

Remember Nokia!

By Lutz Varchmin

Point of
view



Not so long ago, a mobile phone was just a telephone that could be used on the go and Nokia was the market leader. This changed with the advent of smart phones, which allowed users to tap into a universe of digital possibilities. We still use our phones to make calls, but calling is only one feature – or better: one app – among many. The car is now facing a similar development. Autonomous driving turns the driver into a passenger who has free hands and, even more important: who has a free head – allowing him or her to do other things during the drive. Tomorrow's cars will still get you from A to B, but they will also need to have many other features.

At the 2018 CES trade fair in Las Vegas, Toyota caused a sensation with a visionary car concept. For the Japanese, the car of the future can be a shop, treatment area or even a restaurant; it offers many types of activities that people can engage in comfortably while being driven. Working is one of those activities. Commuters can work on their way to the office, or when travelling to the next meeting. Some critics will object that IT security poses a problem for this vision. But the car of tomorrow offers a decisive advantage as a workplace. Unlike an airplane, train or a lounge with free WiFi, it is a protected and private space. Meetings, presentations and telephone calls can be handled here discreetly and, with the appropriate technology in place, securely.

To assure IT security, the right infrastructure must be in place. Mobile network coverage and high speed data rates are crucial. And, of course, automotive manufacturers have to design the interior space of their cars to meet these new requirements. But this is an opportunity rather than a problem. Futuristic designs of rolling offices with tables, swivel seats and monitors already exist. Trade fairs such as Germany's CeBIT have already shown vehicles with installed multimedia.

But what turns a mobile office into a real modern workplace in the age of digitalization is not only the right interior and online access. There's more to it than that. Car manufacturers need to create the right technical preconditions. The rolling office should provide all information and company data anytime and anywhere.

Moreover, a stable connection for video meetings and real-time access is required. Only then can collaboration,

document sharing and team workflow become a reality. Passengers will only accept the car as a complete workplace if they can securely access all of the company's content, processes and other information they need to keep projects moving. Furthermore, the car interfaces must be based on a centrally-implemented digital information management system. Users should be able to access enterprise content management applications via a cloud-based platform, compliant with their authorization levels.

"Tomorrow's office on wheels will be like a mobile filing cabinet"

Security is a decisive aspect here. Tomorrow's office on wheels will be like a mobile filing cabinet containing a gigantic amount of potentially sensitive data. All hardware that accesses company data via the car must be protected – as it should be today. For the car industry, this means much more than just making the car internet-enabled. Automakers need to cooperate closely with software developers to provide stable and, above all, secure cloud-based access to all enterprise content. Ideally, they will create an infrastructure and connectivity that offers such complete functionality, which users want and need.

Obviously, successful car manufacturers will adapt to changes in vehicle use. Autonomous driving is not a sheer question of locomotion. For tomorrow's car buyers, in-car IT and equipment will become decisive selection criteria. The development path of the car will be similar to that of the mobile phone. A device that was once primarily limited to one main task now becomes a system that does much more. The auto industry must take heed: Nokia once was the market leader in mobile telephony.

Lutz Varchmin is territory leader for Germany, Austria and Switzerland at business software provider Hyland

