

Category Standout: Webalo

Webalo's Mobile Rapid App Development (mRAD) Platform



By Eric Klein, Director, with David Krebs, Executive Vice President

SUMMARY

The mobile workforce demands new and more mobilized means of accessing important business applications and data. However, the effort and cost associated with mobilizing important enterprise applications can be prohibitive to many organizations. Webalo's Mobile Rapid App Development (mRAD) platform helps organizations tackle this problem by streamlining the typical processes associated with integration with legacy IT systems. The platform simplifies managing mobile app lifecycles and gives developers the ability to generate native mobile and desktop web apps by interacting with and pulling data from a user's existing enterprise applications.

KEY DETAILS

- > New apps can be connected to enterprise data and developed via a self-service administrator console.
- > Apps can be created for native utilization on smart mobile devices as well as for Chrome, Edge, Firefox, and Safari desktop browsers.
- > Webalo's platform offers a simple configuration approach to building apps, which allows developers to deliver applications faster at lower costs.
 - Configuration models are used to define the various elements of an application, reducing the need for hand-coding and accelerating the development process.
- > Webalo can be delivered via both a native mobile client and a desktop client. The mobile client can be downloaded through the relevant native app marketplaces on smartphones and tablets running on Android, Apple, BlackBerry, and Windows.
- > The Webalo platform can be deployed via Amazon Web Services, Citrix Xen, Microsoft Hyper-V, or VMware, single or multi-tenant, cloud, or behind the firewall.

VDC'S VIEW

Investments in software for mobile management, security, and communications are sizable but will ultimately be dwarfed by the sizable budgets organizations will be spending on development tools and pre-packaged applications going forward. Mobile app development has quickly become one of the most active areas in app development today; however, while most organizations have formal mobile strategies, they have been slow to expand their usage of mobile apps. The primary reason has been cost: mobilizing and integrating manual business processes and workflows with modern mobile platforms is not only complex but also time consuming and typically requires a high degree of specialized skills.

DEMOCRATIZING APP DEVELOPMENT

As approaches to enterprise mobility mature, the emphasis on applications will continue to be front and center. With the number and variety of mobile devices used to conduct business continuing to grow at a faster pace, application development tools that can reduce development time while simplifying the process will be critical as demand for custom applications increases; organizations are keen on providing their end users with new and more efficient ways to be productive while on the go. This shift is also evident in recent VDC data which shows that global shipments of mobile application development platforms and tools reached \$932M in 2016 and are forecast to grow to a \$2.55B market by 2020, a CAGR of 26.9%. This growth is in response to organizations approaching enterprise mobility in a more strategic fashion—specifically, by recognizing that apps will be fundamental to organizational efforts regarding business process optimization. The challenge, however, is that investments in legacy applications and systems are vast, and mobilizing them can be both challenging and expensive.

WHY WEBALO'S MRAD IS A CATEGORY STANDOUT

Founded in 2000, Webalo is based in Los Angeles, California, and employs around 30 employees. Peter Price, Webalo's co-founder and CEO, is a seasoned technology veteran with extensive experience in enterprise software. Mr. Price has built an enterprise-focused team at Webalo, with many years of hands-on experience in the IT industry, corporate customers, and early stage technology companies.

Webalo's value play is to facilitate and accelerate the processes associated with delivering access to enterprise applications and databases to a mobile workforce; the platform provides fast, cross-platform app development, while reducing time to market, supporting scalability, and delivering enterprise-grade security and support for mobile app initiatives. Rather than hand-coding new individual mobile apps, the platform uses simple configuration and machine-learning techniques to transform legacy apps and data by generating native mobile apps and desktop web apps, which enable mobile users with access to real-time data and new opportunities to be more productive and efficient wherever they are working.

The workflows, tasks, and integrations created in Webalo are all accessed via a single universal client app. Webalo connects to enterprise applications and data that organizations rely on and mobilizes the workflows that people engage and interact with. This is a compelling proposition, as users can interact with important workflows and undertake work tasks via a single system, eliminating the need to utilize many different enterprise applications to get work done. Even the largest and most sophisticated IT organizations lack the mobile acumen to design, develop, and integrate mobile solutions; Webalo offers a quick, cost-effective, and secure way for organizations to transform the way their businesses operate from within, by ensuring that mobile initiatives are pursued across business divisions.

