Can Enterprise Customers Migrate From Blackberry Without Sacrificing Security?

A Business Phone News interview with Moe Arnaiz, CEO of eMOBUS, a Telecom Association subject matter expert for enterprise mobility solutions

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Dan **B**aldwin: Blackberry outages have been well documented over the past several months, as has been the outcry of unhappy Blackberry enterprise business customers. The obvious questions begged by these headlines include:

>   *What's preventing Blackberry customers from moving to the iPhone or the Android platform?*

>   *Does Blackberry have a monopoly on enterprise-class mobile security?*

>   *What does a migration strategy away from Blackberry look like?*

Here to help us answer these questions and understand the related issues is Moe Arnaiz, CEO of eMOBUS, a mobility management company. eMOBUS is a carrier and device neutral mobility management company and solution provider for enterprise businesses. Moe, thanks for speaking with us today.

Moe **A**rnaiz: Thanks for having me, Dan.

DB: Question #1. Moe, our first question we will start out with, can you give us a history of Blackberry's perceived monopoly in the mobility space for enterprise businesses? What is blackberry layering on top of AT&T, Verizon or Sprint phone numbers that makes it so secure for enterprise customers?

MA: I'll start off with the first part of that question. I think what gave Blackberry its perceived monopoly early on in the enterprise mobility space is pretty simple. They were really the first mobile device manufacturer that was able to deliver secure e-mail on mobile devices that actually worked.

When Blackberry came out, initially there wasn't a lot of competition, and then shortly after the competition was from companies like Windows with a pocket PC products and Palm. One of Blackberry's big advantages back then was that they were actually developing the operating system and making the hardware.

1:40 So at the time when mobile devices weren't that reliable, Blackberry was able to deliver a product that worked and was secure, where their competition had devices that didn't have as high a level of security, and also had a lot of flaws in terms of functionality.

If we remember back to some of the earlier Palm devices or pocket PC devices, it wasn't uncommon for those to freeze up a few times throughout the day. So when Blackberry came out they delivered again a product that worked, and enterprise hopped on it pretty quickly.

In terms of security perspective, the Blackberry Enterprise Server, often referred to as BES, really allowed from a backend perspective enterprises to deliver an enterprise grade mobile solution. So this allowed them to deliver e-mail, contacts, wiping devices, setting policies on devices, pushing applications to devices all in a secure fashion. So what it really did is, it delivered a PC-type experience on a mobile device, and Blackberry is to be credited as the first mobile device provider to be able to make that happen.

DB: Question #2. Let's look a little bit more at this security. Are we talking about if someone looses the device, someone else cannot pick it up and then get all the e-mail? And, what are the applications that the enterprises businesses are using that require such a high level of security?

MA: That's a good question. I think that really depends on the enterprise. For some enterprises

something like e-mail or contacts is something that they treat very carefully, and they want it to be extremely secure. So the BES of Blackberry change over did a great job of being able to secure that and give enterprise and government the comfort level that the security or the proper security measures were in place for that.

Other enterprises are running additional mission-critical applications like access to ERP systems. There could be home-grown applications. I guess the simplest answer you could provide would be anything that is mission critical to the business in terms of data and functionality, typically enterprise wants to have some pretty high level security measures around.

4:00 DB: Question #3: How is it that Apple's iOS mobile operating system and Google's Android mobile operating system are so inferior to the Blackberry operating system mobile platform?

MA: I would say that they are not inferior. I would actually have to say that as we are seeing today in the market that the operating systems on Apple and Google are far superior in fact to what the Blackberry is delivering.

The device usability, the application eco systems. I think now Google has about 200,000+ applications available in their Android market, and Apple has almost 500,000 in app exchange, and they are continuing to win the mindshare of the mobile users with this ease of use and a lot of content being available in the application ego system that they have created.

So in terms of operating system, I think they are leaps and bounds ahead of Blackberry, and that's where Blackberry is feeling a lot of the pain.

In terms of mobile device management, what we would call MDM, Blackberry is really the first MDM provider in the space with the Blackberry chain or enterprise server, and that's where they still have a slight advantage because it is the most proven solution still available.

