Key points from the Empowering People with Technology Symposium

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Empowering People with Technology

1. The New Normal

The commercial world is a very volatile place

Since the global recession of 2008 it has become imperative that businesses are lean, agile and commercially attractive. Eight years on we are still feeling the effects, and certainly in the UK, our economic stability is being challenged even further with Brexit, the living wage, pension increases and the apprenticeship levy. This creates its own set of challenges and uncertainty, yet businesses have the potential to overcome the situation by embracing innovation through the deployment of technology.

Gartner have highlighted three key technologies that will drive the digital businesses of the future; namely, Internet of Things (IoT), Mobile and Cloud. Individually these will provide incremental improvements, but together they have the potential to drive transformational business change.

TBS's approach is unprecedented; in that their managed mobility solution, TaskMaster, has all three elements with the addition of Wearable technology. These wearables offer a unique solution to our customers as they overcome the usability barrier presented by Smartphones and tablets. As truly hands-free devices, the result has been both transformational and disruptive.

The business case for mobilisation technologies has changed beyond recognition in just three years. Where the required capital expenditure was once prohibitive, with fit-for-purpose devices often costing £1000, at times there was no viable business case. Now, with sophisticated low cost Wearables, Smartphones, and IoT, the business case is heavily weighted in favour of deployment.

2. Consumerisation to Industrialisation

Consumer technology is no longer just for "geeks" or the affluent, the cost of technology has plummeted over the last decade, making it very affordable for all.

In 2014 consumers spent 1,224 billion dollars and this figure is projected to reach 2,976 billion dollars by 2020, according to FMI.

It is expected that the smart home (IoT) segment is set to grow the fastest. With this ever increasing demand, Samsung Electronics - the biggest player - is investing around 13.4 billion dollars (20% of global sales) in R&D. There is a wealth of low cost innovative technology percolating its way through businesses, with the most prolific to date being the Smartphone.

3. Adopt, Adapt, Improve…. Quickly!

Adopt

The danger with adoption of any new technology is that there is a tendency to erect artificial barriers to implementation. The traditional procurement model is to define the project requirements, create a request for information (RFI), and use this to select a group of vendors. From here, refine the RFI and create a request for a proposal (RFP), enter into vendor selection process, pick a preferred vendor, enter into contract negotiations, and finally sign the contract. By the time the project has started, the fast pace of technology development - invariably the reason for undertaking the project is the first place – means that the chosen technology is now obsolete.

It is a simple fact: the new normal in which we live, demands a fresh, agile progression to keep ahead of the game.

The great thing is, digital transformation involves using technology that is familiar to the majority of the workforce as they are already personal consumers. So simplify the buy-in and engagement stage, and allow the focus to be all about process innovation and empowerment.

Adapt

It is increasingly important to explore with key business stakeholders, the impact these technologies will have on their business, by starting small and quickly deploying a proof of concept with the focus on specific business outcomes. This creates a business sense of urgency to concentrate on digital innovation and a practical demonstration of how technology can underpin it. With the investigation complete, businesses have enough data to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with the innovation or to revisit the requirements.

Improve

The technology to deliver innovation exists. Assembling the component parts in a unique way, whilst focussing on the workforce needs, delivering transformational change that adds real value to the business, and turning “business as usual” into “innovation as usual”.

4. Driving Cleaning Service Change – case study

The TBS approach

With the help of TBS, Mitie ran an innovation forum with key members of the Mitie Clean Environments team, made up of sales and account directors, and the daily operations team. TBS brought to the table its wealth of mobility experience which, partnered with Samsung's latest innovative technology, enabled it to demonstrate various compelling scenarios and the following 'what if' questions:

So wouldn't it be great if….

- Only those waste and recycling bins that are full, or better still just becoming full, were visited?
- Only the rooms that needed cleaning were cleaned? Based on data showing which rooms had been used, when and for how long, by how many people - whether office, meeting room or washroom.
- Only the dispensers that are empty, or nearly empty, were part of the replenishment schedule? Soap, hand cream and toilet roll dispensers can all be monitored.

The outcome of the innovation forum quickly led to a prototype using a number of revolutionary technology solutions. Through this, Mitie are able to help their clients understand their buildings, providing meaningful and useful data, for example, peak times of use and footfall in certain areas. Knowing when to clean and where to clean, removing the scheduled cleans that were carried out on the hour every hour, means that Mitie can streamline the entire process and apply resources direct to where they can best be used.

This is only the beginning.

How was this achieved?

The first stage solution, enabled by Smart Watches and Sensors is demand-based cleaning; only cleaning what needs cleaning, combined with scheduled tasks.

