, and so forth) while retaining sufficient agility to meet these needs in a timely manner.

As consumers themselves, employees are used to the relatively smooth and easy process of downloading and using mobile apps from the various online stores. This experience has conditioned them to expect a relatively rapid application development (and enhancement) timeline, without compromising on the quality and user experience of the application. The implication for enterprise application developers is clear: how do you accommodate these expectations with the existing enterprise software development lifecycle infrastructure?

Finally, enterprise IT needs to put in place the appropriate infrastructure, processes, and organization to ensure the desired visibility and control across the lifecycle of these mobile assets (devices, users, and applications). While some companies still issue and retain ownership of mobile devices, the majority allow employees to use their own devices to access corporate information. This blurring of lines between professional and personal devices leads to diversity and complexity, as well as data security considerations. Enterprise IT needs to step up to the task, whether that involves self-service provisioning of mobile devices for users, deep insights into device and application usage metrics, or compliance monitoring. What’s required is a robust set of tools that automate as much as possible the operational complexities of a mobile infrastructure while providing actionable insights to deal with issues and exceptions as needed.
A Way to Centralize Governance, Standards, and Activities

Establishing a mobility center of excellence (COE) is an initiative intended to centralize governance, standards, and activities around a set of principles – organizational and architectural – for an effective and efficient use of mobile technology across the enterprise. By capturing experience, best practices, and reference architectures from mobility projects within the organization, the mobility COE can accelerate deployment within the corporation. In addition, the COE also minimizes overall effort, as each work group or business unit no longer has to reinvent and implement mobility policies on its own.

A mobility COE provides the leadership needed to deploy and manage personal and company-owned mobile devices seeking access to corporate data. The group uses a combination of standards and policies, along with technology infrastructure and skills, to alleviate the challenges of enterprise mobility.

The mobility center of excellence facilitates success by:

- Leveraging existing IT processes (standards, governance) and people
- Defining standards, vendor and technology selection, and security policies relevant to mobility
- Acting as the trusted adviser to the line-of-business leaders
- Reviewing, evaluating, and approving mobility projects
- Providing technology expertise to the business, authoring best practices, and facilitating training and technical support during implementation
- Offering thought leadership, consulting on mobile technology, and providing metrics reporting and support after deployment

**DIMENSIONS OF THE MOBILITY COE**

Different organizations are in different stages of their mobility adoption and maturity, which in turn shapes their experience level, competency mix, and comfort level with mobility. Regardless, a mobility COE has three broad but interlinked dimensions, as shown in the figure.

**Scope**

As a first order of business, you need to define the scope and the charter of the mobility COE. This is an essential element to grounding the mobility COE for everything it does going forward. We recommend that you answer the following questions to help define the scope of your mobility COE:

- What is the core function of the COE? Are you setting it up to act in a purely community-enablement function – that is, to drive better collaboration on mobility initiatives across the organization by providing the infrastructure (knowledge management, social media, and so on) and organizational tools (such as communities of practice)? Or is the function to shape and drive a mobility strategy for the organization that can be used by the various departments and business units as a basis for their mobility initiatives? Or is the intent to use the COE to guide the strategy and also provide support on mobility projects – whether in the form of creating usability guidelines, defining architecture principles, recommending specific technology choices, or managing an initial set of pilots or proofs of concept (POCs)?

![Figure: Dimensions of a Mobility Center of Excellence](image-url)
• What does the COE cover? Mobile technologies encompass business-to-business and business-to-consumer applications, enterprise mobile management (of which mobile device management is a component), remote access, machine to machine, radio-frequency identification, and so on. That’s why you need to set limits on the set of mobility initiatives the COE will take on. It is perfectly acceptable (and even recommended) to have an aspirational statement, but start with one or two key areas of focus.

• How will the COE interface with your existing IT organization? Since most IT organizations already have an existing infrastructure (processes, tools, and people), you need to define what the COE will define and create as “net new” for mobility. This will ensure minimal duplication of efforts and leave “regular IT” relatively unchanged, thus causing as little disruption to ongoing IT activities as possible.

