Chapter VI
Creation of a Process Framework for Transitioning to a Mobile Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the creation of a process framework that can be used by enterprises in order to transition to mobile enterprises. This framework facilitates adoption of mobile technologies by organizations in a strategic manner. A mobile enterprise transition framework provides a process for transition that is based on the factors that influence such transition. The Mobile Enterprise Transition (MET) framework, outlined in this chapter, is based on the four dimensions of economy, technology, methodology, and sociology. These four dimensions for MET have been identified based on an understanding of people, processes, and technologies. A research project undertaken by the author validates these four dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an approach to transitioning to mobile enterprises. The earlier outline of this approach was published by Unhelkar (2005) and it contained three dimensions of a mobile enterprise transition framework. Later, based on the research undertaken by the author, this transition framework was modified and extended to result in a four dimensional framework. This framework is the core discussion topic of this chapter. A complete and in-depth discussion of this process framework also appears in Unhelkar (2008).

Mobile technologies form the basis of the communications revolution that has resulted in elimination of physical connectivity for people, processes and things. This wireless connectivity has resulted in significant impact on the organization of the business and its relationship with the customers. The ability of businesses and customers to connect to each other ubiquitously -independent of time and location – using mobile technologies is the core driver of this change. However, successful changes in terms of adoption of mobile technologies and applications in an organization depend on a process framework. This chapter discusses a Mobile Enterprise Transitions framework

for *transitioning* an organization to a mobile organization. The purpose of this MET framework is to provide guidance in terms of people, processes and technologies involved in successful transitioning of the enterprises.

A MET can be defined by extending and refining an earlier definition of mobile transformation given by Marmaridis and Unhelkar (2005) as "evolution of business practices through the adoption of suitable mobile technologies and processes resulting in pervasiveness." This definition suggests that the MET will facilitate incorporation of mobile technologies in business processes that will result in pervasive business activities independent of location and time. The understanding of MET, however, needs to be based on a firm understanding of how mobility is unique and how it is different to land-based Internet connectivity.

CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF MOBILITY IN THE "MET" FRAMEWORK

Electronic business transitions have been studied, amongst others, by Ginige et al (2001), Lan and Unhelkar (2005). However, the uniqueness of mobile technologies in terms of their impact on business has been discussed by Marmaridis and Unhelkar (2005), Arunatileka and Unhelkar (2003), Godbole and Unhelkar (2003), Lan and Unhelkar (2005), and Unhelkar (2008). These authors have focussed on the specific nature of mobility as depicted in Figure 1. The inner square in Figure 1 indicates land-based connectivity between enterprises, functional units and other fixed devices. This connectivity evolved from the initial centralized connectivity of the mainframe, followed by the client-server connectivity and finally resulting in the Internet connectivity (business to business - B2B and business to customer - B2C). The Internet-based connectivity is further augmented by the XML (eXtensible Markup Language) to facilitate the Internet as a medium of computing, rather than merely as a means of communication. However, as depicted by the outer square in Figure 1, the external wireless connectivity, by its very nature, is between an individual and the business or between two individuals. As correctly stressed by Elliott and Phillips (2004), a mobile phone is a far more personal device that is carried by an individual as compared with a desktop personal computer.

This nature of wireless connectivity needs to be understood and incorporated in all dimensions of MET (this could be based on discussions such as Thai et.al (2003); the four dimensions are discussed next). For example, economically, the cost of a mobile device has dropped and continues to drop significantly making is obligatory for businesses to consider mobility in order to access and serve the customer. Technically, it is essential to consider the "individuality" of the mobile gadgets and their ability to be location-aware

Figure 1. Mobility is personal in nature (based on Unhelkar, 2005)