

SAS goes mobile with CSC's Mobile Office

CSC MOBILE OFFICE CASE STUDY

The mobile requirements of today's business world are constantly increasing. As globalisation continues to sweep the world, countless companies are going mobile to maintain their competitive edge. Meanwhile, workers are requiring more flexibility in their schedule in order to balance their hectic work routine with family and personal life.

For today's busy professionals, the ability to stay connected to their company's IT infrastructure has never been more important – in fact, it is essential to maintaining productivity and efficiency outside the office.

The ability to work anywhere

CSC is at the forefront of mobility with a new state-of-the-art solution that makes corporate resources available to the mobile workforce on standard devices, such as mobile phones and handheld computers. Called Mobile Office, the solution provides full access not only to email and personal data, but also to corporate applications, intranets and the Internet via a powerful web browser.

With Mobile Office it is also possible to synchronise with MS Smartphones and MS Pocket PC Phone Edition over the air, via a cradle, Bluetooth and WLAN (wireless network). Mobile Office's core infrastructure acts as a base platform to connect with business-critical systems within the company from anywhere at anytime.

SAS pilots Mobile Office

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), like every airline, is a very mobile company. "Administrative and operations staff alike need to be able to work even when they're on the go," says Claes Norrman, head of IT at SAS. So SAS wanted to give its staff the tools to carry out mobile work more effectively while keeping corporate information secure at all times. And, as there were a lot of different mobile devices in use throughout the

company, SAS was looking for a way to synchronise and control them.

Mobile Office provided the answer SAS was looking for. Because it features quick and easy centrally managed software distribution, devices running Mobile Office synchronise automatically with SAS's internal systems, so employees always have the latest information, right at their finger tips.

SAS decided to try out Mobile Office over a one-year pilot period. A group of 40 SAS top managers and middle managers incorporated Mobile Office into their workday while CSC built the main infrastructure for the solution around SAS's existing Microsoft systems.

Usability at the forefront

According to Mats Lundqvist, product manager for CSC, the main goal with Mobile Office was to create a user-friendly interface. "We wanted to take a fairly complicated infrastructure and hide it from the end user. The user should only see the functionalities that he or she will be working with and these should be set up in a way that the user is already familiar with. Our aim was to align the Mobile Office functionality with exactly what is on the laptop."



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In order to further tailor the solution to the real-life needs of SAS users, CSC collected feedback about what was working and what needed improvement. Lundqvist adds, "We interviewed each and every user until we got the solution right. How did the user react? What kind of needs did they have that were currently not being met by Mobile Office? Were they satisfied with the form factor? What was their preferred device?" CSC then used this valuable feedback to further improve the solution.

Highly secure and future ready

Mobile Office provides built-in access control software that is centrally configurable. This makes it easy for SAS's central administrator to prevent unauthorised access and data loss, regardless of where the user is located.

All data is also secured on a server and CSC keeps backups of passwords and other information which further minimises risk. According to Lundqvist, "We also use a central VPN solution in combination with certificate handling, and the devices are protected with encryption of all data storage. So users don't even have to think about security, they know it's secure."

And, Mobile Office is designed for the needs of tomorrow. Built on the proven version of Microsoft's operating system, the solution aims to follow the Microsoft roadmap. This means that it will be easy for SAS to build on new applications and processes as business needs change. Using standard, well-known tools also helps keep the cost of application development and functional design down.

Clear benefits already

After the one-year pilot period, SAS is extremely pleased with the results of Mobile Office. Managers have been easily able to access their emails, calendar and contacts while on the move. This has already led to increased flexibility and sped up decision-making processes.

Mobile Office will continue to deliver more benefits over time as business-critical information about HR and finance soon becomes available on the system. In the long run, Mobile Office will also help SAS gain greater control of its costs and assets.

Successful pilot leads to company-wide roll out

Norrman estimates that around 7,000 of the company's 33,000 employees will eventually be using the system. This will include flight staff, who will use Mobile Office to provide better service for passengers. Norrman has been particularly impressed by how easy it has been to get the system up and running for individual users. "The users basically take care of themselves. Once you've installed the synchronisation program, most of the system just works automatically," he says.

He adds, "Eventually, this will allow for new ways of working, and some people might choose to keep their computers turned off and only use their mobile phones. What the employees have really appreciated is the ability to access their calendar and email. Since the mobile phones have built-in WLAN capabilities, they can also be used in the air."

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CSC makes a special point of understanding its clients and provides experts with real-world experience to work with them. CSC is vendor-independent, delivering solutions that best meet each client's unique requirements.

For more than 45 years, clients in industries and governments worldwide have trusted CSC with their business process and information systems outsourcing, systems integration and consulting needs.

The company trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "CSC."