The struggle to deliver mobile apps

Micro Focus
Research results

May 2013
Demographics

590 senior IT decision-makers in organisations with mainframes in their infrastructure were interviewed in January and February 2013, split in the following ways...

...geographically

- USA: 100
- Brazil: 100
- France: 100
- Germany: 100
- UK: 100
- Australia/New Zealand: 50
- Singapore: 25
- Hong Kong: 15

...a range of private sectors

- IT & software: 19%
- Financial services: 16%
- Manufacturing: 15%
- Retail, distribution and transport: 14%
- Business & professional: 10%
- Insurance: 6%
- Telecommunications: 5%
- Leisure and entertainment: 2%
- Agriculture/forestry: 2%
- Biotechnology: 2%
- Media: 1%
- Pharmaceutical: 1%
- Other commercial: 6%

...more than 500 employees

- 32%
- 31%
- 37%

Figure 1: Analysis of where respondents are based
Figure 2: “Within which sector is your organisation primarily based?”
Figure 3: “How many employees work in your organisation?”

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Mobile devices will increasingly need access to business applications

At present, an average of 31% of business apps are accessible on mobile devices. Respondents expect this to increase by half to an average of 46% of applications within three years; a third of businesses expect 60% of apps or more to be mobile-accessible. Businesses will therefore be dedicating significant efforts to making apps compatible with mobile devices over the next few years.

Figure 4: Analysis of the percentage of business applications accessible on mobile devices, both at present and within three years (590 respondents)
Multiple reasons for mobile accessibility

Improving operational efficiency 78%
Improving operational cost-effectiveness 66%
Capturing new customers/market share 66%
Retaining customers 58%
Keeping up with competitive mobile application offers 48%
We have no plans to support mobile applications 4%

The majority wants to support mobile applications for multiple reasons...

...primarily to improve operational efficiency, but also to improve cost-effectiveness, find new customers, and retain existing customers.

Significantly, only 4% have no plans to support mobile applications, meaning that nineteen in every twenty organisations see the value in making their applications accessible on mobile devices.

What mobile platforms are organisations using or planning to use?

Figure 5: “Why are you looking to support mobile applications in your organisation?” (590 respondents)
Android support is reaching saturation point

Android is the most supported platform at present, but support will not increase over the next few years. Compare this to support for Windows Phone and iOS, predicted to increase by 13% and 6% respectively. This does not mean that Android is decreasing in importance though; rather, it indicates that organisations intend to support an wider line-up of platforms. It also suggests that businesses may look for solutions which allow easy deployment over multiple platforms.

What devices are organisations developing mobile apps for?

![Chart showing Android, Apple iOS, Windows Phone, BlackBerry OS, Symbian, and Other support percentages]

**Figure 6:** Analysis of what platforms organisations take into account within their mobile applications at present and within the next two years.
Mini tablets are the big growth area for mobile application development

Support for mini tablets is predicted to double over the next two years

Support for smartphones and tablets is almost ubiquitous, whereas support for mini-tablets is far less evident at present. Although large growth in the support of the mini-tablet is predicted, it looks as though more than half will still NOT supporting that device type in two years’ time. The focus of mobile device efforts is still largely on the smartphone.

With these plans to expand, how proficient are mobile app development teams?

Figure 7: Analysis of what devices organisations take into account within their mobile applications at present and within the next two years

The struggle to deliver mobile apps
Mobile development teams are not ideal

Only one in ten respondents say that their mobile development team is perfect

The majority (57%) says that their team is ‘very good’, suggesting that, though they might be proficient, there is room for improvement.

Worryingly, a third says that their team is middling, sluggish, or poor, meaning that significant improvement is needed.

Given that so many apps will need mobile access over the next few years, this data suggests that organisations need more help in developing and executing mobile applications.

How responsive are these mobile development teams to operating system updates?

Figure 8: “How would you describe your mobile development team (whether in-house or outsourced)?” (590 respondents)
Businesses struggle to update apps quickly

Fewer than one in ten businesses can update apps within a month of platform updates

It takes the average business five months to update their apps to support new iterations of mobile operating systems…but platform holders like Apple and Google update mobile device operating systems regularly throughout the year!

This means that many organisations’ updates risk being out-of-date before they have even launched.

Is slow deployment due to a reliance on internal non-specialist teams rather than dedicated, outsourced providers?

**Figure 9:** “How quickly can you deliver new versions of mobile applications for newly-launched iterations of existing mobile devices?” (590 respondents)
Businesses are outsourcing small amounts of their mobile development

An average of 37% of application development is outsourced

Most are using external partners to some degree though – only 17% say that all development is done in-house

But outsourcing delivers less than half of application development on average, suggesting that internal departments are doing the bulk of the work themselves

Given that most do not describe their development teams as perfect, should organisations be outsourcing more in order to develop apps quicker and more effectively?

Is there another reason why external partners are used so rarely?

Figure 10: “What percentage of your application development do you outsource?”
(590 respondents)
External partners are reluctant to work with mainframe organisations

Only 14% say that vendors are NOT reluctant to work with them because of their reliance on mainframes

In fact, one in seven (13%) say that every vendor they have spoken to has been reticent to develop apps with them purely because they use a mainframe!

This might explain why relatively little mobile development is outsourced – vendors either lack the experience or the willingness

Yet there is obviously a need for support, as organisations are slow to deploy new application updates

Figure 11: “Have you found that mobile application vendors/developers are more reticent to work with mainframe organisations?” (590 respondents)
Mainframes make mobile app development difficult

Figure 12: "Do you feel that having a mainframe presents your organisation with challenges in implementing/developing mobile applications that work with your existing systems?"

(590 respondents)

Only 22% say that having a mainframe in the infrastructure makes no difference to the difficulty of developing mobile apps.

Almost half – 42% - say that having a mainframe makes mobile development very or incredibly difficult.

Clearly, making the latest technologies compatible with legacy systems is especially trying for those who rely on mainframes.

Could this be why it takes them so long to deploy updates to their mobile applications?

But does having a mainframe present them with any advantages in this area?

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Having a mainframe does result in some mobile app development advantages

- Yes – it means we have an infrastructure which already accommodates new technologies: 54%
- Yes – it means we already have an easily-accessible core business functionality and data set ready for mobile applications to exploit: 37%
- Yes – it means we have a long-standing set of standards over which all our systems operate: 33%
- Yes – it means we have the services and storage to quickly enable mobility: 28%
- Yes – it means we already have engineers available to implement/develop mobile applications: 11%
- No: 9%

**Figure 13:** “Does having a mainframe actively assist in implementing/developing mobile applications?” (590 respondents)

Only 9% say that having a mainframe does not actively assist in developing mobile applications.

The need to implement new technologies with legacy systems means that most have built an infrastructure which easily allows this.
In summary...

- A minority of business applications are already accessible through mobile devices...
  - ...and this demand for mobile accessibility is likely to increase by half over the next few years
  - Mobile accessibility results in improved operational efficiency and cost effectiveness

- Businesses are looking to support ever-increasing numbers of mobile platforms...
  - ...and ever increasing numbers of mobile device types, too

- Despite this, few businesses are completely satisfied with their mobile development teams...
  - ...this may be confounded by vendors who are generally reluctant to work with businesses who use mainframes

- Most businesses recognise the difficulties that mainframes cause in developing mobile applications...
  - ...but the majority contest that mainframes present a range of benefits to mobile development, too
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