

## Anglia Business Solutions

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### THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

The trend towards moving infrastructure services to be run “in the cloud” as outlined in last month’s article begged the question on what devices companies would need to manage their processes in house. The reality is that people will remain wedded to their PCs and laptops for some time to come. However much companies would wish to get away from fixing printing and communications problems, they will remain issues for in-house resources in the immediate future.

Developments are rapidly evolving that will change the way in which all users interact with their business information. Nowhere is this more evident than in the growth of mobile devices. In the past, supply chain companies used these merely as data capture devices. Typically, static information would be scanned and uploaded to be collected by the core system during the next batch update. While this is a perfectly valid method of ensuring the accuracy of the collected data, it no longer meets the requirements of fast-moving supply chains.

The issue in this scenario is the lack of intelligence built into the mobile devices. Geared towards pure data capture with limited verification capabilities, the devices offer little assistance when circumstances change. Being unaware of alterations to customer order details has the effect of compounding errors. These are expensive to fix while impacting on customer service. However, in order to avoid such errors, it is necessary to ensure that users at the coal face are aware of changes as they happen. This is difficult when working with dumb data capture devices linked to batch-driven systems.

Mobile technologies are rapidly changing to reflect the need to provide access to information more rapidly. In an ideal world, what is available to the production people should reflect what the back office is experiencing on their systems. Changes to orders, delivery instructions, quality standards or packaging details should immediately be reflected in the packhouse without reliance on hard-pressed people to relay the information. In the past, this would have meant recreating full ERP systems on the mobile devices.

While this is neither desirable nor feasible, modern dynamic ERP systems are evolving to move towards a more open and sharing environment using web services. Technology advances in mobile devices allow intelligent, sophisticated applications to be built. These can be seamlessly linked to pick up real-time changes from a modern ERP platform.

To quote one fresh produce finance director: “In the past, we were working in a fog from the time that the goods arrived until despatched. We can now see where both costs are incurred and value added in real time. As a result, we have been able to refine our processes to cut costs while improving customer service.”

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