

MOBILE MANAGEMENT

Not everyone is focused on the social commerce side of the market, which Eversoll cites as a \$300 billion opportunity.

Howard M. Cohen, an IT consultant and the Northeast Regional Chair with the U.S. International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners (IAMCP), sees a specific new opportunity for partners—management.

“With the consumerization of computing bringing more handheld smartphones and tablet devices into the corporate network, new challenges arise that create tremendous opportunities for channel partners,” Cohen said in a “Big” Ideas entry.

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Howard Cohen, IT Consultant and U.S. IAMCP Board Member



“Partners should begin now to plan to add MMSP—Mobile Managed Services Partner—to their portfolio. Client concerns include information security; network access control; authentication, data encryption, containerization, and separation of personal and business data; kill and wipe capability for lost devices; not to mention mobile application development and more,” he said.

“Between cloud and mobile devices, more and more rogue IT initiatives are springing up and IT management will need help to keep proper control over the corporation’s data assets and network. Prepare now to provide those incremental new services,” Cohen said.

As Cohen points out, partners building mobile management practices are skating slightly ahead of the Microsoft partner competency structure.

A System Center competency is currently focused on the existing System Center suite of products, which don’t specifically include mobile device management. Meanwhile, that System Center competency is becoming more closely aligned with the virtualization products. In May, Microsoft will merge the Virtualization competency and the System Center competency into the Management and Virtualization competency.

There is a Mobile competency, but that’s also not focused specifically on managing devices. The systems integrator/VAR side of the competency is intended for partners integrating

primarily Windows Phone with Microsoft productivity apps, such as the Microsoft Office suite. There’s also a Mobile ISV competency for partners such as Eversoll.

MOBILE ACTION

While Microsoft hasn’t laid out a general plan for its partners yet in the same way it lays out business cases for other opportunities, there’s been a lot of action in the mobile management space. Mobile management has been especially hot among enterprise IT departments as the user-driven IT trend takes hold. Familiarity with the tools and questions in the enterprise can be very helpful to partners looking to assist customers with mobile device management.

In a comprehensive report over the summer, called “Critical Capabilities for Mobile Device Management,” Gartner Inc. analysts Monica Basso and Phillip Redman explored enterprise requirements for the sector.

First, Basso and Redman wrote of a step that would apply equally well in partner conversations with customers: “Organizations need to identify the risks and benefits of introducing support for corporate applications on personal devices. They then need to identify the IT policies required to control deployments, manage risks and support users. Finally, they need to choose the appropriate management approach and the products and services that can help to enforce those policies in a cost-effective way.”

Another general question the Gartner analysts pose is whether the client organization is looking for a lightweight approach or a heavyweight approach.

The lightweight approach often involves a server-side product or service offering with a small mobile agent running on the device. Lightweight solutions may also call native APIs provided by the mobile client, but don’t have a complete mobile management client. “They can enforce policies on the server side, but cannot control the device and mobile-user behavior in depth,” Basso and Redman noted.

Heavyweight approaches have a management client that can enforce strong IT controls on the client, such as local data encryption, selective wipe and a concept called containerization, which Gartner defines as “a set of mechanisms to separate corporate from private content (data, applications) on a device and apply a range of actions to control the corporate footprint.”

The Gartner analysts identified 10 critical capabilities for mobile device management (MDM) in the enterprise. Many of them also will apply in the smaller and midmarket customer environments that partners often engage in.

1. Device Diversity

Straightforward as it sounds, this metric covers how many types of devices a given mobile device-management

“There will be 20 billion connected devices by 2020 or roughly three devices for every person on the planet.”

Liz Eversoll, CEO, SLM Technology LLC

solution covers. Requirements vary by client, but the core requirements remain the Apple iPhone and Google Android devices, as well as the iPad. Other items clients may be looking for include ruggedized devices and Google-based tablets. Interestingly, Gartner rated support for Windows Phone or RIM BlackBerry as a plus because when it conducted its study in July, relatively few MDM vendors included those platforms.

2. Policy Enforcement

This capability covers a lot of intriguing possibilities. Of course it includes standards such as enforcing policies about version numbers on the device for different platforms, such as requiring iOS 4 or iOS 5 on the iPhone or iPad. But it also might include the capability of detecting jailbroken iPhones or rooted Android phones. Other policies might include restricting access from non-compliant phones, preventing blacklisted app downloads, while also managing corporate apps on personal devices and personal apps on corporate devices.

3. Security and Compliance

Security and compliance might include password strength enforcement, device lock, various levels of remote wipe, local data encryption, certificate-based authentication, firewall, antivirus, mobile VPN and rogue app quarantining.

4. Containerization

As previously defined, containerization could include separation of corporate e-mail from personal e-mail and corporate apps from personal apps. The capability can be powered by virtualization capabilities and other aspects include more fine-grained control over what parts of the device might be remote wiped, what gets encrypted and prevention of data leakage between containers.

5. Inventory Management

This capability often allows for provisioning, control and tracking of devices. In addition to asset management and inventory, inventory management can include distribution, configuration, monitoring data points like battery life, and disabling device capabilities such as cameras, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi or removable media cards.

6. Software Distribution

Software Distribution capabilities for mobile devices can be very similar to their PC counterparts. Features can include



application discovery through private app stores, software updates for apps and operating systems, patches, fixes, backup and restore.

7. Administration and Reporting

Some features to look for, according to Basso and Redman, are single console or Web-based console, over-the-air provisioning, role-based access, group-based access, remote control and integration with enterprise management platforms.

8. IT Service Management

Gartner explains this category as granting mobile service levels to mobile users. Service levels might include help desk, user support, user self-service, end-to-end real-time monitoring, troubleshooting and alerting.

9. Network Service Management

This is a budget management tool covering things like contract management, expense management and service-usage management.

10. Delivery Model

Finally, Gartner asks enterprises to consider the way the MDM platform is delivered. It is cloud? On-premises? Hosted? This is also a good place to consider up-front costs and whether pricing policies are per-user or per-device. •

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