

Apple's iOS Update Tightens Security, Management

Apple's release last week of the new iOS 4.2 version its mobile operating system added some long awaited new bells and whistles for iPad users, but, more importantly for the enterprise, adds some key management tools for IT administrators.

If Apple is to be believed, enterprises are deploying iPads in droves – on its most recent earnings call, the company said more than 65 percent of the Fortune 100 are testing the iPad. And the new mobile management and mobile security features of iOS 4.2 should make the iPad considerably more friendly for IT professionals to support.

The more prominent new features – including multitasking, folders, unified email, wireless printing – were previously available on the iPhone and iPod Touch, and they do make the iPad a significantly better business tool for mobile computing. Email, in particular is now on more equal ground with Research in Motion's Blackberry, the enterprise standard for mobile email. With iOS 4.2, iPad now supports multiple Exchange ActiveSync accounts on the same device, and works with Exchange Server 2010.

Yet more importantly for the enterprise, Apple plugged a series of potential security vulnerabilities (listed here in Apple's Knowledgebase), enabled automatic encryption of email and attachments stored on an iPad and added native iOS support for SSL VPN connections. (Juniper and Cisco also have announced apps to support SSL VPN on iOS devices.)

In addition, enterprises can now host and wirelessly distribute custom apps to employees' iPads, and Apple has made APIs available to enable third-party software for wirelessly configuring and updating settings, monitoring corporate policy compliance and remotely wiping or locking lost or stolen iPads.

Even some of the new end user features, such as AirPlay, which lets users stream media from an iPad to an AppleTV, could offer benefits for enterprise users as well for training or other instructional content.

For administrators at those 65 or so Fortune 100 companies testing the iPad, life just got a bit easier.