It's been deployed in governments, it's been deployed in the world's biggest enterprises, but on the other hand you also have providers out there today that are delivering MDM solutions independent of Blackberry companies like Trellia, MobileIron, Zenprise (Good Technology, AirWatch) that are delivering a similar product to what Blackberry had with BES, but allowing that product to work on devices such as Android and Apple. So this is making it easier for enterprises to adopt some of these newer devices, and still keep the security measures in place.

We are also seeing a big paradigm shift in the enterprise in general. A lot of enterprises are actually trading off some of the security that they used to have to give their users the devices that they want to adopt.

6:20 Enterprise typically had a certain amount of control on devices and security. Not all of it was utilized. So some of them are scaling down in that control to be able to deliver something like an iPhone or an Android device to their user base, and ultimately I think they are realizing that adoption is critical if they want it to be an effective tool in the enterprise.

Unlike most enterprise technologies, the users are actually pushing for these devices to come into the enterprise. They are saying my iPhone, I like it so much I want to use it on my company network. Or my Android device, I like it so much, I would like to use it on my company network.

It really is putting IT in a position where they kind of have to react and is putting their back against the wall in a way where they have to deliver the ability for their users to utilize these devices.

So there are a lot of tradeoffs going on at the end of the day, but I also think it is for the better. If users are adopting these tools, and they want to use them, it is definitely going to give the enterprise an advantage because it is not something they are force-feeding. Their users actually want to leverage them.

DB: So for our listeners who are maybe kind of new to the whole mobility management space, the Blackberry operating system isn't necessarily what is creating the Blackberry security. It's the Blackberry BES, right?

MA: Yes, exactly. The BES is the main infrastructure. Ultimately they are all connected. The BES is talking to the operating system, and then the operating system is talking to the hardware. So, they are all connected.

One of the big advantages that Blackberry still has in that arena is they do make the BES, they make the operating system, and they make the hardware, so in terms of how well that is integrated in keeping a consistent experience, they do have an advantage there.

8:19 Unfortunately, that advantage is going to be more recognized by IT folks than it is by end-users, and right now in enterprise the end-users are having an extremely large influence on what happens in the mobile space.

DB: Especially when the end-user is the owner of the company.

MA: That happens as well. Absolutely.

DB: Now the BES, can it accommodate the iPads, and the iPhones, and the Androids?

MA: That's on their roadmap, and they are definitely getting into that space. The Blackberry has really been kind of blown out of the woods if you would by Apple and Google, and what they are realizing is that the infrastructure on the backend is probably the most valuable piece they offer, because it is a highly robust solution, and it is trusted by enterprise.

So instead of just supporting the traditional Blackberry devices, they actually do have plans to move into supporting Android, and I believe Apple as well. So it will be interesting to see how that thing shakes out.

The whole mobile device management space, or MDM space, around Apple and Android is quickly becoming very, very crowded.

DB: Question #4. What's at the crux of Blackberry's recent outages?

MA: What they say was extremely critical network issues, so basically network failures. The one thing that makes Blackberry so secure is also what makes them vulnerable to these types of failures, and that is that everything is centralized back through their infrastructure.

When their infrastructure goes down, ultimately the users go down as well. So unlike Apple or Google where you would typically be running e-mail off of your exchange, you wouldn't go down unless your exchange environment went down entirely. With Blackberry, that's different.

10:14 The most recent example of kind of a similar situation, not in an e-mail product but in a product that is centralized, is a few weeks ago with Apple Siri. The Siri product is also centralized, so when their servers went down the same thing happened. [Siri stopped working](#).

So benefit in terms of security, but ultimately it makes them vulnerable to these types of outages, and it's not the first time it has happened.

DB: So it's almost an example of a cloud failure. If you have all your stuff in the cloud, and a particular part of the cloud fails you're done until the cloud gets fixed.

