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## MOBILITY

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In this customer briefing, we explain what the mobile workplace is, discuss its benefits, and look at some key considerations for businesses looking to embrace flexible working.

Your customers want to contact you in new ways; your staff expect flexible access to their workplace, and your finance team needs to slash overheads. Welcome to the new world of the connected business.

In this environment, the business that responds in the most agile and innovative way is most successful; responding to challenges thrown up by a changing world, and anticipating others with clever technical solutions. Key to this agility is satisfying the growing demands for a mobile, flexible workplace - but what does that actually mean, and what are the steps necessary to deliver it in your organisation?

This briefing aims to distil the meaning of the mobile workplace: what's it for, what does it look like, and on which technologies does it rely?

### The Move to Mobile

Mobile working. Smart working. Flexible working. There are many terms all attempting to describe the same concept: a move away from doing business at a fixed time and in a specific location, towards flexible staff working on mobile devices at times which suit them and your business. What does that entail? Simply, it means giving staff the environment they need to do their job regardless of their location or device.

**Flexible working, supported by the mobile workplace, has considerable benefits:**

- **Reduction in overheads.** A mobile workforce with access to online collaboration tools has less need for conventional office space and equipment. Mobile working can be the enabler in significant cost reductions, allowing rationalisation and restructuring of office space and services.
- **Flexibility and productivity.** Flexible working is a crucial tool in attracting, retaining and fulfilling the potential of the most talented employees. Moreover, according to a 2013 RSA report, there's a direct link between greater flexibility and enhanced productivity and innovation, with employees estimating they gain an average five productive hours each week through flexible practices.
- **Creativity and innovation.** Where employees can escape the static environment of the desk, they're better able to collaborate on projects and informally exchange ideas. With the right systems and apps in place they can capture and share those ideas as they happen.
- **Reflect cultural changes.** People increasingly use mobile-enabled apps and channels to communicate, not necessarily within traditional business hours. Staff and customers alike expect the organisations they deal with to do likewise.

### The Mobile Workplace

So much for the concept. What does the mobile workplace actually look like? Ideally, it's an environment where staff can access all of the usual voice and data systems, data and apps they need to do their work securely, remotely, and from a device that's suited to the context. Moving between locations should be seamless, communications and collaboration should be effortless, and innovation and ideas encouraged.





### Delivering this has three key pre-requisites:

- **Voice and data.** The mobile workplace could be anywhere: homes, workspaces, coffee shops, public transport or public places. Staff need access to data from anywhere that's in scope, which means they'll be using broadband or mobile connections which the business doesn't control. They need voice services, too, whether these are discrete or running over IP.
- **Devices.** The workplace extends onto computers and mobile devices provided by the business, but also onto family computers, tablets and smartphones over which you have little control. Business apps need to be optimised for the full range of targets.
- **Security.** Extending the workplace opens up greater risks, so the mobile workplace must have rule and role-based access control, which verifies and considers the identity, location and needs of users and their device.

## Under the Hood

What factors underpin this kind of environment? Many are common enough to be self-evident: fast and highly available wireless coverage within your own premises, for example. Others vary on the scope of your own requirements, but they might include the following.

### Security and authentication

- **Authentication.** It's critical that only authorised people access your business systems, and that their access is appropriate. A security management platform automates and enforces context-aware security access to network resources and safeguards access with technologies such as two-factor authentication (2FA).
- **Mobile device management (MDM).** It's equally important that only authorised devices can gain access. MDM simplifies the setup and administration of smartphones, tablets and other mobile computing platforms.
- **Mobile device protection.** The security and integrity of mobile devices and their access to the workspace can be controlled through a secure mobility client. This helps facilitate device and user authentication, manage access to apps and data, and deliver secured endpoint access.

### Applications and systems

- **Applications** need to support a range of operating systems and environments. Apps may be native to each OS, browser-based, or they may even be provided through a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI).
- **Systems** need to be made available to mobile staff in several ways, for example through a VPN allowing remote access to existing apps, via a web interface, or through a virtual-desktop container. Each offers their own risks and advantages, but security needs to be a primary consideration: it's unlikely that you can rely solely on the native security of the device.

### Communications and user training

- **Unified communications (UC).** Key to the viability of a mobile workspace is easy and reliable communication between staff, customers and other stakeholders - via voice, messaging or video channels - regardless of location and platform. Together with additional services such as presence, instant messaging, desktop sharing or conferencing, these fall under the umbrella of UC.
- **User training and culture.** In many organisations, mobile, flexible working will require a cultural shift. Staff may need support through the transition, and training to ensure they understand the new systems and share in the benefits.

**About Ideal:** Ideal is an IT solutions and strategic consultancy provider with a mission to delight our customers with brilliant technology solutions. We work in partnership with many of the key players in mobile workplace technology, such as Cisco, Palo Alto Networks and VMware. We specialise in the design, supply, installation and support of network infrastructure, unified communications, security and data centre services.

Discover more about us and what we can do for you at [www.ideal.co.uk](http://www.ideal.co.uk)