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TOP STORY

Wal-Mart Says Mobile Products Cut Traditional Office Costs

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May 23, 2005

Wal-Mart's Executive VP and CIO Linda Dillman is credited with developing one of the most sophisticated information services networks in the world. She told Wireless IQ that the retailing giant's networks and IT leadership were a natural progression from founder Sam Walton's early focus on control and cost-cutting in order to offer consumers the lowest prices and still make the company a profit.

"Sam (Walton) used a very detailed control system in his day and it is pretty much the same system we use now – it's just larger and computerized. We develop and build our own systems and use common systems around the world, so we have always had a strong control focus," says Dillman.

That's no small task considering Wal-Mart tops the Fortune 500 list and is both the largest retailer and largest employer in the US plus it operates internationally in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South Korea and the UK.

Dillman says mobile products have made a substantial impact on Wal-Mart's operations...sometimes in surprising ways.

"For example, we really watch costs closely and cut them everywhere we can to ensure our customers get the lowest prices always. We even measure the number of pages we print. Our goal for this year was to reduce printing costs by 10%; so far this year we have cut them by 19.7% and that happened because our associates are using mobile devices that negate a lot of the need for the printed page," she said.

Dillman predicts mobile products will continue to cut traditional office and operations costs as advancements in interoperability and compatibility continue.

"Mobility and networks change the way you do business. There's no such thing as 'business as usual' anymore," she said.

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