

From Manual to Mobile: Speeding Business Success for SMBs

Perspectives Report



Drivers for Mobilizing Your Workforce | 2

Doing More with Mobile Solutions | 5

Making Business Process Mobile | 6

Managing Mobile Peace of Mind | 7

Summary and Perspective | 9

Laurie McCabe
Sanjeev Aggarwal

April 2017

Sponsored by:



Top Takeaways

- Major demographic trends and the increasing adoption of mobile devices and apps are changing our definition of the workforce and expectations of how and where work gets done.
- 57% of SMBs indicate that 50% or more of their employees now use mobile devices for business purposes, as the adoption of mobile productivity and collaboration apps has become mainstream.
- SMBs are turning to mobile business solutions to take the friction out of tasks such as customer relationship management, expense reporting and time keeping.
- Mobile-friendly business solutions can help SMBs expedite the process of moving from manual methods and spreadsheets to automated business processes and workflows.
- As workers' reliance on mobile solutions increases, SMBs should deploy mobile management and security solutions, and they should select business solution vendors that employ strong security policies and practices.

Generational shifts, the rise of the remote workforce and the growth of the gig economy are reshaping the workforce and our definition of the workplace. Today's workers increasingly need—and expect—to get their work done anytime, anywhere and from the device of their choice.

Therefore, it's no wonder that U.S. small and medium businesses (SMBs, defined here as businesses with 1 to 1,000 employees) have taken to mobile like fish to water: 68% strongly agree/agree that mobile solutions are critical to their business.

However, getting the most business value from mobile investments involves more than just outfitting workers with the latest mobile gadgets. By equipping employees with the right mobile business solutions, companies can cut the time that workers spend on repetitive chores so they can devote more time to activities aimed at growing the business. SMBs must also take measures to ensure that they are managing and protecting their data wherever it resides.

