Why mobile strategies do actually work

In order to seriously compete in today's commercial environment decision makers have to put into practice a carefully refined mobile strategy. Any credible strategy will inevitably cover cloud-based service delivery, most notably Microsoft's Office365, which is an example of 'Software as Service' (SaaS).

This is the view of technical experts at Network Alliance, an established national ICT service provider with a track record of almost two decades of proactive, value-add service to the market.

The company believes Microsoft's Office365 represents a seismic shift in how businesses acquire, deploy and use software. The value of this technology to a mobile strategy is summarised in three key points:

• Microsoft's data centres are secure, highly-resilient and provide guaranteed uptime backed-up by a money-back guarantee. This is especially important to SMMEs, who typically do not have the in-house resources, skills or expertise to address hardware or system failure, and simply cannot afford the cost associated with downtime and lost productivity.

• End-users are empowered to access email and other business critical data from virtually any device with an internet connection, as such data is housed in the cloud. In the event of hardware/system failure, or disruption to fixed-line infrastructure, mobile and other users can thus either work from home (telecommute) or from locations equipped with WiFi, thus negating the impact of such disruptions.

• An Office 365 Subscription reduces software licensing cost, as, depending on the type of Office 365 subscription, users are allowed to install up to five copies of Office 365 ProPlus per user on multiple devices. Thus, one subscription allows the deployment on desktop workstations, laptop computers, Surface tablets and the like, thus facilitating productivity regardless of a user's location or the device used.

The solution offers clear advantages to the both the consumer and the business user says André Fourie, Operations Manager at Network Alliance.

"Specific advantages to the enterprise include lower cost of ownership and compliance with corporate governance guidelines because data is stored in secure, highly-resilient data centres with guaranteed uptime. This mitigates risk associated with data loss, loss of productivity and downtime," says Fourie.

When considering the potential adoption of cloud computing, CTO's, IT Directors and IT Managers have to pay attention to the extent to which they want to (or are forced to, in many instances) exercise control over their environments. Thus, it is prudent to consider a hybrid model that includes both on-premise infrastructure and SaaS elements, as well as the ability to further reduce cost by subscribing to different product suites per end-user role/ function.

Taking it to the Cloud

Network Alliance endorses the message that cloud computing is complementary to any mobile strategy today.

"Until a couple of years ago, the vast majority of corporate computer users typically used desktop workstations and/or laptop computers, which typically featured both Windows and the Office productivity suite. However, the release of the iPad in April 2010, coupled with the emergence of BYOD revolutionised the IT landscape by significantly changing both consumer and enterprise behaviour; smartphones and/or tablets replaced pc's and the era of standardisation effectively ended when network administrators started allowing devices running iOS, Android and Windows Phone 7/8 to connect to corporate networks. Corporate enterprises and IT departments have had no choice but to adapt to the demands of its end-users and the market direction" Fourie continues.

The Company's message to the market is that cloud computing exists because of the need to facilitate 'anywhere access', while businesses adopt mobile strategies in order take advantage of the benefits – cost and otherwise – of cloud computing.

"While a well-designed on-premise or hosted data centre can facilitate so-called 'in-house mobility – think of VPN and/or RDP access, Outlook Anywhere, Outlook Web Access and a published instance of SharePoint - these all require a high-level of technical expertise to implement/maintain and can be expensive. Cloud computing is here to stay and will no doubt become more ubiquitous once 'Platform as a Service' ("PaaS) and 'Infrastructure as a Services' ("IaaS") become more mature and are embraced by more and more enterprises. However, I envisage that many corporate enterprise will be loath to cede all control to cloud service providers, and will thus defer to a hybrid solution that encompasses both cloud and on-premise solution elements," Fourie adds.