

Mobile business apps grab top focus for software developers

October 11 2010, By Byron Acohido

Software developers are queuing up for an expected gold rush creating and selling business applications for mobile devices.

A recent IBM survey of 2,000 tech pros in 87 nations revealed a high expectation that development of business apps for devices such as the [iPhone](#), [Google](#) Android phones and tablets like the [iPad](#) and new BlackBerry PlayBook will surpass all other forms of business software development by 2015.

Several drivers are in play. Mobile devices are becoming much more powerful, and developing for them is becoming much easier, says Jeffrey Hammond, senior analyst at Forrester Research.

Younger and tech-savvy workers want to integrate contacts and leads from their PC-based [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts into their mobile devices. "The fundamental demand here is for simple, secure, and easy access to information that's going to help people do their business without being tethered to an office," says Jim Corgel, IBM's manager of developer relations.

Software categorized as mobile business apps and sold in consumer-focused online apps stores are counted as consumer productivity programs, which research firm Gartner ranks fifth in 2010 sales behind mobile apps for games, shopping, [social networking](#) and utilities.

Moving forward, the big growth in mobile business apps should come in

the form of customized software developed for a company's unique operations, says Hammond.

There should also be robust growth in more generic mobile business apps marketed directly to so-called enterprise customers -- new technologies not likely to ever show up in consumer-focused online stores. These early examples, for instance, are meant to be integrated into the enterprise customer's specific internal network and work with whatever mobile device platforms the enterprise happens to support:

- **Smartphone security.** PhoneFactor supplies another layer of authentication for anyone trying to connect to a private network from a company smartphone. The service places a call to the phone and requires the user to punch in a code before completing the connection.
- **Mobile CRM.** iEnterprises enables use of customer relationship management (CRM) programs on [mobile devices](#). The service lets workers in the field tap into extensive customer data and related programs they usually have to be at their desks to access.
- **Civic surveillance.** CitySourced supplies a program that enables you to send phone photos and reports about pot holes, downed traffic lights, flooded roadways and graffiti directly to local government agencies.

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