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On the move to mobile

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Beverage distributors are investing in mobile technology to increase efficiencies, control costs and improve customer service.

In fact, with the growing complexity of more stock keeping units, varying retail locations to service, and the overall growing intricacy of beverage delivery/distribution operations, mobile enterprise management is considered a necessity today, not merely a “nice-to-have,” according to Raymond Zujus, director of business development, food and beverage at Telogis.

Beverage operators are unique in that they have multiple mobile workforces performing multiple operations that are typically managed somewhat independently of each other, he notes. “There is exponential value in connecting these workforces together to provide a complete picture of the entire operation that enables the identification of areas that will drive increased efficiencies and cost reduction,” Zujus says. “The rapidly growing complexity of the beverage business is inherently eroding efficiency and driving up cost. Connected intelligence is becoming a necessity for these operators in finding ways to identify where cost and efficiency improvements can be made and still meet the ever increasing demands of the business.”

“Beverage operators and those in the beverage distribution business are incredibly busy and

are often on the go,” adds Fred Powers, chief executive officer at Dimensional Insight. “As a result, they need access to important data, presentations and documents wherever they are since they are not always completing their work on desktops. Mobile solutions need to be focused on getting the right information to the right person at the right time on the right device.”

Powers cites five priorities for beverage distributors looking for mobile solutions:

1. Uniformity across platforms; 2. Dynamic data interaction 3. Centralized data access; 4. Modular data governance, and 5. Security.

The move to mobile also is part of a bigger picture of technology integration, where devices and vehicles are in closer touch with home base.

“It’s paramount for operations to understand the important role mobile technology solutions play in the ever-changing regulatory and operational landscape of trucking,” says Sid Nair, senior director, marketing and product management, Teletrac Navman. “Whether it’s real time insight on deliveries, navigation or electronic logs, these mobile solutions allow trucking operations to remain competitive.”

“Mobile solutions need to be optimized to help your brand grow,” adds Andrew Loos, chief strategy officer, Attack! Marketing. “It is important that you select a platform that provides insights and information to help you develop your brand. It isn’t enough to simply measure production or display distribution metrics. Mobile technology should exist to help you make informed and immediate decisions with the data at hand.”

Key attributes of mobile derive from customization, he notes. “With so many technology platforms to choose from, it’s astounding how many companies select a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. Each operator is unique with specific needs, requests, and desired metrics to track, so why would another company’s solution be expected to work for yours?”

Loos suggests that distributors look for companies that embrace a “partnership” focus with their clients. “Business-to-business relationships that encompass this quality will not only provide you with the right solution, but will work with you to ensure their technology is helping you succeed,” he says.

At Encompass Technologies, Darin Spence says key attributes to obtain in a solution include speed, sales execution, accountability, collaboration, and analytics. “Speed is king. The app should run fast, but more importantly enable people to navigate quickly to the things they need to do,” he notes.

Sales managers need more than surveys, he continues: “With so many suppliers, mobile is critical in facilitating program execution at retail via task management that measures real-time progress so supervisors can provide coaching and support during the program, while there’s still time to meet goals, rather than after.”

On accountability, he says features like task management are the new standard in aligning the company toward a goal, and making it clear what is expected of them. Real-time chat and the ability to attach videos or sell-sheets facilitate collaboration. They provide an easy way to get questions answered quickly and leverage the best selling tools available, Spence notes.

For analytics, business reviews can reveal the story of customers’ current business, “but distributors should expect things like on-demand market analysis that provide salespeople the ability to instantly expose opportunities in SKUs the customer is not carrying, or the volume being done at other retail price points at accounts in their neighborhood that are just like them,” he adds.

A basic attribute to look for in mobile solutions is the ability to run on both major operating systems: iOS and Android, says Cyndi Brandt, senior director, product marketing and strategic alliances, Omnitrac. Also look for the ability to function on both rugged and non-rugged devices —consumer-based devices such as iPhones are viable in the delivery world as long as they have a rugged case. In addition, cloud or software-as-a-service architecture will make deploying the mobile solution much easier.

Other attributes to expect are application flexibility and a roadmap to growth. “Not every business does the same daily tasks, nor do they do things in the same order. Mobile applications should be able to be ‘fine-tuned’ to your business and not have a rigid framework that the user must follow at each delivery stop. This wastes what could be productive time at each stop even if it’s just a few minutes at each stop,” Brandt notes.

The mobile application should solve the problem identified by the distributor. “Many of the applications do too little or offer many options. Do your homework and know ahead of time what the table stakes are for the problem you want to solve,” she notes.

Beyond the mobile application, a robust back-end system is of equal importance, she adds. While an app should reveal in real-time any variances to a plan so a failure can be prevented, “it’s equally important to understand historical trends with regard to a driver, a route, a vehicle or even a customer. It’s become almost more important in the age of big data to insure that you can get the data out and in a meaningful format that is easily understandable by multiple constituents.”