MA: Exactly. And it just so happens when it goes down everybody goes down, so obviously things are heightened. I don't think it would be safe to say that most companies could support a better environment than Apple or Blackberry could. It's just that when those environments go down it's not just one company, it becomes every company that touches their product.

So it is a cloud failure, but by no stretch of the imagination I think less safe than managing it internally.

DB: Question #5. Can enterprise mobility customers get sufficient security such that a migration away from Blackberry is conceivable?

MA: Yes, and it's happening today. There are a lot of big changes. Government agencies have begun to switch over. Medical is starting to adopt products like the iPad. They have a lot of security measures that they have to follow.

So it is possible, and really what they would have to do is pursue some of these mobile device management providers and figure out which ones offer the functionality that is in line with what they are utilizing today with the BES, or the Blackberry Enterprise Server.

So Blackberry enterprise is extremely robust, and it goes very deep, but just like with any technology at the end of the day most people are using about 15% to 20% of it. So for most enterprises in terms of what they need with security and functionality, they can find that through various MDM providers that are available.

12:23 The one thing that they would have to watch out for is in terms of functionality and usability it is more fragmented as I mentioned before, unlike Blackberry where typically a director of IT would deploy a new Blackberry he knew exactly how it would behave because again, hardware, operating system and the backend infrastructure was all made by Blackberry.

When you're getting into Android and Apple, it becomes much more fragmented because you have multiple hardware manufactures, you have two different operating systems, and then you have different flavors of mobile device management providers providing the security and some of the functionality that you need on the device.

So it does become much more fragmented. You can't expect as consistent of an experience as you would typically get with Blackberry, but there are tradeoffs. Your end-users get a much better experience, or at least that's what the market is telling us.

DB: I am going to combine questions. Questions 6 and 7. Lets say I'm the owner of an enterprise company. I love my iPad, I love my iPhone for whatever reason. The IT guy has explained to me look, between Blackberry and IT that you have, we're 100% in control. I say I don't really care. Do whatever is necessary to enable me to use my iPad and my iPhone.

So, with those marching orders, what is an IT director to do? How does he set up a migration strategy and what does that look like? And what is eMOBUS' role in assisting in that?

MA: In terms of a migration strategy, just as I mentioned before he needs to figure out exactly what type of security measures they have in place today that need to remain in place. Obviously there is an application being accessed via the Blackberry, so internal systems being accessed. They will want to make sure that that's also going to be available on whatever platform they transfer out to.

14:30 And if they are deploying new devices that they haven't had in the enterprise before like tablets, they are going to want to understand exactly what those tablets are going to be doing, and to what degree of security they need. Then they need to begin sourcing mobile device management providers to see which ones can provide the adequate security for them to safely deliver those solutions into the field.

In terms of eMOBUS and what we do, we are looking at mobility management much more holistically. MDM is a piece of what enterprises need to manage mobile devices. What we do is we deliver a platform that essentially integrates multiple components of enterprise mobility management.

So whether it be managing invoice processing, managing your inventory, your management of service requests or as kind of refer to in this space MACD, move, add, change and delete requests, ordering, reporting, and then even integrating with applications like MDM for security, we provide a platform that integrates that all into one easy to use system so that IT director wouldn't have to go to four different places. They could go to one place and essentially manage their mobile environment.

DB: You mentioned the BES MDM replacements, I think you mentioned Trellia, MobileIron and Zenprise, those are software applications that provide security and they plug into eMOBUS?

MA: Not all of those vendors plug into eMOBUS. We do have a partner that plugs into eMOBUS in a white label format, and then we also have some things on the roadmap for expanding some functionality that we are going to deliver directly.

What we focus on predominantly is the pieces of MDM that are most used by our client base. MDM, again, it goes very deep. You can get as far into MDM as creating VPNs and into specific applications, but what our clients are typically utilizing is the standard functionality like being able to see if a device is currently active, what type of operating system it has, being able to kill a device if it is stolen, being able to deploy the MDM client on a new device when it is activated. So that is the type of functionality that we are focusing on directly. If a client needs something more robust, then we have a partner that we integrate with.