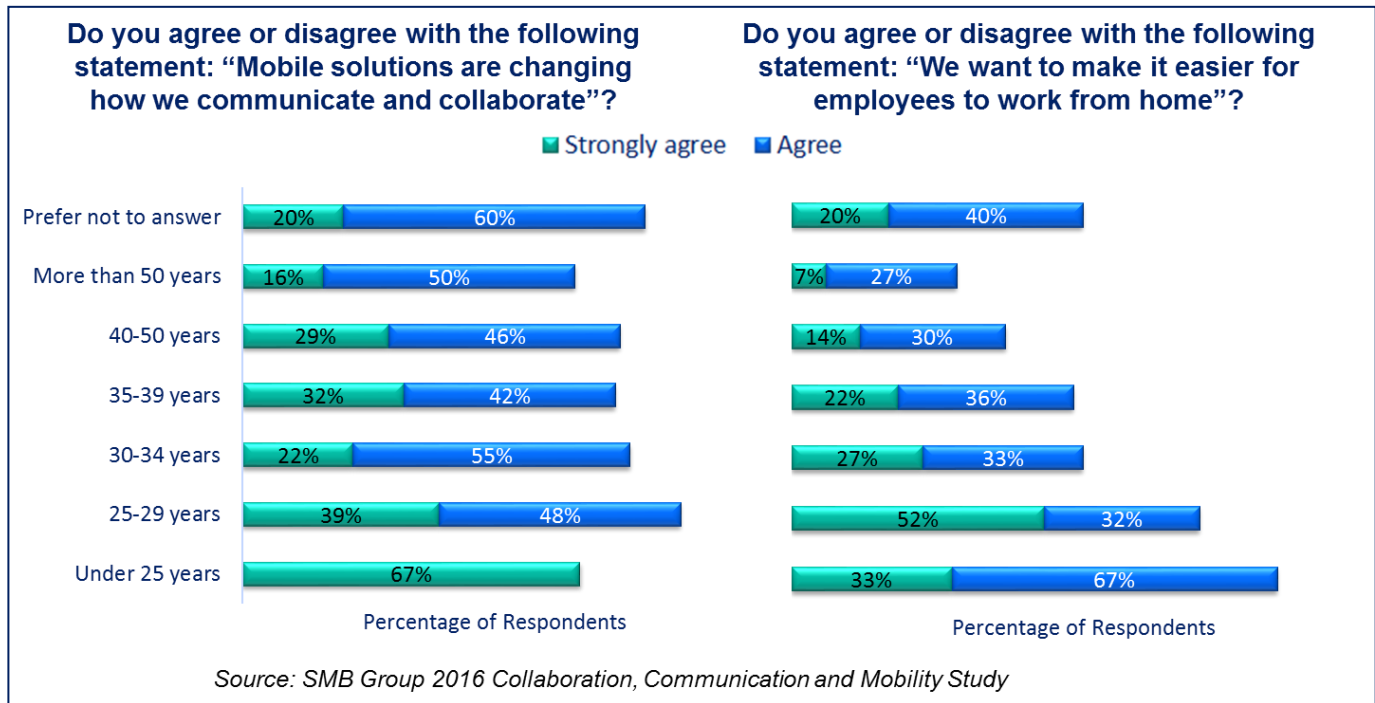
Drivers for Mobilizing Your Workforce

Several demographic trends are combining to alter the composition of the workforce and our expectations of how and where work gets done.

First, we are in the midst of a huge generational shift. According to the Pew Research Center, millennials (those born between 1981 and 1997) surpassed the baby boomer population (those born between 1946 and 1963) as our country's largest living generation in 2015. About 10,000 boomers started turning 65 every day in 2015, and about 10,000 more will cross that threshold daily for the next 19 years. As baby boomers retire, many will be replaced by millennials, who have different attitudes about work than prior generations. For instance, SMB Group research shows that younger SMB decision makers are more likely than their older counterparts to agree with the

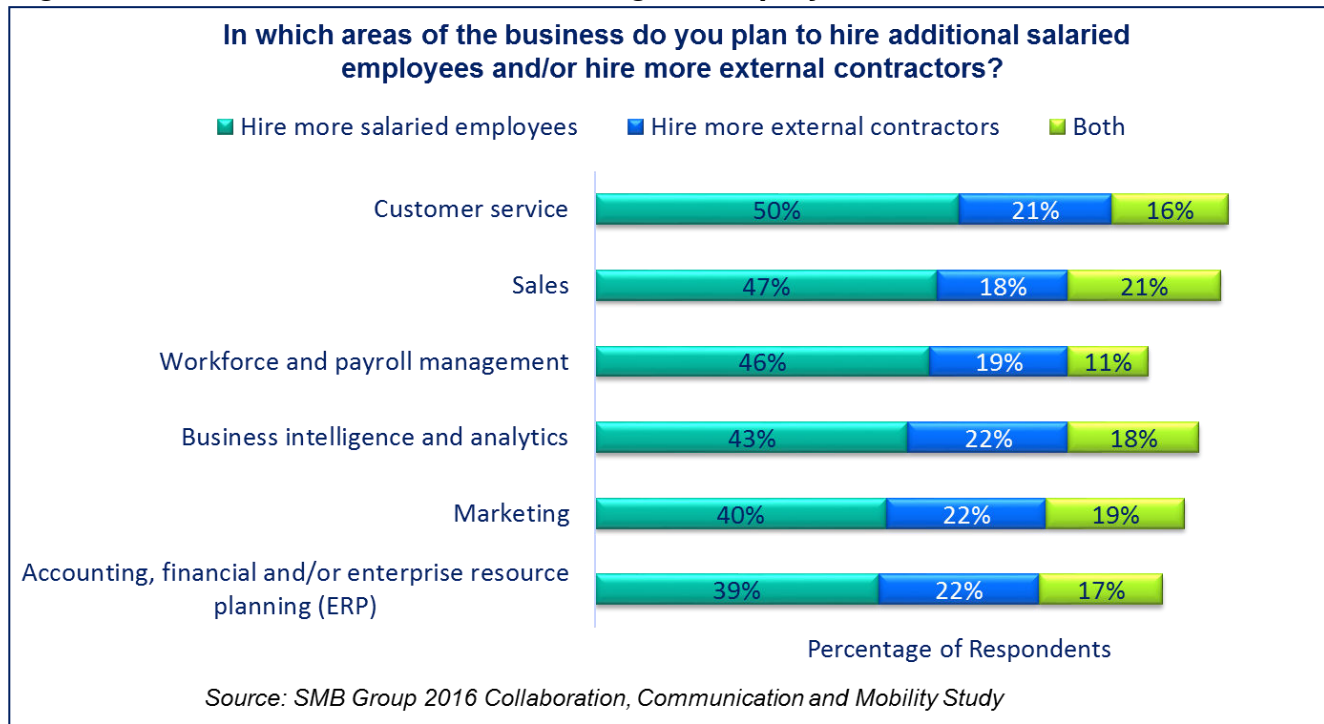
following statements: “Mobile solutions are changing how we communicate and collaborate” and “We want to make it easier for employees to work from home” (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mobile Attitudes by Age of Decision Maker



