

# SOFTWARE 101: Mobility Moves Beyond Apps

WEB-NATIVE BUSINESS SYSTEMS CAN BE ACCESSED FROM ANY CONNECTED DEVICE WITH A BROWSER.

By Amanda Lamela

During this year's keynote speech at Google I/O, the annual software developer-focused conference for Google platforms, Sundar Pichai shared his vision for the future of the "Internet of Things" (IoT).

The concept of the IoT deals with the idea of being able to manage equipment from a mobile device. This is not a new concept. Right now, it is possible to adjust a home thermostat or set a security

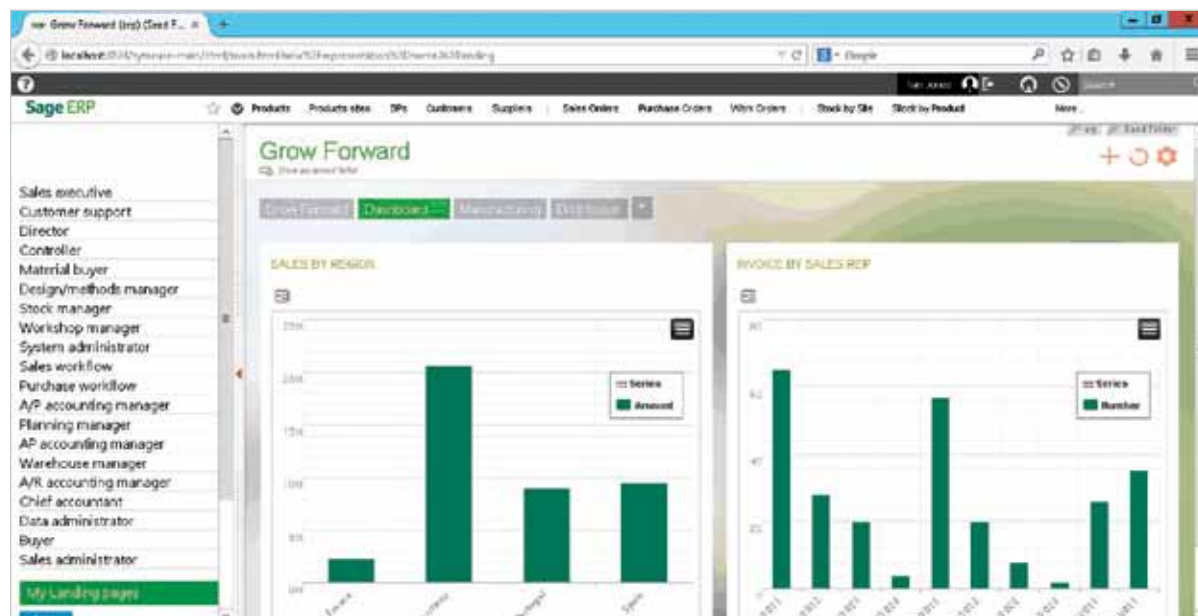
system from a mobile phone. The Veterans Health Administration was also an early adopter of IoT technology, with remote patient monitoring.

"You can imagine a farmer, managing her entire farm from a smartphone," the Google senior vice president, who oversees Android, Chrome and Google Apps, said on May 28.

Controlling farm equipment from a mobile device may not be fully realized yet, but right now, a greenhouse grower can access his entire business

system from any connected mobile device. Last month at the Solutions Marketplace at Cultivate'15 in Columbus, Ohio, Practical Software Solutions debuted its newest version of Grower Vertical for a web-native Sage ERP system written in HTML5.

"This web-native platform is an important step in the evolution of enterprise resource planning," said Greg Lafferty, senior account executive for Practical Software Solutions in Concord, North Carolina. "Instead of having only a handful of mobile applications available, greenhouse growers now can access everything from their financials to production information to shipping details from any device with a web browser."



With the new web-native Sage ERP system, growers are now offered expanded tools for accessing data on mobile devices.

## Growth of Mobile Expands Demand into Business World

In the past few years, smartphone use has grown in leaps and bounds. According to Pichai, since the 2014 Google I/O conference, more than 600 million people around the world used a smartphone for the first time. In the United States alone, nearly two-thirds of all adults own a smartphone, according to a Pew Research Center study published in April 2015. This is up from a mere 35 percent in 2011. The Pew study also found that nearly 90 percent of adults ages 18-49 own a smartphone.

"This is the moment of mobile and the smartphone," Pichai said during his address.

With this meteoric rise in smartphone usage, it's not surprising that those adults want to have the same mobile access to data, services and communication in their business-to-business transactions as

they are accustomed to in their personal business-to-customer transactions.

“Today’s business consumers are used to being able to handle just about any transaction in their personal lives — from shopping to banking to paying their bills — online and on-demand,” said Darcy Boerio, the channel development manager of Website Pipeline in Greenville, South Carolina. “So in turn, when they’re buying in a business capacity, they expect to be able to self-serve just like they do in their private lives. They want to be able to interact and transact with their vendors and suppliers anywhere, anytime and on any device.”

### Web-Native ERP System Benefits Office Staff, Mobile Workforce

A traditional enterprise resource planning (ERP) system is based on a client-server relationship. This means a client — the program that allows a user to

interface with the system — must be installed on every computer on which the system will be used. Today’s mobile technology doesn’t have the space or processing power to run something as large as an ERP system through this type of client.

