Why Your Mobile Strategy Could Do with a Leap of Faith

Selling cars is tough. Buyers are fussy about the color, the interiors and all the bells and whistles. They want to take every model they fancy out for a spin. But getting all the cars a buyer wants into one showroom can be problematic. A few months back, an auto manufacturer decided to solve this problem using Virtual Reality (VR). Using a VR headset and a mobile phone, the manufacturer now puts customers into the cockpit of its latest SUV for a test ride practically anywhere, any time. The mobile app is clever. It takes potential buyers through idyllic countryside and presents the brand in a smashing new technological light, especially to young buyers.

A decade ago, this was all science fiction. Not that mobile apps were not around. But those that were, remained limited to unglamorous back office and industrial work such as rugged bar code scanners in warehouses and in manufacturing plants.

A little later, two leading package delivery companies came along and took mobile applications to a new level. They used mobile devices to scan bar codes and take electronic signatures as proof of package delivery, reducing paper work and automating back-end tasks.

Are your mobile initiatives stuck in siloes?

Today, mobile applications have come a long way from performing rudimentary tasks. They are now the focal point of everything: monitoring production, approving decisions, tracking consignments, completing transactions, booking a taxi, buying groceries and chasing Mewtwo, Moltres, Zapdos, Articuno and Ditto (die-hard fans and players of Pokémon Go will know how prized these are). Of all digital media, users spend most of their time on mobile devices.

It isn't surprising then that mobility is at the core of the current wave of digital transformation. Mobile devices are exploding (smart phones, tablets, scanners, wearables, He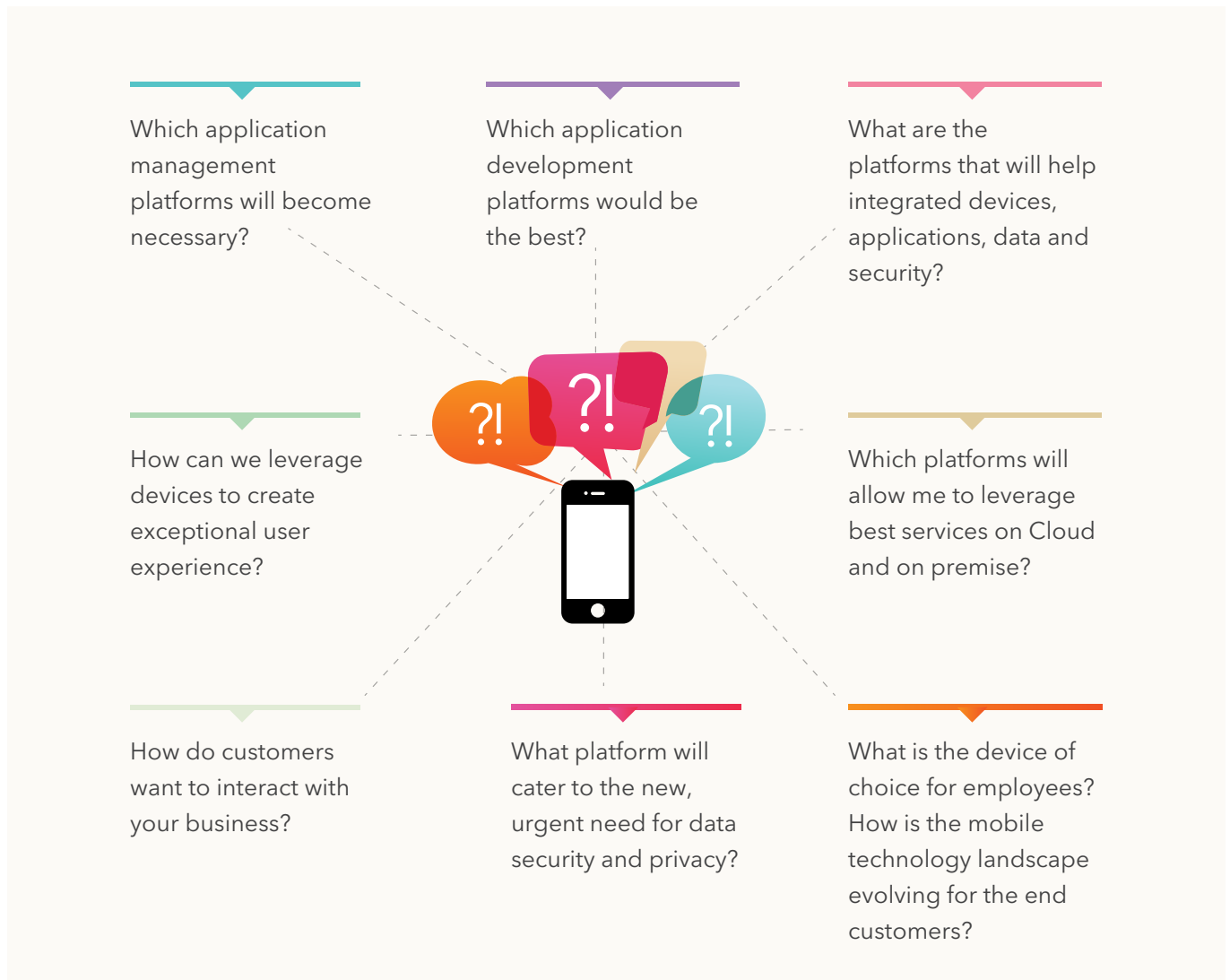ads Up Displays, VR Headsets). Customers are using these devices to spend time and money. Organizations are responding to a globalized, 24X7 business environment using mobiles. And yet, remarkably, cohesive strategic thinking around mobile adoption appears to have taken a back seat.