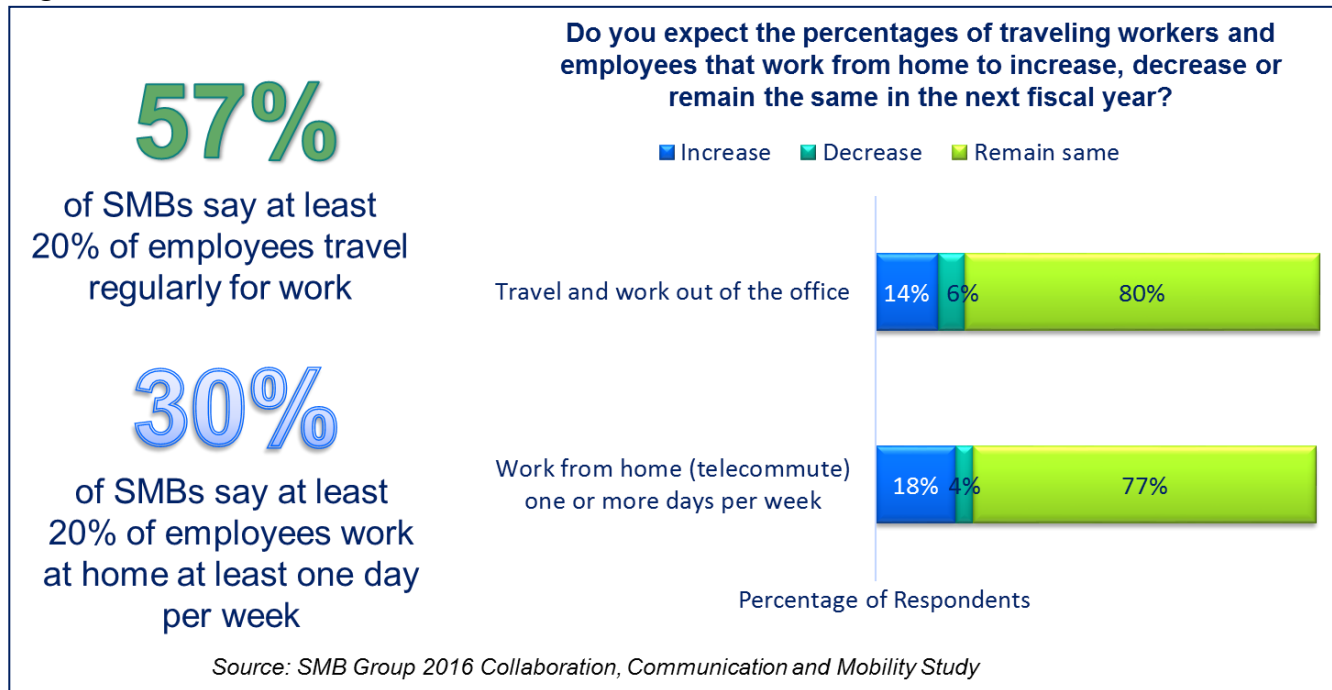
Next, the gig economy is growing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one-third of American workers are now freelancers, contractors or contingent workers. Forecasters predict that this segment will grow to 43% by 2020. Gig workers include self-employed as well as temp workers, contractors, on-call workers and part-time employees across industries—from construction to pet care, from accounting to healthcare, and from creative design to programming. As shown in Figure 2, SMBs’ reliance on external contractors across many functions is rising.

