
Selecting the right mobile device management solution:

On-premise, managed service or SaaS

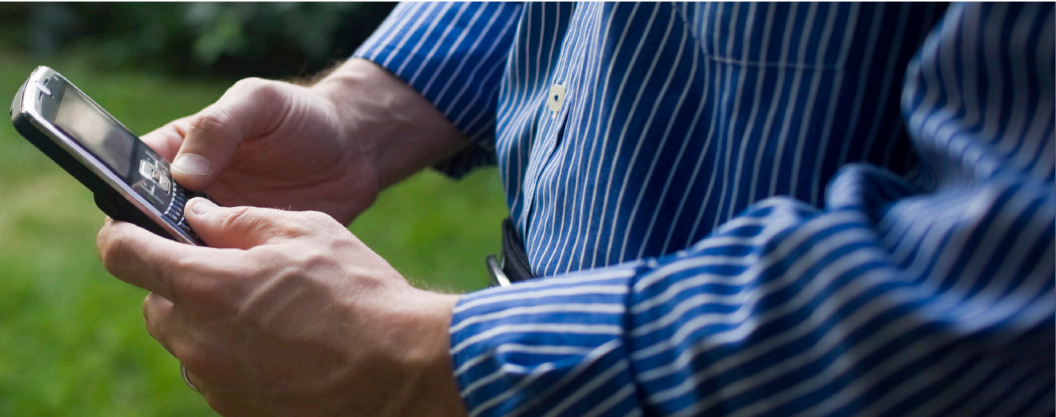


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Executive Summary

With the growing number and variety of mobile devices connecting to corporate networks, enterprises need a mobile device management (MDM) solution to maintain security, reduce costs and ensure compliance with corporate or government guidelines. Not only are companies faced with finding the right MDM provider, there are also a growing number of delivery options for MDM solutions. There are many terms to describe these methods of delivery, such as premise-based, hosted, SaaS, managed services, on demand, cloud computing and outsourced. With each term used in different ways, it can often be confusing and hard to compare.

Each of these delivery options for mobile device management has its own benefits and serves different needs, and an organization should understand the differences so they can determine which option is best for them. The goal of this whitepaper is to clearly outline the benefits of each method, including what questions you should ask and what factors you should consider when selecting a delivery method. Matching your company's needs, resources, expertise and IT assets to a delivery method that best fits your organization and its needs will help you get the most out of your investment to reduce your management costs and improve productivity.

Definitions

For the purpose of this paper, the following definitions are applied to each of the methods of delivery:

Premise-based

With a premise-based solution, all servers are installed at your location(s) and are maintained as part of your enterprise. The solution (all hardware and software) is owned by your company and is often viewed as a capital expense. You maintain control of the servers and maintain their security. This option might also be referred to as on-premise or in-house and typically requires a higher, one-time license fee and optional annual maintenance.

SaaS (Software as a Service)

In a SaaS, or on-demand or hosted model, a provider licenses an application that is hosted at a remote location, Network Operations Center (NOC), to customers through a subscription model, generally a monthly or yearly fee. This approach to application delivery is part of the “cloud computing” model where all of the technology is in the “cloud” and accessed over the Internet as a service.

Managed Services

A managed service, or outsourced management, is the practice of transferring the day-to-day responsibility of managing the software/hardware to an outside organization with expertise in the subject area for more efficient operations. Managed services are generally provided in a subscription model, and an external organization will provide operations and management capabilities that are delivered with a recurring monthly or annual fee for their services. While the customer is more hands-off with a managed services offering, they should still be provided regular status reports that cover areas such as roll-outs, software/hardware updates and asset and inventory tracking.

Considerations

Every organization is different with unique infrastructure and management needs. As such, each will have different reasons for selecting a particular method of delivery. There are a few considerations that all organizations should take into account when selecting a delivery model for device management. As we discuss each of the following points, consider your organization's unique needs and capabilities.

How Much Control Do You Want to Have?

A VDC Research report titled, "Enterprise Mobility Managed Services: Next Generation Deployment Models," found the primary issue among organizations deploying mobility solutions was maintaining control and visibility of their mobile ecosystem. If you select a managed services or SaaS offering, you are giving up some level of control. But it does not mean you need to give up control of your overall IT strategy and direction.

