

# Mobile Device Trends in the Industrial Sector

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The mobile device trend is not just for the consumer sector anymore; buyer demand and employee desire has brought constant connectivity to the B2B space, and the



trend only appears to be growing.

“The proliferation of smartphones and connected devices in worker’s private lives has contributed to a desire for similar tools at work,” says Mike Zelman, Vice President of Business Development at Handheld Group, a company that manufactures rugged mobile computers and devices. Workers want to have access to the data they need at all times, even while in the field or out on the facility floor – and there are many benefits to letting them have access to it.

Zelman notes that the mobile trend is helping to drive employee productivity: “Providing data to a worker in the field or on the factory floor can enable smarter and faster decisions. Additionally, allowing a field worker to acquire data on a connected mobile device can lead to improved accuracy and higher efficiency.” These advantages alone would inspire a company to keep pace with the trend, but another factor has prompted the movement even more: the customer (and employee) requires it.

The heightened pressure for companies to do business faster and more accurately than ever ties almost directly to consumer demand. The expectations that companies like Target and Amazon have instilled in the consumer sector are creeping into the B2B sector as workers begin to expect the same level of service to which they are accustomed as consumers. Consumers also expect the same tools

for the workplace that they have elsewhere.

So how can your business be mobile ready? Zelman offers three steps:

1. Clearly prioritize the objectives around a mobile deployment. What KPIs do you want to affect with your mobile strategy? Is it accuracy, or response times? Defining your goals first will make for a much more seamless integration later.
2. Define the use model and environment in which the mobile devices will be used. What do you want employees to be able to do from the field? What data sets should be restricted access when outside the firewall? Will you need SSL encryption to protect sensitive data?
3. Understand and fill in any gaps in existing infrastructure needed to support the deployment. Will you be purchasing devices for employees, or allowing them to use their own? Will you need to create a WiFi network for your facility?

Companies that fail to accept, or at least explore, this trend toward mobility run the risk of losing their customers and employees. While customers may not see the lack of mobile devices in use in the facility, they will feel the lengthy customer service response times if employees are not empowered to act on inquiries or mishaps in a timely fashion. Employees, in turn, can grow frustrated with internal processes if they are not given the data and tools needed to stay abreast of their competition. Sensing a lack of support, these same employees could leave the company for one that offers a business model more in tune to the modern mobile user.

Zelman observes that the mobile ecosystem will continue to advance rapidly in the next six to twelve months. "The continued build-out of LTE networks will allow faster communications and access to larger sets of data for field workers," he says. Another point to note: a wider range of wireless field sensing devices will allow for more efficient management of remote assets, once again raising the amount of data available to a company regarding its projects, products, and shipments. Businesses that take advantage of the data available to them through the devices that enable access to it will be a step ahead of their competition.

The bottom line is that industrial companies need to use mobility in the same way that they have used other communication platforms in the past: to anticipate and meet customer needs. Any trend that enables a company to do so is an important one to note - and probably one in which companies need to participate.

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