



# The Mobile Messaging Genie is Out of the Bottle

*By Crimson Consulting's Rick Sklarin*

Back in 1999 I co-authored an article entitled "[Mobile Data: We've Been Here Before](#)" which predicted that the deployment of mobile and wireless data in businesses would replicate the deployment of the PC in the enterprise. The article noted that in the early 1980s, personal computers began populating the desks of accounting and marketing executives, often without the knowledge or involvement of the IT department. Then, the PC battle began between the end-user's desire to customize their desktops and IT departments' desire to limit the number of configurations offered and supported throughout the enterprise. Over the next decade, efforts were made to integrate the standalone PC into the enterprise's technology architecture. These efforts gave end users the independence they sought, and the IT department the control and discipline the organization required.

Nine years later, as anticipated, there are many custom wireless solutions developed for enterprises that have broad field services, fleet management, warehouses, points of sale etc. IT departments have planned for and effectively managed these custom solutions which are part of the core processes of enterprises such as UPS, Fed Ex, AT&T, WalMart, Hertz and others.

## **Standardization Needed for Mobile Messaging Devices**

At the same time, IT departments in enterprises, mid-market companies and even small businesses are starting to make rumblings that it is time for standardization of the mobile messaging device just like we saw standardization on WinTel in the 1980s. Employees have been buying Windows Mobile 6.0 devices, Blackberry's, Nokia Intellisync and Good Technologies-based messaging devices to access corporate email, calendars, contacts and other enterprise data. IT departments are being inundated with a tidal wave of new devices, new mobile messaging platforms, new applications and the resulting complexity of purchasing, configuring, managing, servicing and replacing this broad array of solutions.

The time is right for companies offering mobile solutions - like Microsoft with Windows Mobile 6.0 - to begin positioning based upon Total Cost of Ownership and even better ROI of their solutions. Mobile solution providers can help their enterprise customers manage this proliferation of disparate next-generation mobile messaging devices, applications, operating systems, platforms and other solution components that have been propagating through business (and that IT departments are stuck supporting.)

Back in 1999, I anticipated that without careful planning and management by IT departments, the mobile data genie would be out of the bottle. Nine years later, IT departments are finding themselves, once again, playing catch-up as they search for ways to provide deployment, management, security, structure and interoperability for all mobile messaging devices hitting the corporate firewall or POP3 server.

## **Balancing Standards with Ease of Use and User Flexibility**

Mobile messaging is reshaping the way people interact with corporate data. But there is a tremendous amount of complexity behind the scenes, and IT departments are bearing the onus of sorting out a rational and economic corporate policy for mobile data device purchases, deployment, activations, maintenance, repair and replacement. This entails more than merely doling out wireless devices across the board. With complexity often comes the potential for inefficiencies and higher costs of doing business. The real challenge, then, is to mitigate these inefficiencies early on by devising an approach that balances corporate wireless standards to reduce unnecessary complexity with local user flexibility.

Mobile messaging companies such as Microsoft, Good, Nokia and RIM are all in a position to begin developing their messaging and value propositions to reduce this mobile complexity through standardized corporate solutions.

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