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The mobile office - options explained

Many business owners want to be able to 'put their business in their pocket' and take it with them wherever they go. In today's fast paced business environment being able to respond quickly to an email requesting a quote and not missing an important client call are essential.

What many firms don't realise is that their existing IT technology and software may be able to support remote working with just limited adjustments.

Blackberry isn't the only answer

Getting access to your emails on the move has become fairly straightforward over recent years. Using technology to forward voice messages via text provides added peace of mind for business owners and professionals who want to avoid missing important client calls. And with increasing numbers of firms giving staff the option of working from home on an occasional basis providing secure access to business files and information is critical.

Many will be familiar with the Blackberry as a tool that professionals use to access email whilst away from the office. But without the Blackberry Enterprise Server at a cost of around £500 it's a limited tool.

If your business has its own server and you use Microsoft Outlook you could use Outlook Mobile Access to provide a complete solution. The added advantage of Outlook Mobile Access is that it comes free with Windows systems.

Options for Collecting Email on the Move

There are a number of different ways you can collect email when you are out and about and much will depend on whether you want email that's 'always on' or whether you prefer to log on to collect emails in your own time.

Outlook Mobile Access

When configured, this provides email push technology to any Microsoft Windows Mobile Smartphone. Allowing users to have access to email anywhere in the world without the need to "dial in".

With both Blackberry and Smartphone solutions, used in conjunction with the right settings and a server, you will have mobile access to email, contacts and diary, plus the added advantage of full synchronization to your desk top, in real time so that any emails you send from your mobile device will also show in your desktop Outlook sent items.

This single system is simplicity itself and means you won't spend half your time trying to track back and find emails, never being sure which device they are stored on.

Mobile Office

Using the Mobile Office suite, available for both Smartphone and Blackberry, you can also make sure you can receive, change, save and resend word, excel and PowerPoint documents on the move too.

Outlook Web Access

If you or your staff mainly want to collect emails from a single location or only want to log in occasionally to collect emails Outlook Web Access may

Security for Mobile Devices

As receptacles for email Smartphone and Blackberry devices are unfortunately also susceptible to virus attack.

Make sure your mobile devices have appropriate antivirus software installed and that your email server settings are configured to block Spam and virus attacks.

Since a Smartphone could potentially hold client contact details, confidential emails and more commercially sensitive data it is essential that all devices have suitable password protection too.

Virus Threats Reach 1 Million

On the 10th April 2008 the BBC reported that the number of computer viruses, worms and Trojans in circulation topped the 1 million mark, highlighting again the importance of system security. With remote and mobile working on the increase it is essential to have up to date virus checkers and spam filters at both the server and individual computer level.

Bronte Business Networks offer an IT system security audit to identify potential gaps in your security systems and can offer special rates on the range of McAfee Protection Software.

be the right option.

Correctly configured all company users can log into their email via a web browser. A secure user name and password enables them to access their in box to send and receive emails from any web connection, anywhere in the world.

Accessing Files and Documents

For many it's not practical to access detailed documents via their mobile device and instead they want the option of working on documents and / or using office based applications away from the office.

Again there are options depending on business priorities and the frequency of working in this way.

One feature of Windows operating systems that is greatly under used is the Offline Files and synchronization function. This allows you for example to load half a dozen files onto disc or a laptop, work on them offline and then reload them to your server or desk top. At which point any changes made to the files are copied over and merged with the document on your server or desk top, literally without you needing to do anything.

Ask your IT department or download the [Bronte Business Networks help sheet on Using 'Offline Files'](#).

Remote Working – A Complete Solution

For a more permanent remote working solution, for those working from home or in satellite offices, a locally hosted terminal server or hosted Citrix solution may be in order.

In this scenario each worker will be set up with a PC or laptop with internet access and through their internet connection (which will need to be high speed broadband for perhaps obvious reasons) will have full access to the selection of files, folders and applications that they need to do their job. So for example you could have a lawyer working from a home office able to access your practice management system, create documents and time record, in real time. Or you could have accounts staff working from a satellite office and able to access client and accountancy systems so that they can do book keeping, credit control and other tasks remotely.

If deciding to go down this route there are some considerations for the business:

- How much access do you want users to have to individual files, programmes and applications?
- Do you want to monitor usage?
- Will users need to be able to print from the server and if so where does the print need to be delivered?
- How many users do you want to use the system now and what's the planned growth over the next 3 – 5 years?
- What applications will users be accessing on a regular basis?

Your IT department will be able to help you explore the options, or you may need to call in an IT support company to explore what is right for you. Contact Bronte Business Networks on 0121 506 9230, we'll be happy to make some recommendations.

Useful Links

Read more about the **Microsoft Mobile suite** of products [here](#).

Download the Bronte Business Networks Using Offline Files help sheet [here](#).

About Bronte

Bronte Business Networks offer a full range of outsourced IT services, tailored to your business. Whether you are looking to install a new network, update your software, add to your hardware, need help maintaining an existing system or require an emergency response, you can be sure of a personal, professional and prompt service. To find out more how you can make the most of your IT visit www.brontebusinessnetworks.co.uk.

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