Organization
Once you have defined the scope for the mobility COE, the next element to review is the underlying organizational structure and associated ways of working. This starts with securing buy-in from major stakeholders across the organization. Since mobility has an enterprise-wide impact, it is important to get sponsorship from senior and influential individuals across business and IT for the COE. Securing this kind of executive sponsorship conveys the importance of mobility (and the COE) and lends legitimacy to the entire effort.

With sponsorship identified and secured, the next steps are to outline the key roles and reporting structure within the COE, specifying the competencies required to staff these roles and building out the organization. A critical decision at this point is to choose the right person to lead the COE. Since this individual serves as the focal point for mobility initiatives within the organization, he or she needs to be:
• Comfortable defining “art of the possible” mobility scenarios
• Credible across business and IT leadership
• Proficient in driving and delivering on innovation
• Grounded in real-world IT project delivery

In addition to the leader, here are some roles to consider for staffing the COE organization:
• Solution architect
• Usability specialist
• Business analyst

Given that most COEs are “bootstrapped” – that is, staffed up over time – deciding which resources will be full-time versus part-time is important. We recommend that you start with a full-time COE leader and explore leveraging resources from other parts of the organization (application development, technology architecture, user experience, and so on).

With the organizational structure and the roles identified, you need to define the responsibilities of the individuals in terms of key work activities and deliverables. As you get started on building the COE, you should look to your supplier ecosystem (telecom carrier, system integrator, network, security vendors, and so forth) for resources that can support the COE.

Governance
The governance element of the COE defines:
• The ground rules for its operations
• The funding model
• The mechanism by which decisions are made
• The criteria used to track its ongoing effectiveness
• The process for communicating key decisions and milestones to its stakeholders

In defining governance for the COE, it is important to keep this process lightweight and pragmatic. For a space that is moving as fast as mobility, you need a governance process that is nimble yet robust enough to get the desired results. Being transparent about how mobility projects are reviewed, approved, and delivered is a critical part of the governance model.

We find that three of the most commonly addressed areas within governance relate to architecture, security, and operations.
Architecture:
• How will you decide which modality (or more than one) to use for a specific application – native client, HTML5 app, hybrid app, mobile browser, text messaging?
• How will mobile application development be integrated with your existing software development lifecycle tools and process – for example, change management, version control, patterns, code reuse, defect tracking, and the like?
• What will your mobile user experience guidelines be? What parts of your existing user experience principles can you carry over to mobile?
• How will mobile align with other initiatives such as enterprise 2.0, service-oriented architecture, collaboration, and so on?

Security:
• Do you support “bring your own device” (BYOD)?
• If yes, then:
  – What is the process for specifying the list of supported devices under the BYOD policy? Does it cover smartphones and tablets?
  – What processes and infrastructure do you need to get the desired level of security and visibility across the lifecycle of the mobile assets?
  – How do you account for country- and region-specific data privacy regulations and their impact on BYOD?
  – What is the policy for reimbursing employees on telecom charges?
• If not, then:
  – Do you support any individual liable (IL) devices at all? If yes, what are the constraints?
  – How do you communicate the trade-offs and implications to your employees?
• What changes do you need to make to your existing information security policy?
• How do you amend the standard acceptable-use policy to account for mobile devices?
• What guidelines should you develop for mobile applications in terms of mandatory and optional requirements for security – authorization, authentication, and auditing (AAA); data at rest; data in motion; and so on?

IT operations:
• How will your mobile assets (devices and applications) be managed across their lifecycle (from provisioning all the way through refresh)?
• Which parts of these will you automate? How much of this should be made self-service so as to reduce the burden on IT? And what do you need to put in place to make this happen?
• What does “support” mean? What service-level agreement can you provide for these devices and applications?
• If users get an unsupported device, what is your support policy?
• What skill sets do you need to support mobility, and how will you staff up for that?

A mobility COE provides the leadership needed to deploy and manage personal and company-owned mobile devices seeking access to corporate data.
For the mobility COE to succeed, follow this core set of best practices.