Webalo's platform has been generally available since 2012; the company goes to market through a network of channel partners. The company has been successful in maintaining and expanding its roster of customers, and has deployments in mobile-intensive vertical markets such as financial services, manufacturing, and healthcare—where the workforce is distributed, and requires mobile access to enterprise applications and data updates in real time. Key customers include Bell Nursery, GE, Inland Group, RBS, National Health Service (UK), PepsiCo, and Wells Fargo.

Figure 1: The Webalo Platform



The platform simplifies the process of developing customized native mobile and web apps by interacting with and pulling data from a wide variety of corporate systems including: SQL Server, Oracle, MySQL, IBM i, DB2, PostgreSQL, Sybase, Derby and Informix; as well as packaged software suites from IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, and SAP. Webalo's patented User Proxy Server technology seamlessly transforms back-end data for compatibility with every major mobile OS (e.g., Android, Apple, BlackBerry, or Windows). Developers can then monitor, update, and re-deploy each of their organization's Webalo apps in real time, regardless of the original enterprise software to which the Webalo app is connected. This enables organizations to tailor new mobility, security, and data analytics features for individual employees, without compromising the effectiveness of their existing enterprise app solutions. The service can be accessed as both a cloud-based platform and a virtualized development appliance.

The Webalo platform's architecture handles security by taking advantage of existing Active Directory and LDAP permission-based security protocols; support for authentication management systems such as OAuth2, Windows Auth, Kerberos, and Site Minder is also available for third party services. SSO with vendor-specific offerings can also be implemented. Data in motion between enterprise systems and devices is encrypted, and data can be set to be non-persistent, removing everything when users log off. Webalo also integrates with popular enterprise mobility management (EMM) solutions from vendors including AirWatch, BlackBerry, Citrix, MobileIron, and IBM—this offers users additional security capabilities to enforce/ensure compliance against regulatory or corporate standards.

Case Study – University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB)

University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) has a reputation for innovation – for trying new technologies that have the potential to turn long-term strategies into short-term solutions. UHB is one of 120 separate “Trusts” within the U.K. National Health Service (NHS). UHB has been aggressively pursuing mobile enablement of its workforce for the last decade, and quickly recognized that end users required a mobile solution that would enable users to conduct transactional and bi-directional workflows that are critical to its business. Mobile applications are critical as clinicians do not need to be tied to a desktop or laptop computer; information needs to be shared more quickly, decisions can be made without delays. Enhancing patient care is also an area UHB strives to improve; mobile solutions have been instrumental and impactful in this effort too.

UHB relies on a mix of packaged and, more predominantly, using Webalo, custom developed applications that offer rich reporting, executive dashboards with key performance indicators, and the transactional, bi-directional programs that provide health and operational data and permit the exchange of information among doctors, consultants, pharmacists, nurses, and other practitioners who have a direct effect on patient care.

The Pharmacy On-Call System (POCS) lets pharmacists respond to requests for medication by looking up – from their smartphones – the details and characteristics of any of the 86,000 available drugs and instantly provide advice about suitability, availability and, if necessary, substitutions. UHB utilized Webalo's platform for POCS, and successfully (and rapidly) built integrations to its pharmaceutical database. UHB has saved a significant amount time by avoiding hand coding its mobile applications using Webalo.

Stephen Chilton, Director of ICT at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust considers Webalo to be UHB's strategic platform for all future enterprise-to-mobile access. “Webalo fits very nicely into our strategic vision for getting more value out of our mobile devices. It's astounding that we can deliver data and functions so fast and provide virtually instantaneous benefits to both users and patients. Webalo's platform has transformed our ability to provide our workforce with the mobile access they need to be productive.”

