

Mobile Warriors Top Tech Wishlist

Mobility is one of the key trends for the year, and with more employees hitting the road for work, technology will play an increasingly key role in boosting their productivity and efficiency as well as making the traveling process more convenient.



According to a recent IDC study, Asia–Pacific, excluding Japan, will see the strongest growth in the number of mobile workers across all regions, with figures ballooning from 601.7 million in 2010 to 838.7 million five years on. Globally, the number of mobile workers will hit 1.3 billion, the report stated.

With this growth in mind, ZDNet Asia spoke to an IT vendor and business travelers on what kind of technologies they would like to see made available or more accessible to aid them in their work.

Connectivity anywhere

David Brett, Asia–Pacific president of Amadeus, an IT vendor for the travel and hospitality industry, pointed out that with five billion mobile devices used worldwide, mobile connectivity is increasingly a necessity, particularly when travel is involved.

"For the road warrior, the demand for Wi–Fi connectivity is no longer limited to the hotel room, but extends to the airport, on board the aircraft and often on rail transfer as well," the executive said.

He added that today's mobile Internet technology has helped reduce people's frustrations while on the move, but expects innovations in communications to enhance the performance levels of mobile devices and the apps on it.

Citing an internal study, Brett noted that the next generation of connectivity can be expected as early as 2016 and, by the middle of the decade, there will be mainstream adoption of 4G devices and services across many Western markets.

Two users also highlighted the importance of high–speed mobile connectivity. Kyle Lee, a research analyst, said "super fast connectivity" is needed almost constantly in his line of work and better connection on the move would be a boon.

"If connection can be tuned up, I can even do video chat or voice–over–Internet–Protocol (VoIP) [calls] smoothly," he said.



Heather Tan, a bank executive, added that there is a need for constant, affordable connectivity but she would expect the Internet access to be secure and her online activities shielded from attacks, breaches and spies.

Enhancing travel experience

Beyond pervasive Internet connectivity, Brett also noted that mobility has caused the travel industry to innovate and provide services in a new and, oftentimes, more convenient manner. From pre- to post-trip, mobile devices have helped make planning and booking trips, checking in at the airport and connecting and sharing experiences from the road that much easier, he said.

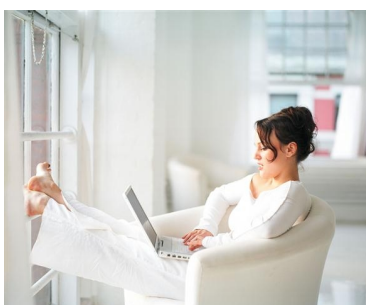
In fact, airlines in this region have embraced the mobile revolution by offering mobile services and widely-used mobile functionalities, he added. Some examples include mobile check-in, 2D barcode boarding passes (BCBP), and itinerary management services.

Frequent business traveler Shawn Chan, however, wants to see more of such services extended to other stakeholders within the travel industry.

"If smart devices can be used for [payment and registrations], especially for processes that are time-consuming such as checking in [to hotels], it would save me some time and I can focus on my work. I certainly hope this is made possible soon," he shared.

Feature-packed devices

In terms of device functionalities, Felicia Goh, a public relations executive, said high on her wishlist would be a mobile device "very long or endless" battery life, as that would mean she would no longer have to fret about equipment dying while she is on the road.



Lee, meanwhile, wished for laptop screens to have touch functions available to devices such as Apple's

iPad tablet. This is because it would make it easier to flip through PDF files, PowerPoint slide, Word documents and Web sites without having to scroll using a mouse or the keyboard.

'Home away from home'

Brett also noted that mobile workers increasingly expect a "home away from home" environment when they travel. So beyond one's personal devices, hotels and event destinations should also be equipped with the necessary tech to make working as easy and painless as possible, he explained.

Bryan Wong, a student, added that one way of doing so would be making available cloud services such as Google Docs and iCloud on the hotel's PC, but the device must not lag or be a low-end model.

"[With these services,] I can work in real-time with others using Google Docs, and later store my unfinished work on iCloud. It will be as good as working from home," he said.

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