Topic: Mobile

Issue: Who are the mobile providers and how will they compete?

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Google Secures Android with Android for Work

Summary: On February 25, 2015, Google announced Android for Work, featuring a significant security boost, a new secure Google for Work App and integration with EMM products.

Event: Google made the Android for Work announcement via its blog on February 25, 2015.

Analysis

While Android is the leading consumer-focused smartphone operating system, it has not been that focused on the enterprise. With Android for Work, Google addresses many enterprise issues, with some help from partners.

Google announced that it was partnering with many leading enterprise mobile management (EMM) vendors to ensure that their frameworks can be leveraged even more than they are. Noticeably absent were a few players, such as Good Technology.

Separating Work and Non-Work Content

By enabling work profiles to be set on Android devices, Android for Work gives enterprises the ability to separate work applications and data from non-work information. For Android 4.0+ devices, Google offers a downloadable app that also provides secure email, calendar, contacts, document editing and browsing. Corporate IT departments can control which apps are allowed to operate in the work environment.

Google Play for Work

On top of the device and app security, Google is also launching Google Play for Work, a new enterprise-focused version of Google Play, its public app store. This too will allow enterprises to control which apps their users can access, download and use.

Leveling the Playing Field with Apple – With One Hitch

Android for Work puts Android on a more even playing field with Apple iOS. Enterprises will now be more confident in being able to deploy a more secure Android that, given phone and tablet choices, will give them more options for their fleets of devices.

The one hitch that remains is that Android is still distributed by carriers, who control the upgrades. We think Google should make a move similar to Microsoft, which can bypass the carrier and offer direct upgrades under certain conditions.

Google Partners with EMM Providers

The Google partner alliance includes major EMM providers, such as AirWatch, Blackberry, Citrix, IBM, MobileIron, SAP and SOTI. Other EMM players such as Good were nowhere to be found. In Aragon's opinion, Android for Work looks very similar to offerings from Good Technology.

While Google indicated that other EMM providers would be added over time, we were surprised that some, such as Good and Symantec, were not part of the initial announcement.

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Google is clearly stepping up its game in overall mobile security. While Android for Work will secure Android devices, enterprises will still need EMM tools to manage their multi-vendor fleets of mobile devices and apps.

Aragon Advisory

- Enterprises that use Android devices should consider enabling Android for Work in their portfolios.

- Enterprises should ensure that their current EMM providers support Android for Work.

- Enterprises need to take steps to ensure that their mobile ecosystems are secure.

Bottom Line

In one major move, Google has made Android more secure, and therefore more of an option for enterprises. Given the increased need for security at every level, enterprises that want to use Android should make Android for Work part of their standard mobile footprint.

Related Aragon Research

- The Aragon Research Globe™ For Enterprise Mobile Management Software, 2014

- Predictions for Mobile, 2015: Mobile-First Apps and the Imperative to Protect the Enterprise

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