The web-native version of Sage ERP is coded to be compliant with modern web standards. Therefore, it’s accessed the same as any page on the Internet: through a web browser. This means that anyone who has ever surfed the web will recognize the basics of the interface.

“For example, the browser’s history function and back button works for the ERP system exactly like it does when you’re browsing the Internet,” Lafferty said. “And every page has its own URL, which means it can be bookmarked or its link can be emailed to other users in the company who have access to see that page.”

It also means any device that can be connected to the Internet and display a web browser can be used to access the entire web-native ERP system.

“In the office, this Sage ERP system is accessible from PCs, Apple Macs, Linux PCs or any laptop,” Lafferty said. “The web interface runs on every modern browser, whether it’s Chrome, Opera, Firefox, or Internet Explorer. So if a greenhouse has provided PCs for its front office staff, but one of the managers prefers to use her MacBook, she can do that with no special installations needed.”

The web-native Sage ERP also has been adapted for tablets: User-interface elements can be zoomed for easier interaction and gestures are recognized. Aside from having access to the entire ERP suite through a browser, tablet users also can choose to access specific functions through mobile applications.

The mobility platform for the web-native version of Sage ERP features support for all smartphones and tablets running on Apple iOS or Android systems. With this system’s mobile application framework, users can browse through a list of apps that have been published and install them on their device. Several apps, such as purchase approval



## LEADS THE WAY

The America in Bloom national awards program brings out the best in hometowns and empowers communities to excel. Lead the way and experience the benefits by registering today.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

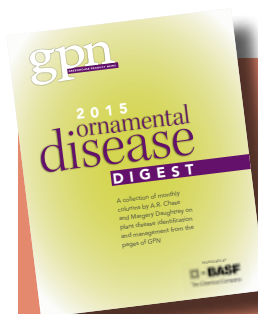


HERITAGE PRESERVATION



THE POWER OF PLANTS

[www.AmericanInBloom.org](http://www.AmericanInBloom.org)



**NOW AVAILABLE:**  
GPN’s 2015 Ornamental Disease Digest  
[www.gpnmag.com/ODD](http://www.gpnmag.com/ODD)



propagation trays  
with results



[bpgrower.com](http://bpgrower.com)  
BEAVER PLASTICS

Instead of having only a handful of mobile applications available, greenhouse growers now can access everything from their financials to production information to shipping details from any device with a web browser.

and expenses management, come standard with the Sage ERP mobile framework. Plus, the mobile architecture was designed with the same logic and in the same language as the full ERP system, allowing for the customization, development and publishing of mobile apps without a major investment in development resources.

“The beauty of this system is that ERP developers do not need to learn new skills,” Lafferty said. “They can use their existing programming skills and are not required to learn the specifics of mobile devices such as native languages or application program interfaces.”

The mobile applications can function both online and offline, which is especially important for growers with remote locations. For instance, if a greenhouse sales representative has poor reception while visiting a contract grower, he can still use the Sage ERP sales information app on his iPhone, and any work he did will sync with the system once he comes online again.

Jolly Farmer Products of Northampton, New Brunswick, is a customer of Practical Software Solutions, and is in the process of implementing the web-native version of Sage ERP. Samuel Keeler, the IT director for Jolly Farmer, said the ease of deployment and platform-agnostic setup were a couple of the advantages that attracted his team to the new platform.

“Web-native solutions, in addition to making it possible to connect from anywhere, are far easier to deploy even within a physical office area,” Keeler said. “There are no client upgrades that must be installed on each workstation and users can access the system using their choice of browser.”


#### Grower Vertical Evolves on Web-Native Platform

Practical Software Solutions began development of the Grower Vertical module in 2006, when Metrolina Greenhouses of Huntersville, North

Carolina, approached the company to help create horticulture-specific functionality for their Sage ERP system. Nearly a decade later, Practical Software Solutions is making sure growers have options for their ERP system as the business world changes.

“Growers want to be mobile,” Lafferty said. “Technology is constantly changing. It is important for growers to be empowered to keep up with those changes and take advantage of tools to help their business operate more efficiently.”

Whether they choose the standard Sage ERP system or the web-native version, growers will still find the same full-featured functionality from Grower Vertical, Lafferty said. The main difference is that growers on the web-native version of Grower Vertical will see expanded tools for accessing data on mobile devices.

“In the sales side of the business, this means a greater ability to look at customer accounts, orders, available to ship inventory, etc., on the go,” Lafferty said. “Also, in the production and inventory areas, organizations will no longer be limited to a scaled-down mobile version of their system in this area. They will now have the ability to access any information they need to run their business.” 

**Amanda Lamela is the marketing director at Practical Software Solutions. For more information on the web-native Sage ERP system, contact Greg Lafferty at 704.721.6800.**

**JānorPot.**  
**3D**  
**SYSTEMS**  
From Summit Plastic Co.

**Not round.  
Not square.  
3D!**

Save. Save. Save.

No matter how you work the numbers 3D containers are real cost savers. More on the floor, more on shipping racks, and more facings at retail - up to 30% more than traditional round!

Available in 5 sizes with matching trays, 3D systems are size compliant - 1 pint, 1 quart, 1.25 quart, 2.5 quart and 3 quarts. The right choices with big savings.

And, that's a win-win!

**Direction.**  
**Dimension.**  
**Display.**



**Summit  
Plastic  
Company**

Ph: 800.814.3496 • [www.summitplastic.com](http://www.summitplastic.com) • [sales@summitplastic.com](mailto:sales@summitplastic.com)

© 2015 Summit Plastic Co.