Companies need to ask themselves what they want to control, especially as it relates to their servers. Large, well-established corporations often want to have control over the entire system, including the server's security and administration of the system. Deploying a solution on-premise gives companies complete control over the system and how it is managed. If maintaining on-site control is extremely important to your company, you will want to consider an on-premise solution.

With a SaaS solution, you actively maintain day-to-day device management, but the software and servers would be hosted at an off-site data center. If you are looking for an option that removes the burden of deploying, controlling and maintaining your own servers and software while enjoying all the control of a hands-on MDM solution, then a SaaS solution should be given serious consideration.

A managed services MDM solution transfers day-to-day operations to a third party. They take care of deploying the servers and the set up, configuration and monitoring of all the components of the wireless enterprise, such as mobile devices, wireless printers and access points. This removes the administrative responsibility and capital expenditures of an on-premise solution from your organization so that you can focus on other aspects of your business. The third party also remotely manages your mobile devices, including security configurations, software packages and other operational settings. If you would like the benefits of an MDM solution but just don't have the expertise or resources to keep up with the growth of the wireless ecosystem, then a managed service is right for you.

What IT Expertise and Resources Do You Have Available?

Many IT departments are overextended and lack the specialized expertise to effectively employ a mobile device management solution. On the other hand, they may have a level of expertise but struggle to keep up with all the new types of devices being introduced. Many IT departments have been streamlined while end users are demanding increased access to more comprehensive enterprise applications on a broader collection of mobile devices.

Technical expertise is needed to manage complex mobile devices and applications. As wireless devices are constantly changing and becoming more critical to the business, expertise is needed to secure, manage and maintain the wireless ecosystem. Add to that an organization's compliance needs with regulations and acts such as PCI, HIPAA, HITECH and Sarbanes-Oxley, and often IT departments do not have the resources capable of supporting these requirements or the staff members who have bandwidth for additional responsibilities. As a result, companies will need to consider SaaS, managed services or procuring additional resources for an on-premise solution.

A managed services offering will appeal to companies that lack the dedicated personnel to manage a mobile device management solution or simply to those that wish to "leave it to the experts." With a managed service offering, customers let someone else take care of the day-to-day administration tasks. Customers don't need to find employees on staff that can log in and manage their wireless ecosystem. Instead, outsourced experts handle that part, which in turn allows the customer to focus their resources on their core business.

The SaaS model requires some administration support from IT resources, including day-to-day operations. However, resources needed to install and deploy the software are reduced since users access the system via the Internet. If your IT department has some resources available, this might be a good option for you.

If you wish to deploy a premise-based solution, you will need to make sure you have the proper IT resources available to support the system for tasks such as pushing out security and application package updates, and monitoring and maintaining the devices on your network. It is still worth noting, however, that no matter which delivery method you choose, the proper MDM solution drastically reduces the burden placed on IT personnel.

Often, the perception is that on-premise systems are more secure than on-demand models. But if the solution is not managed properly, the system may not be secure and devices may be out of compliance. With mobile devices that are easily lost or stolen, and many companies held to stringent regulatory or other security requirements, having a system that is secure is essential to your business. A comprehensive solution that is properly managed will enable devices and data to be secure and safe. With SaaS and managed service options, customers will always have access to the most current version of the software including the latest security updates; with premise-based solutions, it is up to the IT department to ensure that the system has all the latest updates.

If you are considering a managed service or SaaS option, look closely at what kinds of security measures are in place. It would be wise to ask MDM providers how data is stored and how information is being backed-up. Find out about the hosting environment and what security measures are used to keep data secure and separate from others in the system. Managed services and SaaS options may or may not have sufficient security methods in place.

What Features/Benefits Are Important To Your Business?

When looking at various delivery methods, consider which MDM features or benefits are important to your business. For instance, if disaster recovery is of primary importance to your organization, you may want to consider a hosted offering. In the event of a cataclysmic event at one of your facilities, having redundant systems located at various locations would provide data integrity and service continuity.

If you are a large company with multiple offices and/or remote workers, you will need a solution that can be scaled to support those various environments. Consider a solution that can easily be implemented at multiple locations around the globe. When looking at your options, be sure to account for all locations and the various user needs and the ability to remotely monitor, update and troubleshoot devices.

What Should I Look For In A Vendor?

