



Odyssey Software's Device Management Enables New Edge Capabilities for Business Benefit

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Management Summary

It is hard to think outside of the box – and even harder to think without assuming boxes – and edges. Like naming and classifying, focusing on what is at hand and familiar is a human predilection. We focus on what is in our boxes, not on the external surfaces. However, to be more customer facing and market aware, the surface – the edge of an organization is what is relevant. This is particularly true at present. Many business constraints, like the physical boxes we used to work in, are no longer as necessary or as prescriptive. Constraint-based success is often a matter of careful habits that persist even when the constraint is removed. Business is a pursuit constrained by regulations, ethics and, perhaps, morality. Lately, technology has given business a bewildering array of options. The organizational edge is no longer a Berlin Wall of contracts and firewalls, but a carefully crafted set of negotiation points.

Many enterprises have been blown off their expected course by altered circumstances and/or expectations. They know where they want to end up but not how best to get there. They have been tossed about by economic forces over which they have no control. Previously designed cadences have been supplanted by unrelenting ASAP. Like Odysseus, many have had illuminating but not necessarily productive encounters with out-of-the-box ways of doing things. They want to get back to a productive and prosperous state.

Odyssey Software, based in West Henrietta NY, brings disciplined management to the mobile and embedded devices at the organizational edge – that negotiation zone between an organization and its customers, allies and competitors. Odyssey's *Athena* software manages any device with the intelligence to be managed or the need to be secured, including devices from smartphones to kiosks and vending machines. The software works on *Windows®*, *Windows Embedded CE*, and *Windows XP Embedded* platforms, at the present time. It plans to expand platform coverage based on demand.

The value of this management goes well beyond a good solution for the obvious problems of *operational integrity* – without which a business is maimed. Device management also supports *business agility* – a necessary means to a positive result. Its most significant benefit is the capability it gives an enterprise to harvest the benefits of *synergies with a customer base* to guide product development and strategic direction.

These three goals can be seen as the pole stars by which to set a course through the welter of information accessible through your endpoints. Yes, there are three – for business is not an environment that can be mapped to paper, but a multi-verse of business dimensions and strategic vectors that, simultaneously, must be navigated well.

Odyssey Software is a timely naming. It manages the odyssey that many organizations are experiencing. For more details, please read on.

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Edge Opportunity and Risks

Leveraging well-managed edge devices has many benefits. On the outbound side, information can be fed to customer-facing people to give them the on-the-spot knowledge to close business. That edge can feed back the kind of detail that, in the aggregate, can save an organization from making many kinds of mistaken assumptions. However, the edge environment also comes with risks.

Mobile devices, like smartphones and laptops, are easily lost. Kiosks and vending machines are generally more permanently attached (ignoring the fork-lift theft of ATM machines), but they are still not under physical control, are not necessarily secure, and are subject to a host of service challenges, such as power outages, resource depletion, and physical attacks on the coin boxes.

Disciplined management gives the basic operational integrity that will allow edge-based devices to be fully functioning parts of operations. If management functionality can go beyond the *keeping-the-lights-on* of service support to *optimizing business operations*, so much the better. If management can gather information as well as display and distribute it, an enterprise gains thousands of data points that can change how business can be done.

Operational Integrity- The First Wave of Benefit

Many organizations have used smartphones in an unmanaged way to see how they work and how they change what businesses do. It is past time to do better, not just by a unified communications strategy (beyond the scope of both Odyssey Software and this report), but by treating smartphones as the flexible, increasingly capable business assets that they are¹.

With Odyssey's *Athena* management software, device management is conducted in an environment secured by mutual certificate based-authentication. That is, the device authenticates the server and vice versa before the SSL session starts. The communications is not in a proprietary protocol, as is the case with several competing products that come from a PBX heritage, but in SOAP Web Services using *https*. This openness allows partners to contribute applications that leverage *Athena* management to add still more significant business value. It also allows customers to aggregate the functionality they need for different worker roles within the commonality of a device management platform.

Management Components

- **Asset Reporting** – This functionality creates

and updates hardware and software details.

- **Device Configuration** – This includes the ability to resynchronize configuration to an enterprise standard.
- **Remote Control** – This is needed for a Help Desk to troubleshoot problems.
- **Enforcement of Enterprise Policies** – This includes controlling what applications run. It also controls cell phone functions for things like text messaging, for which there is no inherent audit mechanism in many phones.
- **Certificate Management**
- **Encryption** – On some phones, *Athena* can activate a local policy to encrypt the phone's memory card. This ability will probably be more widespread in the next generation of smartphones.

Device Security – Lock and Wipe Functions

Mobile phones are, by their nature, easy to lose. Odyssey offers the following remediation for this possibility.

