

Managing your company's mobile phone usage

With the economic downturn, businesses are scrutinizing their communications costs more closely than ever. **David Sharpley**, of the 'mobile personalization' company Bridgewater Systems, explains how policy control technology helps to put the IT department back in control of mobile communications budgets

Companies which are in the business of managing large quantities of products will be fully aware of the benefits, both financial and otherwise, of effective asset tracking. The technologies available to do this offer reliable and cost-effective ways of automatically identifying and tracking assets beyond the functions captured by traditional asset management processes.

It is hard to imagine doing business today without the use of a mobile phone. The smartphone, in particular, has revolutionized business communications and operations by providing instant, remote access to company data, the Internet and email wherever the employee happens to be located.

But while mobility can undoubtedly deliver great business benefits, the current economic climate and the need to remain in tight control of operational spending mean that smart businesses are increasingly taking another look at their smartphone costs. The name of the game is to shave off unnecessary expenditure while still delivering the service that individual employees need, and this is precisely where policy control technology plays a vital role.

Two scenarios

Take Rajiv, for example. He's the new European sales manager of an international software business and he's always on the move – both in the UK and throughout Western Europe. While he's travelling, Rajiv needs access to his email, he needs to make and receive calls to other staff and to customers, and he needs to access enterprise systems to get the up-to-date information required to do his job effectively. Rajiv is keen to make a big impact in his new role, which unfortunately he did in a way he hadn't intended.

After a busy first month of successful meetings throughout Europe, his first phone bill arrived. The £1500 bill meant Rajiv certainly made a big impression on the IT director. As

a result, and despite his protests, the IT director restricted access to data roaming services not just for Rajiv but for all employees. No matter how bitterly the sales staff complained about how it was negatively impacting their effectiveness, the IT director could not afford to blow his budget by letting communication costs get out of control.

This is a typical example of how mobile communications plays a complex role within the enterprise. On the one hand, mobility can make employees more productive – but many businesses are now asking 'at what cost?'

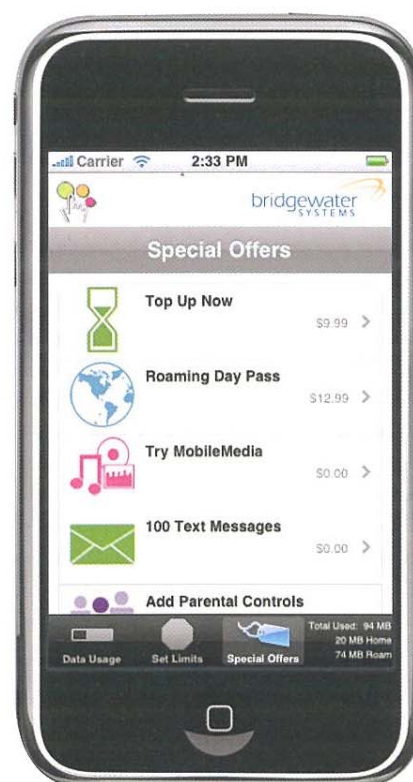
Linda is more cautious than Rajiv. She is a business manager for a retailer and she also travels for work. Being highly cost-conscious, Linda avoids the embarrassment of Rajiv's predicament by simply turning off her smartphone while travelling abroad.

However, while Linda's communication costs have never featured in the high-usage accounts her company's IT director likes to keep an eye on, her strategy meant that when a critical business decision needed to be made, Linda was not contactable. The resulting, sub-optimal, decision cost her firm thousands of pounds. A simple phone call at the right time would have meant that staff could have benefited from Linda's insight and extra costs would have been avoided.

Heart of a dilemma

These two scenarios represent the modern communications dilemma for businesses. At the heart of this dilemma is the opaqueness of mobile communications costs and the inability to control and monitor costs as they are being incurred.

But what if employees could track their usage in real time and monitor what they are spending on data, SMS, applications, voice and roaming charges? What if the IT department could set personal limits for each employee along with notifications on progress



Implementing a policy: Bridgewater's solution for the iPhone and BlackBerry won a Best of 4G Award at September's 4G World Conference and Expo in Chicago

towards these limits? And wouldn't it be good if employees received special offers from mobile operators, including day passes for new applications, roaming passes for staff who are travelling, bandwidth boosts, or free SMS with mobile advertising?

This is the type of mobile experience delivered through the use of policy control technology. Enterprises are able to move beyond a one-size-fits-all or on/off approach to mobile services to take a smarter and more business-oriented approach while still keeping costs under control. Policy control technology

empowers businesses to set their own policies on mobile communication usage, including mobile usage at home, in the office and while roaming. The IT department can also tailor the mobile service to the needs of individual users, including setting personal limits and notifications, and prioritizing certain applications.