Figure 2: SMB Current and Planned Hiring for Employees and Contractors



Finally, more employees are working remotely. 57% of SMBs say that 20% or more of their workforce travels for work, and 14% expect this number to increase in the next year. In addition, more employees are working from home: 30% of SMBs now support telecommuting for 20% or more of their employees, and 18% expect the percentage of their telecommuting workers to increase in the next year (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Rise of the Remote Workforce

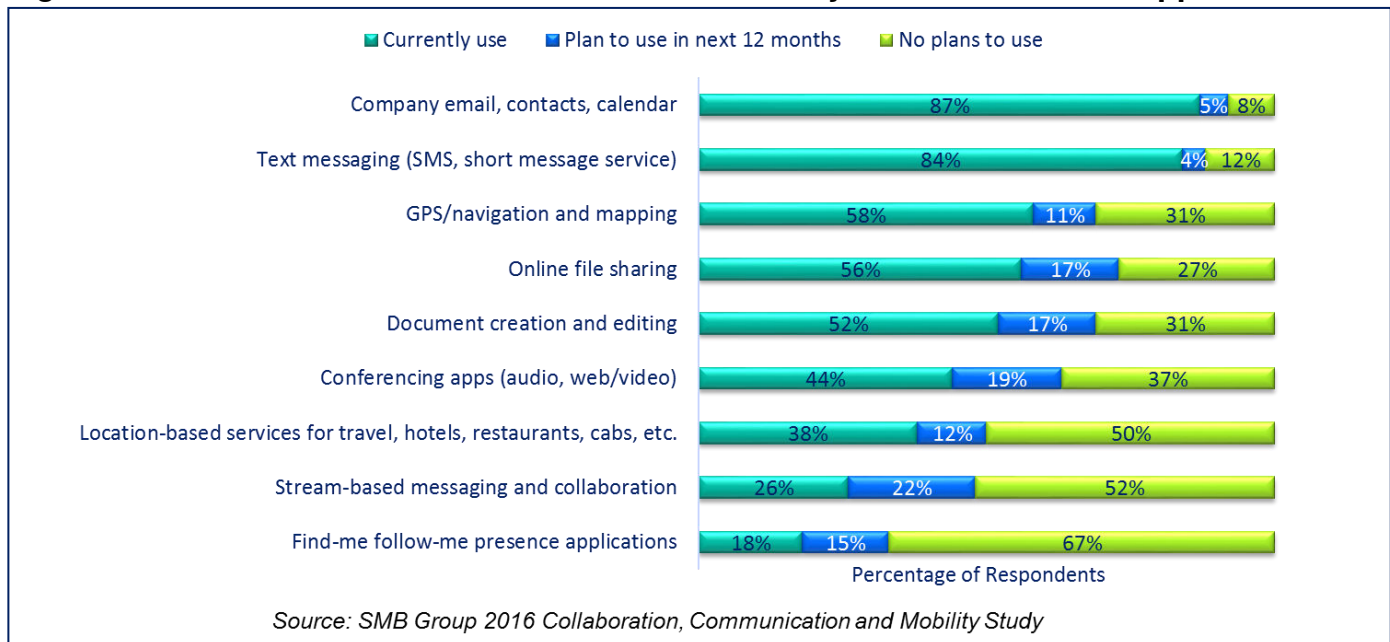


Doing More With Mobile Solutions

These trends fuel the need for more effective, flexible ways to collaborate and get work done—whether at home or in the office, by salaried employee or contractor, millennial or baby boomer. Although the PC is far from dead, workers increasingly expect to have the ability to do more of their tasks on a phone or tablet rather than at a desktop.

