Mobile applications: an MBaaS to industrialize your developments!

Sébastien Bonnet, Mobility Architect with Digital Dimension explains how companies can respond to issues linked with development of mobile applications, in a context where there are ever more of them around.

One of Gartner's research directors recently stressed that "*developers consecrate 70% of their time to integrating the application*" (*). What does this mean?

Development is a complex business.

When you think of an application, you will often be thinking of **the UX or the design. This is essential**, as the quality of the interfaces has a direct influence on user adoption. **But this requires less time than the infrastructure part of the application**, which is the key to ensuring that it works. You need to understand that the whole application processes information, which mainly comes from the company's information system (IS). And connecting the application and the IS is a very tricky operation which cannot be carried out without IT teams. In addition, to ensure the sustainability of the application, you have to anticipate the constant evolution of mobile operating systems and the increased work load as user numbers rise.

All of these elements are part of the "technical" developments which are the CIO's responsibility. With the growing pressure from business to develop applications, IT teams must re-examine their approach and equip themselves in order to become more efficient. MBaaS solutions are the solution.

Can you tell us more about these MBaaS solutions (Mobile Back-end as a Service)?

MBaaS is a cloud platform which integrates a variety of items, allowing all stages of a mobile application's lifecycle to be managed, from integration with the company's IS to analysis of usage and bugs, not forgetting development as well.
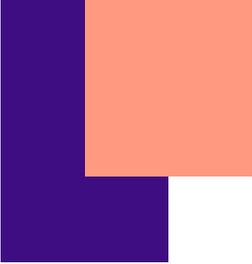
In concrete terms, **the most mature solution allows us to**:

- Mutualize the interconnection of mobile applications with the company's IS by making connectors available (SQL, SAP, MongoDB, Amazon, ...) and by integrating APIs (Application Programming Interfaces);

- Resolve any client/server complexity by providing developers with "toolkits" for managing synchronisation, security, data storage, push notifications...;

- Manage mobile fragmentation (multiplicity of OS, terminal models, screen sizes...) by relying on "responsive technologies";

- Simplify the work of developers by integrating the MADP (Mobile Application Development Platform) brick which covers all mobile development languages (Ionic, Cordova, Xamarin, native iOS and Android...), proposing RMAD (Rapid Mobile Application Development) models and supplying DevOps tools like automatic build of application binaries (BuildFarm iOS and Android) or centralisation of application signature certificates;

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- Maintain control over source codes via the "code repository", management software for decentralised versions (e.g. git) integrated into the solution;
- Safeguard the data processed by the applications thanks to various security mechanisms (SSO, SSL...);
- Follow use of mobile applications on a day-to-day basis thanks to analytic tools integrated into the solution.

To sum up, an MBaaS solution is a real accelerator for mobile application development as it provides teams with greater agility, visibility and efficiency.

Doesn't MbaaS duplicate the work of the ESB (Enterprise Service Bus)?

This question is often raised. No, **MBaaS and ESB are complementary**.

The ESB is the backbone of a company's IS. The data and the services it hosts are critical. It therefore needs to be reliable and to guarantee a 100% level of service. A long period of reflection and checks needs to be carried out prior to any modification of the ESB; this is a very time-consuming process which makes the ESB incompatible with the development of mobile applications, which are, by nature, agile and rapid.

MBaas is the abstraction layer between the ESB and applications which allows each to develop at its own rhythm, using the data from the IS without any danger. In other words, MBaaS supplies the ESB with the flexibility it needs to meet the requirements of the mobile world.

Are MBaaS solutions only aimed at CIOs?

No, not exclusively.

Of course, the main benefit of these solutions concerns CIOs, who are guaranteed to **save plenty of time** because the connections between all the applications and the IS can be mutualised. In particular, they **provide CIOs with increased legitimacy**:

1. By providing them with visibility in terms of all the applications developed by business (and their service providers),
2. By guaranteeing the conformity of applications and thus ensuring data security,
3. By positioning them as vital partners of Business Management via a tool which provides autonomy and efficiency.

MBaaS solutions are also advantageous for Business Management, allowing it to rapidly prototype and test applications, fully autonomously, in particular thanks to RMAD models which avoid the need for code. They can be (and should be) used by service providers as a development platform.

In short, it is a tool which promotes innovation and the industrialisation of good ideas!

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