Policy control improves the relationship between the enterprise and its mobile operator. When policy control technology is deployed, businesses are more likely to use and trial a greater variety of services because they understand the costs involved and are in control of these costs. By helping businesses avoid 'bill shock' and by taking a more proactive and tailored approach to enterprise communications, operators are more likely to drive usage of new services and therefore incremental revenues.

Policy control

Key information delivered by policy control technology when coupled with subscriber data (such as preferences, location, billing and behaviour) also enables operators and their partners to offer useful and contextual services and special promotions. What's more, now that the IT department is able to set its own policies and monitor its own usage, it no longer has to call the mobile operator. This creates a win-win situation, as it delivers greater control to the enterprise but also reduces the cost of customer service for the operator.

The IT director in Rajiv's company decides to move to a mobile operator which has deployed policy control software. He is then

able to work with the new operator to set up custom plans for employees based on roles. Rajiv now enjoys special roaming rates and priority access to sales applications while he's travelling. He has preset limits and notifications to ensure that he is productive on the road and to avoid another embarrassing 'bill shock' experience. The IT director spends less time monitoring phone bills and more time investigating innovative services that improve employees' productivity.

Linda's company is informed by its mobile operator that it has now implemented policy control technology. The IT director has introduced role-based usage limits and personalized notifications. As a result, Linda now feels confident in keeping her smartphone switched on when she's travelling. She is able to monitor her usage in real time. On a recent trip to Paris, she was sent a 'day pass' offer which gave her unlimited usage for £5. She can even contact her family without feeling guilty, since she knows there are now internal policies to deduct the cost from her wages each month.

Policy control technology provides a unique opportunity to empower enterprises to tailor communications services to their requirements. After all, it's your business and you're the expert on how to run it. Policy control technology puts you back in the driving seat and ensures that communication services deliver against your business needs without any nasty shocks at the end of the month. You might like to ask your mobile operator about it.

Don't become the next 'bill shock' victim



By defining usage limits as part of a mobile phone policy, the IT director can keep telecoms costs under control

So-called 'bill shock' refers to the phenomenon where a customer is aghast when they receive their phone bill. The scope for bill shock has increased recently through the introduction of a wider range of mobile data services which may also carry unpredictable pricing. Often employees and businesses fail to understand the complex pricing of roaming or data services and the likely consequences of these.

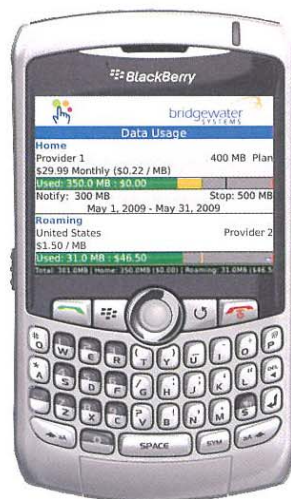
High-profile cases of bill shock fill newspaper column inches at regular intervals and aren't limited to any one mobile operator or any one market. How bad can it get? Well last year, an IT contractor from Manchester was sent a bill for £31 000 after downloading one episode of *Prison Break* while on holiday in Portugal. This summer the US television presenter Adam Savage, from the TV show *Mythbusters*, spent days on Twitter complaining that AT&T charged him \$11 000 for using mobile data while on a trip to Canada. And a *Top Gear* fan racked up a bill of £21 716 for downloading four episodes of his favourite show during a skiing trip to France earlier this year.

Your company does not have to become a victim of bill shock and neither does it have to lock down data services to avoid it. By using the capabilities provided by policy control technology, you can once again be in control of the cost and usage of your communications services.

Usage: how does policy control work?

The policy control system developed by Bridgewater Systems takes a three-part approach:

- The **myPolicy application**, currently available for the iPhone and BlackBerry (and for additional smartphones soon) tracks real-time data, SMS and applications usage, as well as voice and roaming charges. It enables users to set personal limits, notifications and roaming controls to manage mobile usage and prevent 'bill shock'. It allows employees to receive special offers in real time such as day passes for new applications, roaming passes for subscribers who are travelling, bandwidth top-ups, or free SMS with mobile advertising.
- The **myPolicy Broker**, which sends requests to and receives requests from the myPolicy application and communicates with the Policy Controller to retrieve information.
- A **Policy Controller**, which applies real-time business rules such as updating usage information and enforcing limits. It also sends requests to and receives information from network, IT and billing systems.



Knowing where they stand in relation to their monthly usage limits, staff can begin to make more effective use of their mobile phones