WEBALO PLATFORM SUMMARY

Table 1: Webalo Platform Summary and Unique Value Proposition

Unique Value Proposition
<p>Webalo offers a simple configuration approach to building mobile applications. This "code-free" approach to building mobile applications can reduce costs by minimizing the need to hand-code applications and by eliminating complex and costly development tools. Webalo's platform provides developers with a scalable and enterprise-grade solution to deliver cross-platform mobile and desktop applications. Developers can quickly orchestrate data sources, configure them, and generate mobile and desktop applications with a native user experience.</p>
Solution Demand
<p>Enterprise and midmarket; primarily: Healthcare, Industrial and Financial Services</p>
Product Areas/Functions
<p>Mobile Rapid App Development (mRAD): Vendors in this category offer a visual, drag-and-drop approach to building apps, which allows developers to deliver applications faster at lower costs. Visual models are used to define the various elements of an application, reducing the need for hand-coding and accelerating the development process.</p>
Licensing/Pricing
<p>Webalo is priced at \$200 per user per year. The Webalo product set includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webalo Cloud - A highly secure, multi-tenant, scalable, enterprise grade cloud-based version of Webalo, deployed in the Amazon EC2 environment • Webalo Gateway - A Webalo administrator-controlled checkpoint between Webalo's cloud-based servers and the customer's enterprise resources, securely managing communications between the two • Webalo Appliance – A behind-the-firewall, single-tenant, scalable, enterprise grade virtual appliance version of Webalo that runs on the leading virtualization platforms including Xen, VMware, and Microsoft Windows Server 2008 Hyper-V • Webalo for Mobile – a Webalo client, installed on a device, that natively delivers the apps, automatically generated by either Webalo Cloud or Webalo Appliance, to Apple, Android, BlackBerry and Windows smartphones and tablets • Webalo for Mobile EMM versions – versions of the Webalo client pre-integrated with the leading EMM vendors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Webalo for AirWatch o Webalo for BlackBerry o Webalo for Citrix o Webalo for MobileIron • Webalo for Desktop – a browser based version of the Webalo client that delivers the apps, automatically generated by either Webalo Cloud or Webalo Appliance, to Chrome, Firefox, Edge and Safari browsers
Company Size
<p>30 Employees</p>
Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Nursery • GE • Inland Group • RBS • National Health Service (UK) • PepsiCo • Wells Fargo

CONCLUSION

VDC's data showed that more organizations have business units taking the lead role in furthering their mobile application initiatives. This signals the broader democratization of mobile application development—the new class of “knowledge worker,” often referred to as citizen developers, is real. Our definition of citizen developers is as follows: end users (within a LoB) who take the lead and develop new business applications for their team and/or across the organization. While Webalo is not a young company, it has developed a differentiated and commercially viable and proven solution for rapidly providing remote access of corporate data to a mobile workforce. The company has brought a differentiated mobile enablement solution to the market and has an established roster of active customers. References describe one of the drivers for purchasing Webalo to be that it has minimized many of the complexities associated with developing mobile applications. Several customers have been using Webalo's platform for more than five years, and claim a significant reduction in professional services expenditures. In summary, we believe that Webalo's mRAD solution will be instrumental in moving organizations forward as they expand their mobile application development initiatives.

VDC RESEARCH CATEGORY STANDOUT

VDC Research Category Standouts is a report series that offer insights into vendors who have developed unique selling points through product innovation, and/or through disruptive business models to their markets.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Eric Klein

Eric Klein is a market research and consulting professional who specializes in the design, analysis, and delivery of project-based research. Over the past 15 years, Eric has worked with a wide array of firms across a number of industries, leading quantitative and qualitative research in areas such as innovation in management, manufacturing operations/automation, and in a variety of market research and management roles, intelligence to Fortune 500 firms. His previous employers include: AMR Research, The Yankee Group, and Affiliated Computer Services (ACS). Eric holds a Bachelor of Science degree in finance from Boston University.

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David Krebs

David Krebs has more than 10 years of experience covering the markets for enterprise and government mobility solutions, wireless data communication technologies, and automatic data-capture research and consulting. David focuses on identifying the key drivers and enablers in the adoption of mobile and wireless solutions among mobile workers in the extended enterprise. David's consulting and strategic advisory experience is far reaching and includes technology and market opportunity assessments, technology penetration and adoption enablers, partner profiling and development, new product development, and M&A due diligence support. David has extensive primary market research management and execution experience to support market sizing and forecasting, total cost of ownership (TCO), comparative product performance evaluation, competitive benchmarking, and end-user requirements analysis. David is a graduate of Boston University (BSBA).

ABOUT VDC RESEARCH

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