Expert opinion

Mobile applications: the ISD is also involved

By Cédric Belmont, digitization and mobility consultant, Hardis Group

While the mobile application market is booming, it is also changing very quickly. As a result many IS departments are afraid of getting locked into poor choices. But solutions are available for deploying a mobile strategy without sacrificing scalability, agility and control of budgets.

It's difficult to ignore the fact that digitization of services is up and running. This is a development that has increased, with the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets, which are opening up the way for new services and interaction, for the benefit of customers and employees. This is a trend that marketing, sales, HR and communication departments are well aware of: they are constantly imagining new services to offer their customers, both external and internal, via their mobile devices.

The abundance of mobile platforms: a "false problem"
But in a still unstable market where four major operating systems (iOS, Android, BlackBerry and Windows 8 OS) are in competition and where still others are hoping to set up on a permanent basis, ISDs are hesitant as the to strategy to adopt: web application, hybrid or native? In the latter case, another problem arise: for which OS? Whatever option is chosen, there are already solutions for sharing the development of multi-OS mobile applications, reducing the costs of mobility projects, while facilitating their development.

Designing a comprehensive architecture for mobility
In addition, for the ISD, these mobile application projects necessarily include close interaction with the existing information system: CMS, CRM, ERP, HR applications, databases, etc. For in the end, what is mobility if not an additional interface between the information system and its users?
This is an issue which has also already been answered, through MEAPs (Mobile Enterprise Application Platforms), which can be used to set up a middle office layer integrated into the IS, which aggregates the information necessary for mobile applications and presents them as part of a dedicated architecture. Basically, this approach amounts to setting up a service-oriented architecture (SOA), so as to have to manage only one mobility "gate" on the IS. Once this type of architecture has been deployed, the IS department can consider the development of mobile applications with greater peace of mind (at least from the technological standpoint). The choices he makes today will not be disadvantageous, no matter how the mobility market develops.

Work iteratively in small batches
To reduce the pressure on ISDs, it is advisable to proceed iteratively: starting with priority mobile services, to allow time for IT staff to learn to adjust their skills and to develop the applications on multiple mobile platforms, etc., then gradually enrich the perimeter. This is

an agile, "prototype-based" approach which also has the advantage of being able to test development platforms gradually: functionality, security, submission to stores, etc.

Here too the tools included as standard within a MEAP platform provide a response to ISDs as regards mobile strategy: dashboards show usage statistics, or indicators for prioritizing projects according to objective criteria (particularly mobile platforms and / or the most used services).

In summary, the drama can be taken out of mobility if it is considered as part of a comprehensive and integrated approach. It can be designed step by step, without major risk for the ISD, while allowing the company to offer the innovative services that its customers (internal or external) expect from it.

About Hardis Group

Hardis Group was created in 1984. It is both a software publisher and an IT services company. Ever since it was created, the company has built growth in a resolutely different way, based on pragmatism and the core values of local presence and a strong commitment to both customers and employees. The founding directors still run the company, 25% of employees are shareholders, and all the personnel is based in France.

Hardis Group focuses on seven major sectors: infrastructure and facilities management, development and Third-Party Application Maintenance (TPAM), consulting and project owner support, business intelligence, logistics and transport (Reflex solutions), development tools (Adelia Studio), and payroll outsourcing (Saphyr software).

As a software publisher, Hardis Group is capable of integrating its own solutions and can also call on the services of a network of partners. Its consultants are experts in high-quality IT project methodologies (such as ITIL and CMMI).

Hardis Group posted turnover figures of €54.7 million in 2012. To date, the Group has more than 2,500 customers and employs 630 people. Its head office is located in Grenoble, with four other branches in Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

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