Selecting the proper vendor is very important when it comes to your business and managing your wireless ecosystem. Selecting the wrong vendor could result in higher costs, less efficiency and more headaches. Take the time to consider the following qualities in a provider and their solution:

Flexibility in the product offering – Is the product flexible in meeting your needs? Can it be scaled to continue to support your growth and the increasing numbers of mobile devices, smartphones, tablet PCs and peripherals? A quality solution should be scalable and backed by an industry leader. Also, look for a provider that offers a range of delivery methods. For example, if you select a managed services offering but later decide that you want to switch to a on-premise solution, can your provider be flexible and allow that change as your needs grow. Don't narrow your thinking to include just your needs today, but consider your organizational needs into the future.

Works with a wide range of devices – A key challenge is to manage an evolving population of mobile devices from different manufacturers effectively. Some solutions don't manage devices from all device manufacturers, resulting in the tedious task of manually updating individual devices. It is important to evaluate solutions that support handheld computers, laptops, printers, smartphones and tablets, and a company that is committed to supporting future platforms and device types as they emerge.

Depth of feature set – Look for a solution that has a deep feature set and consistently supports newer technologies. For example, if a solution says it supports a particular device, make sure that support includes the features you need and not just the ability to, for example, check battery strength. Compare solutions side-by-side and take note of which features are missing. Conduct research concerning product upgrades and new release frequency.

Looking to the future – Business changes such as company expansion, economic cycles, product evolution and management turnover can have an impact across the organization and on its IT needs. Your company will most likely continually add more and varied mobile devices and operating systems, such as Apple and Android to your wireless ecosystem, resulting in a complex and diverse mobile asset population. Maybe you deploy a different backend database or you move from Windows servers to Linux. Your organization may decide to move outside the four walls, in which case Wireless LAN versus Wireless WAN solutions become important. The point is that you need to consider whether or not a vendor has the ability to adapt to changes in your company and your networks. You need someone that has a proven track record of product evolution.

Strong customer base – Find a vendor that has a strong customer base, and don't be afraid to ask for customer references. Call the references and ask questions about the vendor's

customer service efforts, how the system performs and their overall satisfaction. Look for a vendor that is a leader in your industry and knows and understands your needs.

Excellent customer service – What is the vendor’s reputation when it comes to customer service? Look for someone who offers around-the-clock access to its customer service team through various channels such as email, phone or online chat. Look for a provider that is willing to support you and make sure your solution is always working.

Vendor viability – What is the company’s longevity or stability? How long has the company been in business? Is it financially stable and growing? When evaluating its customer base, look at how long they have had their customers. Do customers stay with them long-term? Seek out a company that has a solid track record with strong management, engineering and support teams that know and understand the nuances of MDM.

Conclusion

As outlined in this whitepaper, selecting a MDM delivery methodology can be a confusing and difficult decision.

Below is a quick summary of each option:

Premise-based – If you want to maintain a high level of control of the system and you also have available IT skills and resources, then you would likely select a premise-based solution. This is also ideal if you prefer to directly control the system’s security and administration. A premised-based MDM solution requires a larger up-front investment.

SaaS – If you don’t want to maintain servers at your site(s) but still want the management and administration to be in your hands, then you should consider an on-demand offering. Customers can negate or minimize the up-front cost and instead pay a monthly or annual fee for the system.

Managed Services – If your IT department is over-extended or lacks the specialized expertise, consider a managed services offering. This option allows you to turn the management function over to experts who handle it for you. This proactive management service provides support without draining internal resources and still provides regular status reports so that you are aware of specific items like roll-outs, software/hardware updates and asset/inventory control.

Take the time to consider each method carefully. Each option has benefits and what is right for your organization might not be the best approach for someone else. Ask your vendor questions, and look for one that can support all of the deployment options to best serve you now and into the future.

About Wavelink

With more than 6 million active client licenses in the field, Wavelink is the leading provider of multi-vendor mobile device management, wireless infrastructure management, terminal emulation, voice enabling, proactive telecom expense management and mobile application development software. Wavelink technology solves the unique challenges involved in deploying, managing and controlling today's enterprise mobility systems and facilitates peak performance from frontline staff. More than 15,000 companies in retail, manufacturing, healthcare, government, public safety and logistics industries rely on Wavelink to accelerate application delivery, reduce device management and support costs, and tighten network security. Inside the four walls, or in the field, Wavelink leads mobility.