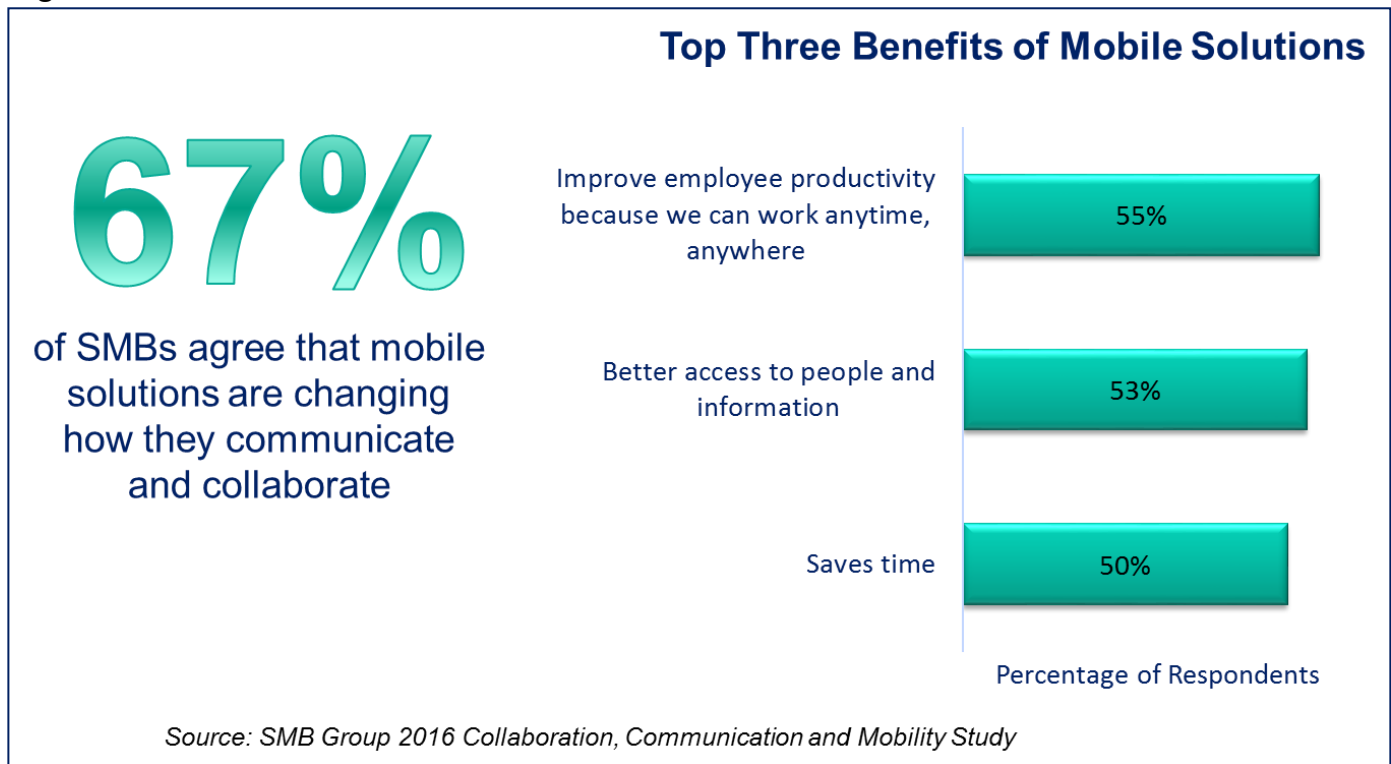
57% of SMBs indicate that 50% or more of their employees now use mobile devices for business purposes. The use of basic mobile productivity apps such as email, contacts and calendar are now mainstream: 87% of SMBs say that their employees use these apps as part of regular business operations (Figure 4). The regular use of other mobile apps—such as online file sharing, document creation and editing, GPS/navigation and conferencing apps—to support the business is also becoming the norm. SMBs are quickly embracing new stream-based messaging and collaboration apps, such as Slack and HipChat as well.

