



“But The Demo Looked Great”

When it comes to digital solutions,
beauty is more than just screen deep



Executive Summary



IT leaders face two common temptations which pose serious risks to their ability to develop and support a digital strategy suitable for their organization. First, they face being overwhelmed and paralyzed by the “fog of facts” that surround the digital technologies. Second, and often as a consequence of the first, they can be pulled in by the “bright shiny thing” phenomenon where their organization is drawn to an option based on its superficial attractiveness or theoretical potential rather than utility.

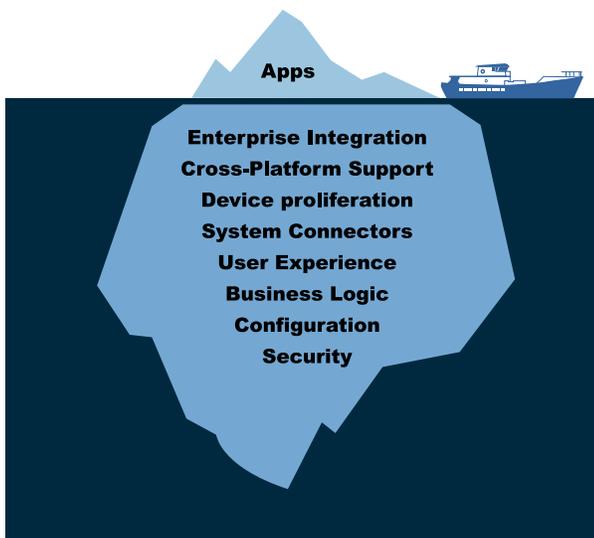
Avoiding both temptations and remaining focused on the organization’s core requirements and prior investments is critical to developing a successful and sustainable mobility strategy and then finding the right solution to support it.

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The Fog about Facts

Much of the discussion today about digital technologies for the enterprise focuses on environmental considerations such as platforms, apps, the mobile web, and responsive web design. While being conversant with each element is important to developing a big picture sense of the mobility space, none on its own tells the whole story. To pursue a complete understanding of every element of mobility represents an enormous investment with diminishing returns, and the critical questions are where to look and how deep to go. Do you need a deep understanding of HTML5 minutiae to develop a sound mobility strategy? Probably not. The solution to your mobility needs is not likely to be hiding inside a decision about a protocol or technology choice.

A better strategy is to keep your eyes on the big picture and work from what you know into the details. Maintaining clarity at all times about your program’s objectives is one of the cheapest and most effective ways to stay on track.



The Bright Shiny Thing

The English language abounds with warnings about making judgements based on appearances “looks are only skin deep” “don’t judge a book by it’s cover” It’s good wisdom and also applies to the field of mobility solutions where the many moving parts can encourage one to latch on to the first thing that looks attractive and easy.

The worst-case solution is the vendor that presents a Potemkin village offering. It looks wonderful for demo purposes but lacks substance and fails to address the core requirements of a mobility solution. It may have weak integration with back-office systems, or even none at all, and not enough consideration given to data protection and security. Unfortunately, these types of offerings often receive support from users who enjoy a good user interface and visual elements but do not understand or appreciate the back-end requirements necessary to make the system useful. The IT department often find itself in the position of being the last and only gatekeeper to ensure that a solution is secure and fit for purpose. Again, this is a time when having clear requirements, particularly non-functional requirements, helps keep a project from veering toward an attractive but inappropriate destination.

Fortunately, a few well-placed questions about integration, security, and back-end logic can expose pretty facade apps for what they are. For example:

“Where is the data we see here coming from?”

“How do you guarantee data security at rest and over the wire?”

“How is offline data protected?” What controls do you have in place to ensure that sensitive data storage on device is minimized?”

“What kind of application and device management mechanisms do you support to ensure security?”

“How will my back-office systems synchronize with this?”

“What happens to this when no Internet connection is available? What happens when the Internet connection is restored?”

“Where is the system of record for this information and how is it protected?”

If, after hearing a vendor’s answers, you come to suspect that “there’s no there there,” it’s probably time to look for a different solution.

The Kitchen Sink Solution

A variation on the Bright Shiny Thing is the Kitchen Sink Solution. Where the bright shiny thing offers next to nothing, the kitchen sink solution offers the entire world, fulfils every requirement, and can do anything... at a price. Would you buy an aircraft carrier to go fishing? Some vendors approach mobility with an agenda of selling you their entire infrastructure. It’s a brilliant stack sale for them but not necessarily what your organization wants or needs. Be discerning about how much is enough and avoid approaches that require massive commitments up front before any tangible results are delivered.

Start with Your Requirements and Your Resources

One thing you know better than any vendor or pundit is your requirements. What do you need to deliver to satisfy the business needs of your organization? Clarity about your requirements will help direct you toward the mobility strategy best suited to your needs. For example, if you have decided that your users must have access while offline, that requirement can be supported by some mobility strategy approaches but not others.

Look Below the Surface

As users become more and more used to quality user interfaces, the importance of surface design has become a given. Anything that appears on a mobile phone or tablet needs to look good and work without mental hiccups. But this is just the begging of the story. Serious design goes deep beyond the UI into the structure of information and how it is stored, secured, and processed. One of the key questions to ask is, “fine, but where is the data going to and coming from?” Otherwise, you risk seeing the great demo that leads to nowhere. Your organization has made an enormous investment in backend systems. A solution that doesn’t tie into those systems is not solution at all. What’s happening behind the scenes is as important as what’s on the screen.

About Diona

Diona provides innovative systems of engagement solutions to government Health and Human Services, Social Care, and Social Security agencies and NGOs around the world. Diona's family of social program engagement solutions, turn mobile devices—such as smartphones and tablets—into tools to achieve better business and social outcomes by helping agencies serve people more effectively, while improving how their employees work and collaborate. Diona solutions extend organizational systems of record and deliver real-time data directly into the field for clients and workers. Diona solutions are secure, robust, scalable, and reliable and feature flexible cloud-based or on-premise deployment options. With deep domain expertise and a user-centered design philosophy, Diona delivers digital solutions that help government agencies and NGOs solve real-world problems for their clients and employees.

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