Mobile applications are still being developed and deployed in siloes. In some cases, they are being used to simplify enterprise processes. In others, to meet the demands of mobile employees and partners. And, with increasing frequency, to deliver products and services to end customers and to seek feedback. In each instance, the development is in isolation, serving the goals of individual teams and functions within an enterprise.

Creating that 'wow!' or nothing at all

With the growing focus on omni channel delivery and the importance of a unified customer experience, there is an urgent need for organizations to design a well thought-through strategy and bring mobility to the forefront of their digital transformation initiatives by examining key questions:

Which application management platforms will become necessary?

Which application development platforms would be the best?

What are the platforms that will help integrated devices, applications, data and security?

How can we leverage devices to create exceptional user experience?

Which platforms will allow me to leverage best services on Cloud and on premise?

How do customers want to interact with your business?

What platform will cater to the new, urgent need for data security and privacy?

What is the device of choice for employees? How is the mobile technology landscape evolving for the end customers?

The answer to these questions lies in making the device and its ability the starting point of building user experience. Once the end customer devices are determined, application design, user interface and infrastructure must deliver the "wow!" factor. A strategy that does not deliver this may not be worth pursuing.

Ideally, a single platform should bring together all the components of a mobile strategy (see table: Your Mobile Strategy).

Your Mobile Strategy		
Discover the right use case	Develop industrial-strength solution	Deploy secure mobile solutions
Business process mapping	UI rapid prototyping	Focus on mobile security
Business impact/ ROI	Integrate back-end data	Create corporate app store
IT landscape analysis	Test-and-tune	Ensure mobile device management support

Instead, what has happened in most organizations is this: the need for rationalizing a mobile platform has been taken lightly. Platforms for development, management, security, authentications, etc., have been viewed as individual pieces, with different technologies being retrofitted to enable them. As a consequence, the mobile technology landscape within organizations is chaotic and confusing. Simplifying this into a unified, future-ready approach is the challenge.

Making mobility the elixir of transformation

One of the reasons for this state of mobile preparedness (or lack of it) is that it provides an insight into solving the problem. IT views the mobile journey as being commoditized, leading to isolated adoption within organizational towers. Even when mobility is viewed as an organization-wide necessity, it is largely seen from an application functionality stand point. Rarely does it include user acceptance as being key to development and release. This thinking needs to change.

Organizations that can take a step back from their current approach and bring mobility to the top of their digital transformation agenda, back that with a clear device, user experience and platform strategy, are bound to emerge winners. Organizations now need to take that digital leap of faith!

About the author

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He has helped large organizations re-envision business processes and deliver the best multi-channel experience. Shabbir has a deep understanding of leading mobile platform architectures, MBaaS and the entire mobile ecosystem.

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