Figure 4: SMB Use of and Plans for Mobile Productivity and Collaboration Apps



Furthermore, 67% of SMBs strongly agree/agree that mobile solutions are changing how they work and collaborate (Figure 5). The top benefits from mobile solutions include improved employee productivity, improved access to people and information, and time savings.

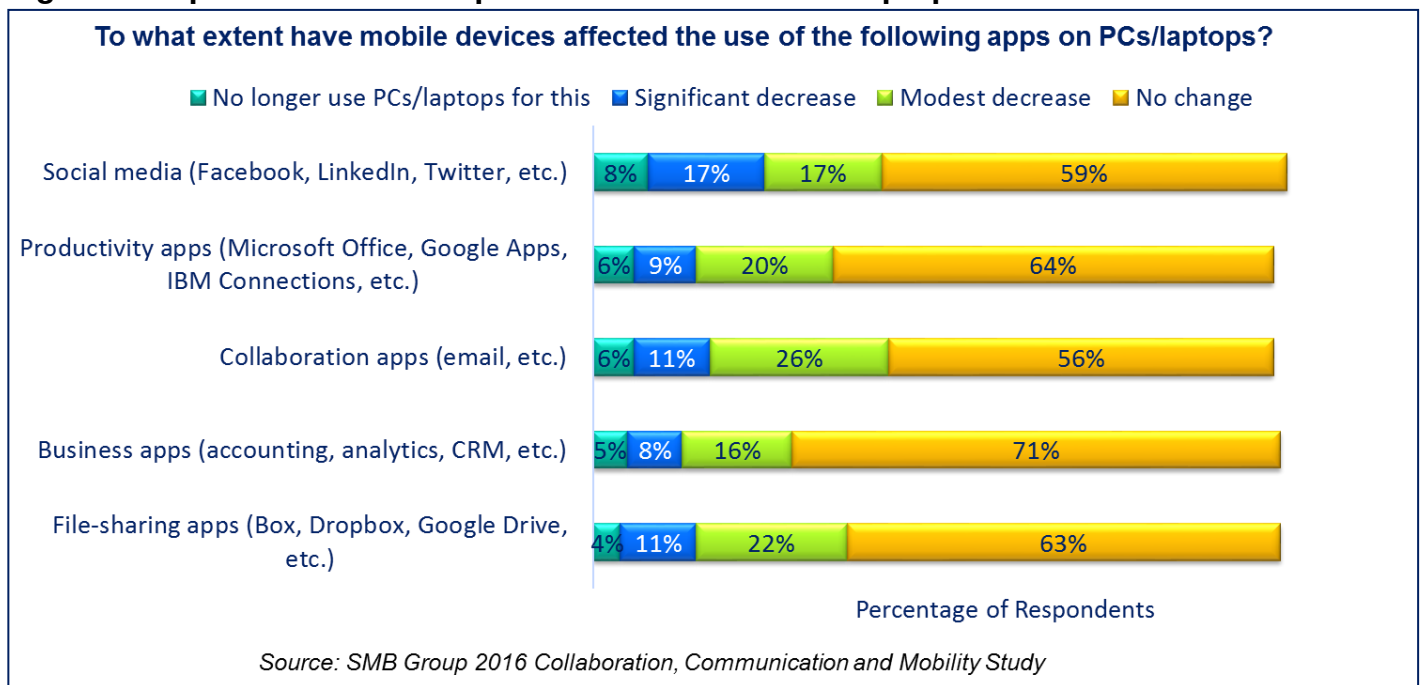
Figure 5: U.S. SMB Attitudes About Mobile Solutions



Making Business Process Mobile

Mobile apps have already made a big impact on how SMBs do their jobs (Figure 6). For example, 37% say that they've decreased their use of traditional PCs and laptops for collaboration functions such as email, and 6% say they no longer use PCs at all for these tasks.

