

Fifth generation mobile communication is about more than just increased speed: it will facilitate smart cities and autonomous vehicles, and its implications for business are enormous, writes **Alex Meehan**



5G WILL TAKE ENTERPRISE MOBILITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Doing business on the move is a well-established concept in Ireland, but the arrival of 5G is likely to bring more than just speed improvements, according to well-placed observers of the market.

"5G will be revolutionary, not evolutionary, from 4G. It's going to have a big effect in terms of mobile working and what end users can do, from anywhere they have a 5G connection. It's absolutely going to change the data access game and what we're able to do with mobile data," said Ronan Carey, regional sales director for Dell Technologies Ireland.

"Yes, transmission speeds will be 20 times faster, but on top of that 5G will facilitate the move towards autonomous vehicles and smart cities. 5G will be hugely consequential in those areas and the ability to shift data around much faster will be key."

A big part of this growth will come from an explosion in the number of Internet-connected sensors in the physical world. More of these end-point transmitters and receivers will create exponential amounts of data.

"We're currently in a data economy that's pretty big but it's about to get much bigger. The outcomes will be huge for mobile working and how we connect. We've gone from needing to be at our desks to receive a given report and now we can get that on our smartphone or tablet," said Carey.

"But with 5G we'll be able to truly drive ERP applications and other enterprise class applications from mobile, to be able to have follow-the-sun development, where development will happen around the globe as if the various parties were in the same room."

In the meantime, what's occupying most business people's attention at the moment in enterprise mobility is unified endpoint

management.

"That's phones, laptops, tablets all integrated together to give one seamless service, regardless of the manufacturer. Obviously we'd love if they were all made by Dell but in reality they're not – people mix and match technology from different providers and they want it all to work together," Carey said.

"Sometimes these devices are supplied by an employer and are supported and sometimes they're devices that people have brought in themselves, sometimes they're state of the art and sometimes they're old. What's important to the customer is that there is a unified endpoint management system."

Good experience

This means that no matter the device used, the application access and user experience

are similar if not identical.

"That makes these devices easier for the IT department to manage, easier for the HR department to 'on-board' people and easier for the end user to get access to the right tools they need. It's our job to deliver efficiencies for the IT team that have to manage these devices and deliver a really good experience for the end user," said Carey.

"This ability to deliver the all-important easily-managed end user experience is at the heart of enterprise mobility in 2020. Paul Conaty, head of consulting services with specialist company CWSI, has seen the demands people have for their mobile devices grow over time.

"We started out over ten years ago with mobile device management, helping companies get control of their mobile fleets in the post-Blackberry era when iOS and Android devices had just started to appear and gain traction in the market," he said.

"From there, things have grown enormously. Initially everyone just wanted email on their phones but as the mobile operating systems become more sophisticated and apps started to appear, we started to manage the application layers, adding in security products like mobile threat defence and helping businesses with digital transformation where mobile is a key pillar."

Today, it's no longer enough to just provide access to mobile e-mail. Instead corporate users want full access to their work tools.

"People want to be able to do field servicing, run apps and change the way they work.

A lot has changed over the last ten years. Remote working has become more popular and the capabilities of mobile devices have improved steadily," said Conaty.

"Simultaneously there has been an overall shift towards cloud-based systems for enterprises which obviously lend themselves more to integration with a mobile ecosystem."

One issue Conaty has concerns about in the enterprise mobility arena is that of security. While companies mostly understand the importance of securing their IT infrastructure, many still have a blind spot about mobile.

"There is still quite a bit of complacency out there around security. A lot of companies assume that mobile doesn't need the same care and attention as other kinds of IT. They spend a lot of time and effort on securing their desktop and laptop machines but mobile devices are often left to the end," he said.

"Lots of IT departments look at their mobile fleet and think 'these devices mostly only have access to email so that's not a big deal.' But the reality is that people use the cameras on their smartphones as scanners, they use Dropbox and Gdrive for storage and they use Whatsapp groups to stay in touch."

Conaty said he doesn't like the term 'shadow IT' being used to describe such unauthorised activity because it sounds "very nefarious".

"In reality it's just people trying to do their job more efficiently. A huge amount of that goes on under the surface in companies and it isn't well managed. Smartphones are now

ubiquitous and everyone has one. People treat them like extensions of themselves and feel naked without one," Conaty said.

"They're treated as personal devices even if they're issued by work and people use them to post to Instagram, to play games, and to stay in touch with friends. That intersection of your personal and work life on one device can lead to reckless behaviour."

He pointed out that many people probably have videos, images or files on their smart devices that could get them or their employer into trouble.

"It's common for people to be part of a Whatsapp group with a friend with a bad sense of humour who sends images or videos you probably wouldn't want to show the whole world. But they're there on your phone and it doesn't look good from a company point of view," he said.

