Mobile geo-computing in oil and gas

Matt Hall, matt@agilegeoscience.com

Small, networked, mobile computers are transforming the ease and immediacy with which we can do difficult things. Only two of these things have, so far, impinged on geoscientists in oil and gas: making phone calls and reading email. In most oil and gas companies, corporately owned and supported mobile platforms are currently limited to BlackBerry. While the BlackBerry OS is not difficult to develop on, the number of developers and the size of the market is small compared to iOS and Android devices, already owned in large numbers by corporate employees. Smartphones and tablets running these operating systems will soon be widespread. Together with increasingly available open WiFi and 4G networks, there is a substantial opportunity to free technical computing from the lab and desktop, when it makes sense. We can build a connected ecosystem of convenient and useful scientific computing tools everywhere there are technical people: meetings, conferences, field stations, and the train home from work. One Android development tool, Google's App Inventor, also offers insight into the benefits of lowering the barriers to software development: a novice can build a functional application in minutes or hours, not days or weeks. This is the level of accessibility needed for deep innovation in a corporate environment: it has to be simpler than Microsoft Excel.