

REPORT REPRINT

BlackBerry launches Digital Workplace to securely enable distributed work environments

MARCH 05 2020

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The company's new offering positions BlackBerry as a competitor within the digital workspace market, bringing together BlackBerry Desktop and AI-driven security software from its acquisition of Cylance, with partner Awingu's browser-based workspace.

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Introduction

BlackBerry recently unveiled its new Digital Workplace platform, a web portal and workspace for secure online and offline access to corporate on-premises or cloud-based enterprise resources and content. The new offering is designed to help organizations enable a distributed work environment, which we define as the technologies that come together to provide employees with secure access to company resources and applications, regardless of their location or the network or device they choose to use.

The BlackBerry Digital Workplace aims to support enterprise requirements for mobility and bring your own device (BYOD) policies, as well as flexible work arrangements – including part-time workers, contractors and seasonal workers, and frontline workers – by creating a secure enclave that provides employees with secure remote access to corporate data, and downloading on a device for offline work without risking compromise.

451 TAKE

BlackBerry's new offering positions it as a competitor within the digital workspace market. This is a crowded space, and the company will face intense competition. However, we believe its launch is timely, and aligns with business requirements for securely enabling a distributed workforce. BlackBerry is leveraging important strengths in its portfolio, and enhancing its technology with key partnerships to provide a differentiated offering. Furthermore, the new BlackBerry Digital Workplace shows how the company's portfolio continues to evolve, with an integrated offering that places it at the forefront of the convergence of unified endpoint management, identity and mobile security.

Context

BlackBerry is targeting use cases that 451 Research believes represent an important opportunity, including mobile workers, remote employees and frontline workers. As we have highlighted in other reports, frontline workers in industries such as manufacturing, healthcare and retail are commonly overlooked when it comes to collaboration and communication requirements. Some vendors are beginning to recognize this opportunity, and are capitalizing on use cases that connect this large contingent of workers.

BlackBerry's strategic vision, described by CEO John Chen at BlackBerry World Tour 2019, revolves around future product integrations with Cylance in regard to unified endpoint management, along with targeting regulated industries and expanding into new verticals. Digital Workplace aims to take advantage of these developing trends, and accomplish these strategic goals.

BlackBerry Digital Workplace extends the company's BYOD capabilities from mobile to desktops/laptops, and emphasizes security. By utilizing CylancePROTECT, an AI-based continuous threat-prevention technology, the company is adding conditional access to work data no matter the device or location. The addition of a zero-trust architecture enables the company to adjust policies for a given level of risk for individual devices.

Furthermore, its partnership with Awingu enables online access to applications, desktops and virtual desktop infrastructure. By combining these functionalities with its own technologies, BlackBerry is aiming to provide a one-stop shop for accessing internal resources for remote workers, contractors and newly acquired enterprises.

Products

The BlackBerry Digital Workplace, priced at \$99 per user, brings together BlackBerry Desktop (which provides access to email, contacts, calendar and intranet web apps), CylancePROTECT for endpoint protection, and a browser-based workspace from Awingu. Businesses can access their legacy Windows, Linux, SaaS or internal web apps, desktops and files inside of BlackBerry's secure managed browser. Awingu's unified workspace runs Windows, Linux, web and intranet apps.

The Digital Workplace offering, which leverages existing UEM infrastructure, provides the following core productivity and collaboration features:

- Device protection
- Online and offline access to personal information management data such as contacts, calendar and tasks
- Online and offline editing of Office documents
- Secure browsing
- Online access to enterprise applications, desktops, files and virtual desktop infrastructure
- Conditional access to SaaS applications including Office 365 and Salesforce

Based on BlackBerry's Zero Trust Architecture, Digital Workplace eliminates the need for a VPN or VDI infrastructures, and is designed to provide continuous threat protection using artificial intelligence and machine learning to enable users to securely work anywhere and from any device, according to BlackBerry.

The zero-trust framework builds a user profile based on user behavior – including a user's networks, the data a user accesses, the time of day a user typically logs on, and even how fast the user types – to provide continuous, proactive monitoring. The data is fed into an algorithm to generate a trust score to determine the access level a user should have.

Competition

BlackBerry Digital Workplace positions the company as a player within the digital workspace market. This is a crowded and mature market, with a wide range of competitors that include digital workspace platforms such as Citrix Workspace and VMware Workspace One, as well as proprietary desktop-as-a-service products such as Amazon WorkSpaces and Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop.

Other providers of digital workspace offerings include Workspot, which recently unveiled Cloud Desktop Fabric, aimed at providing improved performance in distributed work environments with a new virtual desktop architecture that enables users to connect with the cloud resources closest to them.

Indirect competitors include Cubed Mobile, an emerging provider of mobile virtualization technology focused on enterprise communications. Cubed Mobile enables cohosting of two or more secure virtual environments on a single mobile device, encapsulating an entire business smartphone in a 'super app' that delivers a centrally managed, self-contained workspace with a unified communications hub and mobile device management functionalities.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

BlackBerry is leveraging key strengths, including its trajectory and strong credentials in mobility and enterprise security, to provide a differentiated offering.

WEAKNESSES

BlackBerry is coming to market with a differentiated offering, but will compete in a crowded and intensely competitive space. This will require expanding its PR and marketing efforts to gain visibility for its approach.

OPPORTUNITIES

According to 451 Research's VotE: WPC survey, the modern work environment is increasingly flexible and mobile. This represents an opportunity for vendors focused on enabling secure, real-time access to business applications such as the BlackBerry Digital Workplace.

THREATS

Virtualization is a crowded space, and BlackBerry will face much larger competitors that are well entrenched, with a long trajectory and an extensive market footprint.