The initial focus is on washrooms. The sensors on the washroom entrance count every visit in real-time. This information is fed back to a large IoT database in the cloud where analytics run on the data, provide insight for operational managers to make decisions based on actual usage.

Washroom insight

From the pilot schemes and the data recorded it has become clear that washroom usage is random and is influenced by time of day and the day of the week. There is a significant difference in usage between male and female facilities. Using a business rules engine, a threshold value is set for each individual washroom to ensure that it is cleaned optimally, thus delivering a unique and personalised service. As more data builds up, longer term trends can be identified, allowing for an increase and decrease of resource during peak times of the month or year. This increased understanding of the buildings being cleaned facilitates further improvements in where resource is deployed during the working day.

5. Panel session sound bites

The panel, made up of industry experts, explored the role that technology and innovation will play in empowering the workforce.

The panel consisted of Bob Forsyth, Managing Director, Mitie Security and Clean Environments, Rob Bamforth, Principle Analyst, Quocirca Ltd, Jeremy White, Editor of Wired Magazine and Katie King, Managing Director, Zoodikers Consulting Ltd.

Steve Reynolds moderated this enlightening session and some key points are summarised here:

- The FM sector is conservative in nature and slow to adopt change.

- The FM Sector is becoming aware that margins are reducing in a "commoditised people-based" area. A few years ago margins were 25% (cleaning) and 15% (security); we are now looking at three to five per cent. This is not sustainable; customers want "cost certainty" and Mitie's clear strategy is to invest heavily in IT, in order to deliver this.

- As technology reduces in price, there will be a greater appetite from businesses to deploy. As little as 18 months ago, giving a Smartphone or Wearable device to a cleaner or someone on minimum wage or zero hours contract, was almost unheard of, now it has become a serious consideration.

- In the next 10 years one third of all jobs will be carried out by machines. However, within this decade we will become much more accepting and comfortable with robots and artificial intelligence.

- In the meantime, feeding additional data into business processes will provide new insight; convey these insights directly to front line staff who act upon them, and many processes will become semi-automated and streamlined.

- As the deployment of IoT grows the increase in data from these will overwhelm the human decision making process, the need to understand what is relevant will no longer be the role of a manager, but self-learning algorithms running in the cloud will automate the processing and understanding of this data and deliver outcomes to the managers.

- Some companies are handling the adoption of technology with new roles and titles, for example "Chief Digital Officer" as an overarching role supervising both the Chief Information Officer and the Chief Marketing Officer. Gartner suggest that 25% of companies will have someone in this role this year.

- There is no option but to use technology.

6. Conclusion

The key to business survival and sustainability, is the capacity to rapidly change to meet future challenges. The adoption of innovative technology in business will differentiate us from our competition.

The Empowering People with Technology Symposium presented, through industry experts and practical examples, a refreshing approach to adopting new technology in an agile but more importantly, a cost effective way. This approach should be embraced by all businesses; being adapted and improved to stay ahead of the innovation game.

Clearly, Wearable IoT, Cloud and Mobile technology has been proven by Mitie to have the form, function and cost effectiveness to deliver business benefits and ROI in a unique and rapid way. Like Mitie, many businesses can and should, embrace this.

You snooze you lose

Innovation is an essential process and must be treated in an agile way. If businesses employ traditional requirements capture and RFP processes, by the time the project kicks off the overarching original strategy will be out of date.

Wearables and IoT offer a unique solution

Wearable technology should not be seen as a replacement for a Smartphone; look for unique opportunities where only wearables will provide a useable workable solution. IoT will provide business insight and digital transformation and will be an imperative for all businesses within the next five years.

Failure is not an option

If a Proof of Concept fails to deliver the business case, it should not be seen as a negative outcome. The lessons learned help with business insight.

Tradition killed Woolworths

Once the business case has been proven, roll out quickly or put out a simple RFP, and qualify it as soon as possible. Delaying and remaining behind the innovation curve, has the potential to result in a costly failure.

What keeps you awake at night?

When considering mobilising a business, look for the problem areas and treat these as a priority, this may sound like common sense, however, it's very easy to deploy technology for technology's sake. Today some businesses are still buying expensive tablet devices as an email solution and then later realising that there is no ROI on their investment!

7. How we can help?

TBS has been involved with many ground breaking projects, using wearable and IoT technologies to tackle unique business challenges. As part of this development, and in conjunction with Samsung, TBS are offering a unique opportunity to engage in a two-hour practical, hands-on workshop based around wearable and IoT use cases. There will be a chance to evaluate devices and identify the areas of any business that could benefit from deployment.

Please contact TBS to explore the potential of a workshop and to discuss this opportunity further.

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