Figure 6: Impact of Mobile Adoption on the Use of PCs/Laptops for Different Functions



But the benefits of mobile apps extend beyond basic productivity and collaboration apps. SMBs are starting to embrace mobile business solutions, including apps for customer relationship management, expense reports, invoicing, time keeping and much more.

Cloud-based, mobile solutions give workers access to workflow and real-time information regardless of where they are, keeping everyone on the same page throughout the process. Because learning curves for mobile business apps are typically short, these apps are often easier for people to use than traditional desktop applications. Consequently, mobile apps can help SMBs expedite the process of moving from manual methods and spreadsheets to automated processes and workflows.

For example, Concur Expense helps businesses automate expense management to improve worker productivity. Employees can just snap photos of their receipts with their phone, and then the app reads, writes and uploads the data to the cloud. Finance managers can view spending as it happens, providing more control and better insights. Integration with corporate and personal credits and popular accounting packages streamlines workflows, reporting and compliance.

SMBs can reap similar benefits when it comes to invoicing using solutions such as Concur Invoice, which automates accounts payable and provides real-time visibility of spending. Users can process invoices from authorization to supplier payments, either via a web interface or through a mobile app. With information updated in real time, the solution helps finance teams more easily manage vendor payments and cash flow.

To maximize mobile productivity, SMBs should look for business solutions that offer a mobile-friendly user interface and integrate seamlessly with back-end processes.

Managing Mobile Peace of Mind

The shift toward using mobile apps for business workflows will continue to gain speed due to the convenience and portability of mobile devices as well as users' increasing preferences for mobile interfaces. In fact, many application developers now prioritize mobile user interface design over designing interfaces for traditional PCs. The influx of millennials into the workforce and the requirement for more flexibility by remote workers and contractors will further fuel mobile business app adoption in SMBs.

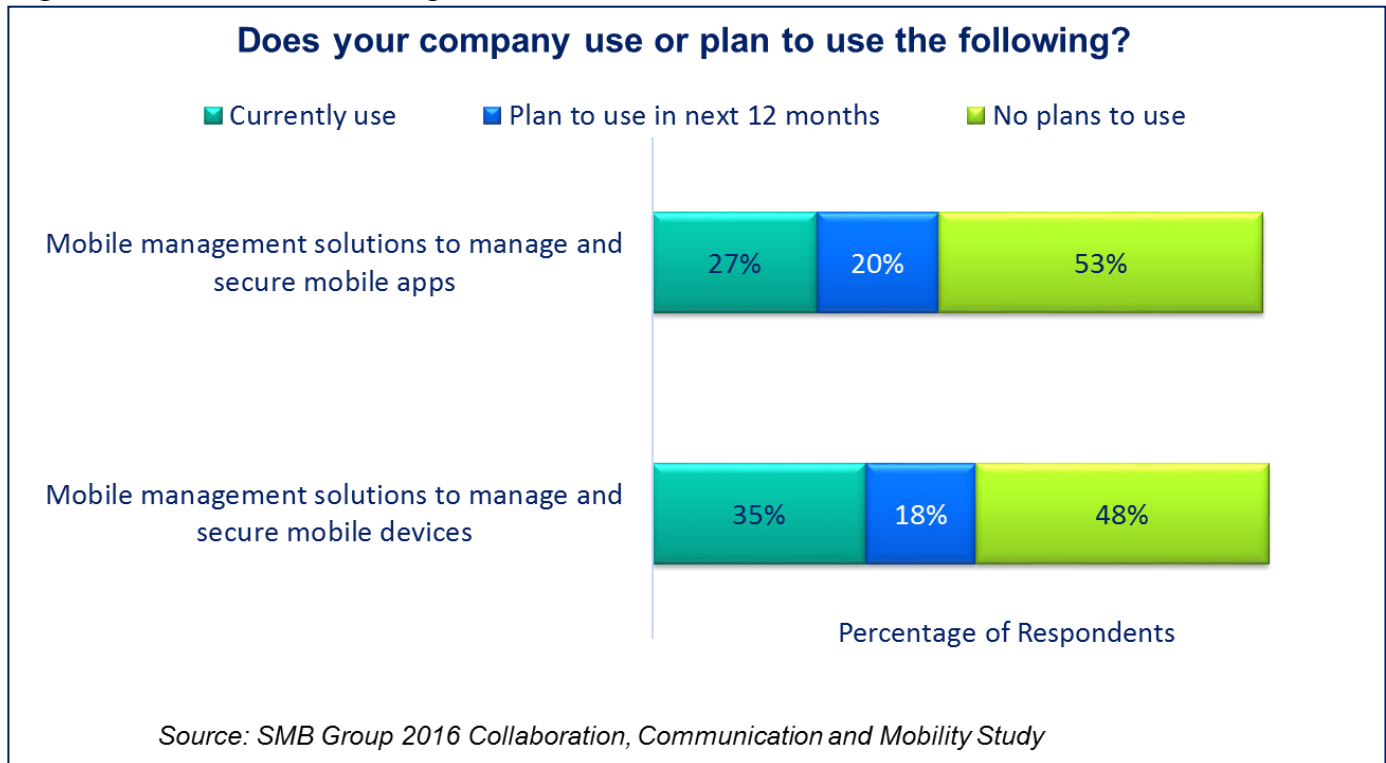
However, in a mobile world, data is no longer tied to a specific device or location. Data may reside on a company server, in cloud applications and in cloud-based file-storing services—and people can access data from a smartphone or a tablet as easily as from a desktop. Because data can now “live” in many places, the risk of data loss and leakage—whether from accidental or malicious causes—grows.

