

MobileIron launches second generation of virtualized smartphone management

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MobileIron has announced Virtual Smartphone Platform 2.0, which focuses on supporting employee-owned devices in the enterprise. MobileIron has added a valuable end-user capability that gives employees the same tools to monitor both smartphones and wireless service costs as IT. Supporting BlackBerry, iPhone, **Symbian**, webOS and Windows Mobile, MobileIron's server and device client software is able to manage both employee- and company-owned devices.

The 451 Take

While use of employee-owned devices in the enterprise will continue to grow, the tolerance for unmanaged devices by businesses will shrink. Companies will increasingly look to vendors like MobileIron to protect themselves against the risks posed by employee-owned devices. To help offset the cost of locking down consumerization, the burden on IT must be reduced. The addition of an end-user portal allows employees to manage their smartphones, reducing the workload and impact on IT budgets caused by consumerization. MobileIron is the newest kid on the block in this space, but its focus and capabilities make it a strong player out of the gate.

Context

Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, MobileIron started in incubation during the second quarter of 2007. It emerged from stealth mode in August 2009 with \$11m in second-round funding from **Norwest Venture Partners**, **Sequoia Capital** and **Storm Ventures**. MobileIron raised \$8.8m of angel funding in March 2008. The company also has **Big Basin Partners** as an outside board member. MobileIron has 40 full-time employees, of which 33 are engineers. The company is led by two **Cisco** alumni, one of whom also founded **Airespace**. Cisco acquired Airespace in 2005 for \$450m. The management team also has roots in **Motorola**, **Nokia**, **Nortel Networks** and **Sybase**.

Customers

The company only began selling its service in August 2009, but has seen significant interest from companies that want to manage employee- and company-owned smartphones. The company won't disclose total customers or seats, but has announced some customers such as networking hardware vendor **NETGEAR**; **Fenwick & West**, a Silicon Valley law firm; and **Windsor Foods**, a Houston-based frozen-food manufacturer.

MobileIron did share its full list of customers with us, and the company is selling into a wide range of companies across several verticals, with two-thirds of its sales going to large enterprises. These deals are starting out in the 500-1,000 seat range, but the company is expecting some of these to expand beyond 40,000 seats. An indicator of growth, the number for ongoing MobileIron trials is several multiples of its customer count.

Products

MobileIron's Virtual Smartphone Platform (VSP) provides management tools for smartphones in the enterprise. Targeting employee-owned devices, MobileIron provides the management and monitoring tools for BlackBerry, iPhone, **Palm Inc's** webOS, Windows Mobile and Symbian. The company promises to support Android shortly. VSP is made up of three modules that provide device management, monitoring and an end-user portal.

Device management comes from the IT Control Center module. This Web-based tool allows IT administrators to remotely provision, view device status, enforce policies (such as encryption) and lock or wipe the device in case of loss or theft. For some devices, it provides the ability to wipe only aspects of the device, such as enterprise email and applications, while leaving media untouched. IT Control Center also provides network access control, blocking unauthorized devices from connecting to the enterprise. Leveraging GPS-enabled devices, it can locate missing smartphones. Addressing the importance of mobile applications, MobileIron also provides a whitelist of approved applications, redirecting users to the relevant mobile app store. For iPhone users, this provides an 'enterprise app store.'

Mobile Activity Intelligence provides monitoring use of the device across voice and data networks. To reduce service costs, this module provides alerts for roaming and when approaching preset or plan limits. Also included is usage analysis of employee calls to help IT better select coverage plans – a key offering is the ability to manage dropped calls, giving IT data to present to carriers when negotiating plans.

MyPhone@Work is an end-user portal that allows employees to manage their own device to reduce the workload for IT. Users can register their device and use the portal to lock and locate a missing device. If necessary, employees can wipe their own device.

Technology

MobileIron's offering is an appliance-based offering that puts a server inside an enterprise's firewall. After installing a client on each employee's smartphone, key data from the device – settings, apps installed, usage data – is copied and stored on the server, in effect putting smartphone data in the cloud. This clone of each employee's smartphone is synced with the device itself nearly continuously, depending on device type. Each device has a virtual instance, which can be run in an emulator. This format allows IT administrators to make changes to the clone of the device without touching the device itself. Once configuration changes are done, the new settings are sent to the device during the next sync session.

Within IT Control Center, MobileIron provides a boundary between enterprise and personal data on the smartphone. This provides selective control of employee-owned devices, building a wall of privacy between IT and the user. One example is the ability to block the syncing of picture files into VSP's cloud. This also serves to limit the amount of data that IT needs to store. Data-boundary settings can be enforced by grouping or specific device type.

Competition

MobileIron is not alone in the bid to manage employee-owned smartphones. Sybase's latest version of Afaria builds on the company's support for iPhone in the enterprise.

Conceivium's MobileAnalyzer provides device management capabilities for enterprises and managed service providers. **Good Technology's** Mobile Control supports all the same mobile OSs, as well as Android. **Trust Digital** wants to be a management server component for iPhone with its Enterprise Mobility Management offering. **Synchronica** is in an adjacent market focusing on email with its Mobile Gateway Enterprise Edition, but supports mobile phones as well as smartphones.

MobileIron's monitoring of service costs and usage competes with services from telecom expense management firms that are increasingly focused on mobile, like **Tangoe**. **Visage Mobile** is relevant, as well, since it is focused on managing mobile-services spend in the enterprise.

SWOT analysis

Strengths

The company will soon support every smartphone OS, allowing it to manage any employee-owned smartphone. Virtualization of only specific data types allows the company to manage employee-owned devices with light touch.

Weaknesses

The company is just starting out, so customers may be wary of the company's staying power and ongoing support. Strong VC backing and a focus on a growth market may alleviate concerns.

Opportunities

The company focuses on locking down consumerization, which will continue to be a fairly horizontal trend, giving MobileIron a broad opportunity across a number of enterprises.

Threats

Large incumbent vendors are already moving to address their current and potential customers' needs in this space. That said, the company's approach may also provide value to competition.

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