

Companies need revolution, not rationalisation, to survive economic gloom

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Simply tightening the belt is not enough to survive during an economic downturn. According to one company, Mbrane, businesses should revolutionise the way they work to find the necessary efficiency and performance improvements they will need to survive an economic downturn.

Twenty years ago, before word processors, mobile phones and email, companies were dominated by paper as the medium for communication. Pools of typists wrote memo's, invoices, and shipping documents. Running a business like that today would be unthinkable. But 20 years ago, it was the way business was done.

During the 1980's, a combination of technological progress and economic pressure revolutionised this now antiquated business model into what we know today. The typists have gone, and email has replaced the memo. Today, we think of our businesses as lean, efficient organisms. So when economic downturn begins to bite again, where do business leaders find the additional productivity and efficiency savings needed? Simply squeezing the business still harder seems unlikely to yield the required benefits needed to deliver real improvement.

Recent "down-sizing" of high profile companies seems to confirm the onset of a global economic downturn. But while many companies will simply seek to squeeze more out of their existing infrastructures, some companies are embracing a new technology that could radically change the face of business as we know it today. Technology, once again, has the potential to radically change business forever.

Mobile Business (m-Business) has the potential to overhaul the way we work, supplying real-time information to the user where the user needs it most. This shift sounds simplistic, but for most businesses simply giving the user information where it is required rather than having to put the user where the information is, is a radical departure.

Of course, in a time of economic gloom, the last thing business leaders think of doing is spending yet more money on technology. Shareholders are far more acceptant of seeing radical cut-backs, job reductions and other forms of rationalisation, and will question the wisdom of such an investment. But it is the early adopters of m-Business that stand to make the greatest gains.

Analysts' Gartner Group believe that companies that do not embrace m-Business will be 20% less efficient than those that do, and they further state that those companies that do adopt the technology will see a 30% increase in productivity of roaming and remote staff. Impressive figures in any economic climate, and far more advantageous than simple rationalisation?

Business leaders are naturally sceptical about new technology. But like any business decision, careful analysis of the opportunity and potential of m-Business highlights opportunities in many types of company. Warehouses, for example, still largely operate with picking lists on paper, introducing delay and inaccuracy. Field sales teams still typically rely on internal sales support to process orders, and field based service staff still use paper based job sheets. Changing to m-business techniques eliminates many of the inefficiencies in these processes, and companies are surprised at the amount of savings that can be gained.

What business leaders should be looking for when approaching m-Business is a clear return on investment. Working closely with a vendor to deliver fast, tangible returns will be crucial.

Above all else, m-Business is about empowering staff to work in a way that is more natural to them, so any m-Business solution should be flexible enough to adapt to their individual requirements. This should lead businesses to look at solutions that are not restrictive in any way, an open platform that permits users full access to any enterprise system, over any

carrier, via any device. This flexibility not only accommodates the users individual preferences, but also ensures that the m-Business platform can grow with the organisation and adapt to technology and requirements as they arise.

To date, humans have had to adapt to technology, restricting the access to enterprise utilities to the physical boundaries of the companies. Even the Internet has failed to overcome this. But technology is now beginning to adapt to the way we work, and this revolution is set to change the face of business forever.