Unfortunately, many SMBs have yet to deploy mobile management solutions (Figure 7). As the use of mobile devices and apps rises, so do security vulnerabilities. One stolen (or even lost) smartphone with

access to company data can provide a criminal with access to sensitive information that can result in brand damage and financial losses.

SMBs can reduce security risks by using mobile management solutions that provide safeguards such as remote wipe, location tracking and rules-based policies for app and data access.

Figure 7: SMB Mobile Management Use and Plans



SMBs need to evaluate the security policies of mobile app vendors, including the following safeguards:

- **Data security:** Look for vendors that adhere to the ISO 27001 security management standard.
- **Data privacy:** Vendors should only collect the minimum amount of personally identifiable information in their apps, and they should clearly articulate how they will use it.
- **Vulnerability management and monitoring:** Vendors should use top-tier security solutions and specialists to monitor all aspects of their software and infrastructure so they can readily identify and fix problems.

Adherence to other industry standards, such as ISO 20000 for IT service management practices, and PCI compliance are also strong indicators that a vendor takes security seriously.

Summary and Perspective

Mobile devices and solutions put an enormous ecosystem of apps in our pockets, making mobility an essential part of both our lives and our businesses. Mobile solutions also offer big benefits to SMBs, including productivity gains, time savings, accessibility and ease of use. And as millennials become a larger part of the workforce, these businesses will also be more in tune with and better able to attract and retain millennials as they enter their prime working years.

Companies that use mobile apps to automate and streamline their business functions can not only improve productivity, but also give employees more flexibility in terms of how, when and where they work. Now that adoption of mobile collaboration apps is pervasive, SMBs are turning their attention to mobile business apps that take the friction out of daily business tasks and workflows.

As the use of mobile devices and apps grows, however, SMBs need to be more proactive in deploying mobile management and security solutions, and they should select mobile app vendors that have documented best practices for ensuring data protection and privacy.

© SMB Group, 2017

[SMB GROUP, INC.](#)

SMB Group focuses exclusively on researching and analyzing the highly fragmented “SMB market”—which is composed of many smaller, more discrete markets. Within the SMB market, SMB Group’s areas of focus include Emerging Technologies, Cloud Computing, Managed Services, Business and Marketing Applications, Collaboration and Social Media Solutions, IT Infrastructure Management and Services, IoT and Green IT. Read our [2017 Top 10 SMB Technology Trends](#) for our views on game-changers in these and other areas of the SMB market.