17:14 DB: As far as project management, I would assume that, or let me ask, are the majority of the clients that you are bringing on board getting away from the Blackberry environment, do they need to purchase consulting and project management as the in between step before then adopting the eMOBUS solution? Or does it all make sense to say okay, I think we are going to do eMOBUS, and so you throw in a little bit of project management and evaluations in addition to the eMOBUS service?

MA: It really depends on how deep the project is. Again, MDM is a small piece of what enterprise is faced with in terms of managing mobile devices. They could certainly have our platform without necessarily having an MDM strategy. Typically the best route, and we see this with most of the mobile device management providers today or MDM providers, is they will offer professional services in that arena, so we like to turn that over to them. They know their products best at the end of the day.

In terms of high-level understanding and ability to offer some information on what a person is going to lose when they switch off of BES, we are always offering that through our professional services team, but it is not our core focus. We're not focused on the strategy of moving from a Blackberry to an Android or Apple device.

DB: To wrap things up for our audience of small or medium-size enterprise customers and/or consultants, what does an eMOBUS prospect look like? Who ought to be calling you both end-users or channel partners out there?

MA: What we are targeting is what we feel is a pretty underserved market. It is anybody with 200 lines to 3,000 lines, and our platform certainly scales above that. But in terms of the way it is designed, the ease of use with everything integrated, easily deployed platform that we have, we target that space because they tend to be more interested in those types of tools.

19:35 So companies that have 200 to 3,000 devices that are looking to manage their mobile environments more efficiently, having to throw less IT resources at the day-to-day tasks around managing mobility, and then also reducing some of the unnecessary costs whether those be on invoicing, hardware, etc. So anybody who wants to manage mobility more efficiently with 200 to 3,000 lines would be our target.

DB: Just to be clear, you're not putting a Telecom department out of business, you're empowering them with your on-line tools so that they can manage it themselves and/or you can manage it for them, is that correct?

MA: We offer the platform as a software only. The most common application of our tool is going to be fully managed where our back office is administering the tool for the client. I wouldn't say we put Telecom departments out of business. We're certainly not the company that organizations go to if they are looking to build an empire around Telecom. If they do want to manage it more efficiently and push out some tasks that really aren't tasks that you should have IT people focused on, then they typically bring in our platform.

So in most instances, we are actually a substitute for having somebody have to focus on mobility fulltime.

DB: Just so I am clear, the end-user has people that log into your software, or do you provide the whole helpdesk. Here is an 800 number when you have a phone problem, call them?

MA: We have a similar call-in model to what Blackberry has with their IT support for the BES product. So we assign name callers to be able to call in to our call center. We are not a call center, but we do provide application to access to every end-user in the organization and make it very easy for them to manage the access to the application, and then for the end-users to process requests that are within policy for that enterprise.

21:49   So we do enable all the end-users, but we more so enabling them via technology than a phone call, and ultimately what we've done there in terms of our strategy is it is faster for you to open up a request through our platform than it would be to get on a phone call, even if we pick up the phone within 10 seconds. So it's a very streamline application, and we've had a tremendous amount of success in having our clients adopt it and utilize it.

DB: It sounds like maybe the next step for end-users or partners that want to see how eMOBUS can help is to give you a call? Get in contact, take a little demo and find out the different ways to access eMOBUS solutions?

MA: Absolutely. We would be happy to take any calls, and we are definitely happy to work with any channel partners who feel like they have an opportunity in the market. Absolutely.

DB: And the best way to get a hold of you is to go to eMOBUS.com?

MA: Yes. They can go to eMOBUS.com, and also if they want to see some more information they can Google eMOBUS and we have recently completed an explainer video that explains what we do in about 60 seconds in an animated video. There are various press releases and other items that they can pull in terms of resources to get a better understanding of what we are doing today for our clients.

DB: This is Dan Baldwin. We've been talking with Moe Arnaiz, the CEO of eMOBUS. Moe, is there anything we forgot to talk about here?

MA: No, that's it, Dan. I appreciate your time, and hopefully you got some valuable information today.

DB: Thanks a lot.

MA: Thank you