**Secure executive sponsorship** – Without strong executive sponsorship, a mobility COE cannot function effectively. It will not be able to get the visibility and the organizational muscle it needs to drive a consistent approach to mobility across the business. Mobile technology has the potential to impact every part of your business, and you want the backing of someone who can help you keep the initiatives within your organization to a well-defined and manageable minimum.

**Drive a partnership between business and IT** – Closely tied to sponsorship is the need for strong partnership between business and IT. While this may sound cliché and trite to experienced IT professionals, it is all the more true with mobility. Since we are all consumers of mobile technology, we expect the enterprise to provide the same level of support for mobile devices that we experience in our daily lives. A successful COE will demonstrate how to embrace mobility to transform the business – for example, predicting or determining the areas of the business where process changes could result in time or revenue savings to departmental budgets.

**Drive effective engagement with end users** – Understanding your end users’ mobility needs at a relatively granular level requires you to “walk in their shoes.” Developing the level of insight might involve, for example, a ride-along to document how an insurance adjuster goes about the job, or mapping out a current business process and a new mobile process for a field inspector. You need to understand the various user personas involved and capture how and where mobility can be embedded in the most seamless way possible. Mobility requires a kind of engagement with end users that is different from many other IT capabilities.

**Define a “straw man” mobility strategy** – Once the mobility COE is launched, the enterprise should focus on maintaining and developing the mobility strategy and framework. The key here is to develop a “straw man” strategy road map – a starting point for gathering feedback – and evolve it based on experience gathered from ongoing mobility projects. This road map could include:

- Translating corporate and business strategy into mobility strategy
- Creating a set of mobility capabilities according to mobile user profiles or personas
- Creating a strategy and framework for adoption of mobile applications

**Drive a culture of agility, flexibility, and customer centricity among the COE team.**
The strategy should include taking stock of and documenting all mobility initiatives in the company, as well as overlaying the corporation’s mobility strategy with its project portfolio. Part of the responsibility of the mobility COE could be to align the company’s mobility solutions with its product lifecycle. For example, consider how the company will be using mobile devices in the sell and service stages of the product lifecycle versus the design and develop stages. Consider sales channels and product lifecycle stages to determine which mobile applications to develop. The mobility COE should also assign budget for mobility initiatives according to priorities and set aside budget and resources to test new or yet unproven mobility concepts.

**Bootstrap from your supplier ecosystem** – In the early stages of a COE’s evolution, tapping into the extended resource pool across your supplier ecosystem is a useful way to supplement your internal resources. Getting capable resources from your partners to participate on a part-time basis in the initial phases of your COE can help you:

- Glean insights into evolving device and wireless networks (from your carrier)
- Understand considerations for industrializing your mobile application lifecycle (from your enterprise independent software vendor and system integrator partners)
- Capture network and security implications (from your network equipment and security vendors)

**Start small, refine, and mature** – As you staff up the first iteration of your mobility COE, define your straw man mobility strategy, and deliver on the first handful of mobility projects, you will acquire experience in the mobility lifecycle. Providing for regular updates to your mobility COE and strategy to reflect lessons learned and technology advancements is critical to the ongoing viability and success of your mobility initiatives. However, it all starts with forming a COE in the first place. For almost every organization, it is conceivable that its mobility portfolio will include, conservatively, a dozen or more applications over the next 12 to 18 months. A COE is a critical foundation for the enterprise to effectively deliver on that portfolio and sustain it in a cost-effective manner.

In defining governance for the COE, it is important to keep this process lightweight and pragmatic. For a space that is moving as fast as mobility, you need a governance process that is nimble yet robust enough to get the desired results.

**HOW SAP CAN HELP**

As adoption of mobile technology across the enterprise continues at a rapid pace, IT organizations are trying to deal with a set of unique mobility challenges. By embracing a mobility center of excellence, you can not only accelerate deployment within your organization but also minimize redundant effort to maximize success. As a leading vendor in the enterprise mobility space, SAP can partner with you to “mobilize” your business, providing knowledge and expertise along the way to help focus your efforts and streamline your initiatives.