As for routing, worker accountability and the ability to track out-of-route miles will save a distributor significant costs. For example, “most users see overtime decrease by as much as 20 percent and find that they have room for one or two additional stops per route once a mobile delivery app is implemented,” she notes. Expected efficiencies from mobile solutions include an increase in the number of stops drivers make, more time for salespeople to sell product, improved pick accuracy and reduced hardware costs.

“As the economy develops into a more of an on-demand model, so will the beverage industry,” Loos notes.

“Distributors cannot ignore the impact that mobile technology is having on our personal lives, and it is now spilling over into commercial businesses,” Brandt concludes. “It’s a major competitive advantage to leverage technology in ways that other distributors are not,” she says.

Mobile devices go the last mile

Here are some of the latest offerings of leading manufacturers:

AWTI (Alliance Wireless Technologies, Inc.)

AWTI’s 3rd Eye Cam prevents the risky behaviors that can lead to accidents, personal injury, and property damage that can endanger a driver’s livelihood. 3rd Eye Cam will capture a driver’s unsafe actions, allowing management to coach the driver to be safer and more efficient.

Brother Mobile Solutions

Brother Mobile Solutions offers rugged, next-generation mobile printers that make it easy for route and delivery drivers to quickly print proof of delivery receipts, service orders, barcoded labels, and more — right where they need them, without wires, without cords, and without a lot of training.

Honeywell Scanning & Mobility.

Honeywell’s new high-performance 8670 Wireless Ring Scanner is a compact, lightweight scanner that fits comfortably on a finger to allow distribution center and delivery workers to keep both hands free while working. The new scanner uses Bluetooth technology to connect to a range of devices including PCs, laptops, tablets, vehicle-mounted computers, rugged mobile

computers and smartphones.

Integrated Communications

For years, the last mile of beverage delivery operations has been dominated by expensive and robust Windows-based handhelds which have traditionally been clunky with very limited processing power. These devices are now being replaced by iPhones that can be ruggedized simply with a case and will support barcode scanning functions with peripherals like the Honeywell Captuvo SL42.

Panasonic

Panasonic has added two new rugged handheld tablets to its diverse portfolio of enterprise-grade mobile devices: the Toughpad FZ-F1 and FZ-N1. As the world's lightest fully rugged handheld tablets, these 4.7-in. Android and Windows devices feature a quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon processor, delivering industry leading performance along with a purpose-built design and rugged credentials that live up to the brand's heritage. The new Toughpad handheld tablets are well suited for a wide variety of applications, such as inventory management, shipping and receiving, delivery routing and parcel tracking, retail store line busting and bar code medication administration. The Toughpad FZ-F1 & FZ-N1 feature an ergonomically designed, angled rear barcode reader that allows the user to scan items without bending at the elbow or wrist while also being able to clearly read the screen. Other purpose-built features include a glove enabled, multi-touch, sunlight viewable display with a rain sensing mode that delivers accurate operation, even in inclement weather.

PrintekMobile

Printek's latest innovative product offering for the beverage delivery/distribution industry is the Interceptor 800 mobile thermal printer. The Interceptor, or I800, prints full 8.5-inch width pages at a 11 ppm speed. The fastest-in-class speed is complimented by a compact design, which includes a fully self-contained paper compartment (100 sheet roll) that is unique to this 8-inch thermal printer market. This durable product comes with USB standard and has an optional Bluetooth interface. The I800 can be vehicle powered, with a plethora of mounting options offered, or it can be provided with an optional battery for carry-in capability. This compact mobile printer features an easy-to-read control face, dual tear bars, and simple drop-in paper loading.

The I800 is compatible with Windows, Windows Mobile, Apple iOS, and Android operating systems for easy integration.

Visybl

The economics of beverage vending machines is closely related to how efficiently they are serviced. And much of that efficiency comes from data about your fountain, when it gets serviced, who services it, and how long each visit takes. With Visybl's technology you can collect all this data, without any additional workload for your driver. Visybl's small beacons are affixed to your dispensers, and the driver carries a normal smartphone on their trip with Visybl's app installed. Every time a driver is in the proximity of a dispenser, the phone quietly records the event, and reports it back to home base. As the driver leaves, the phone detects leaving the proximity of the machine, and reports the visit as having completed.—*D. Alaimo*

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Bacardi rum today introduces "We Are the Night," an integrated, global campaign that revels in the distinctive night personas that come to life under the cover of darkness.



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Energy drink brand Xyience recently launched an ambitious new marketing campaign in college sports media, but the scope of that marketing campaign suddenly changed

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Evan Williams teams up with Major

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Heaven Hill's Evan Williams Bourbon is partnering with Major League Baseball to sponsor the 2016 World Series. It's the largest sponsorship



Molson Coors merges sales, marketing to

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Molson Coors has merged its sales and marketing team to produce an in-house division called Brew + Press in a bid to "form a united front" to consumers.



Deschutes, Bendistillery release Black Butte

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In a collaboration between a craft brewer and a craft distiller, Deschutes Brewery and Bendistillery today announced the much anticipated launch of



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