Step 1 – Identify

If the phone goes unused for a period of time, a screen comes up asking for PIN and/or personal information

Step 2 – Lock

If the device cannot communicate with the enterprise for more than a period of time, it goes into a stage 2 lock, which can only be undone by the appropriate help desk or administrator.

Step 3 – Wipe

If the phone has no contact with the enterprise for a longer period of time, the phone will be wiped at the bit level.

These make a smartphone a full-fledged enterprise device, capable of supporting business dexterity.

Business Dexterity – the Second Wave of Benefit

Because *Athena* uses Web Services and SOAP over *https*, the benefits of Odyssey extend far beyond device management. Any service can be published to any browser. Customers can tailor the presentation layer skin on the browser to match different roles, or to the situation (say, remote assistance). The *Athena* agent on the device also can accept plug-ins to support different features. Subsetting of these features is also possible. This allows organizations to skirt the twin perils of overloaded, semi-comatose phones, and inadequately equipped phones that cause frustration.

The *Athena* agent can also publish natively into IT management frameworks, including *Microsoft Systems Center*, *IBM Tivoli*, *HP Open View*, and *CA Unicenter* through the use of XML Web Services. With this integration, the enterprise Smart-

¹ One need only look to emerging economies such as India to realize what a business difference smartphones can make. We, in mature economies, have many business assets, and it is easy to focus on the plethora rather than the fuller use of a particular device.

phone fleet becomes a fully manageable enterprise asset. Odyssey's Athena gives IT management bootstrap-style management for their phone fleet. It can retire a phone, authenticate a new device, and download, install, and fire up the new agent, which will collect an inventory of functionality and check for updates.

Odyssey OEMs Athena software to Motorola, as well as other cell phone manufacturers. It also OEMs its product to software vendors, whose solutions incorporate the Athena agent on smartphones via plug-ins. This allows both the applications and the devices supported to evolve as the market for them does. Odyssey also sells direct to enterprise customers, providing them with an integration point pre-packaged for systems management. Licensing is per device. At present, these offerings are:

- *Athena for Microsoft Systems Center Configuration Manager 2007*
- *Athena for Microsoft Systems Center Mobil Device Manager 2008*
- *Athena for Microsoft SMS 2003*

Odyssey Software obviously has a very good relationship with Microsoft, which extends down to sales force integration. It will expand its offerings beyond Microsoft over time.

For both software vendors and enterprises, Odyssey solves the last mile problem for provisioning devices to suit the need for business dexterity. But there is more – it can let businesses leverage the market synergy this transparency provides.

Harvesting Market Synergy – the Third Wave of Benefit

To address a market properly, one must know more these days than heretofore. The nature of a market, and its proper addressability, is more than a matter of size. It is a matter of their character, and the specifics of what works well with what customer segments.

Today, there are many endpoints of significance beyond smartphones. All are endowed with embedded systems capable of considerable intelligence gathering. This includes dispensers, monitors, RFID gateways, counters, and cameras. Instrumentation is pervasive. What is worth populating with a secure agent may be a smaller subset. Consider what you need to know in order to offer compelling value to your customers. Consider the benefits of harvesting this knowledge directly from your operational experience.

In many states, retail and grocery stores must have price-checking kiosks to validate the sticker price. Traditionally, these have been hard-wired and manually managed. Because they are customer facing, it is important that they be always func-

tional. With manual management, this has been a challenge. For example, JC Penney has found Odyssey's Athena system not only meets the immediate challenge but also offers them opportunities to do more with their marketing, such as couponing and cross-selling.

Input from these kinds of devices may not indicate what a business should do. It may give far more clarity into what is not working, or what only works with particular customers, such as the weekend clientele. It documents operations in a way your busy human staff cannot. Analysis can extract interesting patterns when they can work with this kind of relevant detail.

A more extravagant opportunity exists in more highly automated situations, where many choices are available to customize the deliverable, such as salad bars and beverage dispensers. Feedback from edge devices can demonstrate what is popular and well liked in a particular venue. This can then be tested in other geographies. One large beverage company will employ this kind of product extension, by offering customization options for their beverage options. Customers will be able to create their own taste sensations – and the beverage manufacturer will be able to identify which ones seem widely and repeatedly enjoyed.

This last wave takes edge device management into the realm of supporting strategies and business model innovation. That the innovation is based on operational experience, and that strategies can be analyzed by information inputs from easily deployable and reconfigurable agents, gives many ways to test new options.

Conclusion

Odyssey Software's *Athena* device management not only helps enable business operational efficiency and effectiveness, but also builds coherent specifics into long-term strategies. Recently, these strategies have suffered from a surplus of what-ifs regrettably sauced with the sour taste of the market downturn. With constrained resources, it has been hard to think how to turn your business model from a consumer of resources to a provider of opportunities.

Odyssey's Athena device management gives a disciplined way to explore both the edges of your institutional box and what lies just outside them. It is a potent business tool. Think how it could be used in your particular situation.



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