

How **Mobile Technology** is Transforming **Workplace** **Performance**

Written by R. Gary Edwards, P.h.D





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Abstract.

We are in the midst of a tectonic shift from a manufacturing-led economy to one led by digital and mobile technology, comparable to the change a century ago, from a primarily agricultural to an industrial economy.

Inside this global economic dynamic, workplace cultures are changing, in large measure by how teams communicate and collaborate with one another. Multi-unit enterprises such as retailers and hospitality providers in particular are facing challenges, as their decentralized operations make communicating the desired action to their frontline teams difficult. New mobile technologies offer solutions to this problem: the opportunity to create a commonality of purpose and to improve performance by communicating, activating, and motivating frontline employees in otherwise fractionalized workplaces.

Adapting to the incredible pace of change in mobile technology and workplace demographics - including a burgeoning young workforce combined with an aging cohort that is unable to retire - adds to the

challenge of managing today's workforce. Mobile technology has opened new frameworks for working more efficiently.

Organizations with distributed workforces now have the opportunity to adopt new mobile communication technologies that allow them to monitor, engage, connect, and recognize all employees, from head office to the remote sales floor, driving improved performance and enterprise growth.

While enterprise adoption of mobile software is still in its infancy, rapid growth is forecasted and inevitable over the next few years. Those who proactively embrace mobile technology to foster employee engagement, customer-centricity, and drive performance, will enjoy a competitive edge.



Introduction:

A Glimpse into the Modern Workplace

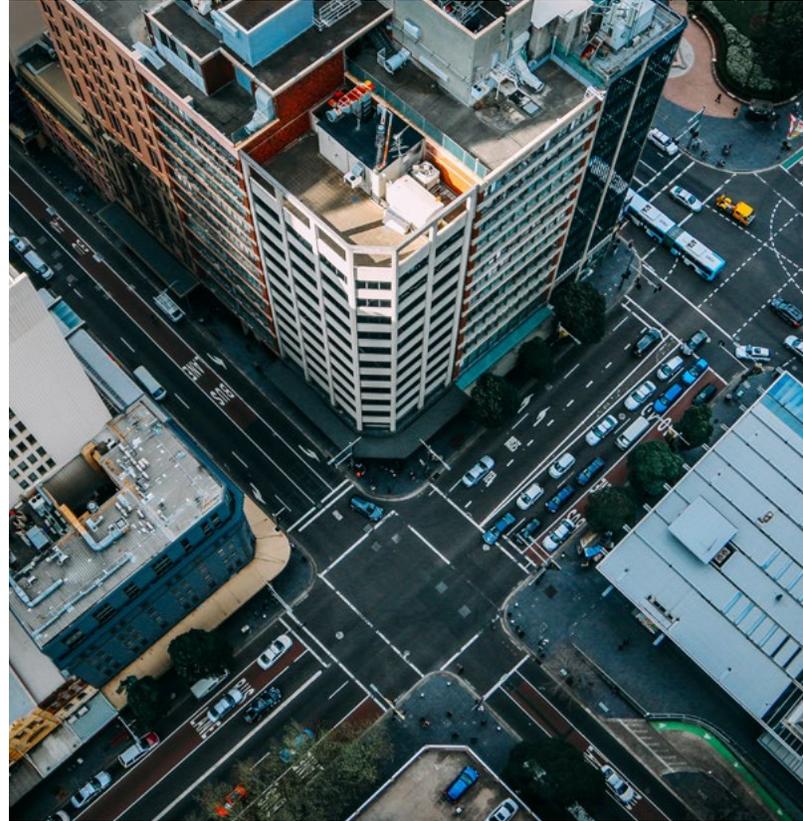
The organizational landscape of modern workplaces is undergoing tremendous change. We are in the midst of a tectonic shift from a manufacturing-led economy to one led by digital and mobile technology, comparable to the change a century ago from a primarily agricultural to an industrial economy.

We have all read that the largest taxi company owns no taxis (Uber), the largest hospitality company owns no hotels (Airbnb), the largest retailer has no stores (Amazon), and the list goes on. Even more telling are the statistics available on how the 7.5 billion people on our planet communicate. Setting aside children under school age, 79% of the world's population are mobile phone users.¹

It only took 37 years for mobile technology to get here. Last year, mobile technology grew by \$100 billion, becoming a \$1.7 trillion industry.² No other economic change in human history achieved this scale at this velocity.

Inside this global economic dynamic, workplace cultures are changing; in large measure by how teams communicate and collaborate with one another. Multi-unit enterprises including retail, restaurant, automotive, grocery, banking and health care are particularly good candidates to leverage the benefits of mobile technologies, as their decentralized operations make communicating with frontline employees difficult. This decentralization creates a challenge for internal communications, including the means by which employees are directed to uphold brand promises.

Distributed workplaces have their work cut out for them: ensuring that their frontline employees receive the information and



direction they need *locally*, in order to provide quality customer service and drive sales growth *globally*.

Reinforcing the right corporate cultural objectives across a broadly dispersed organization is challenging. Traditional methods for accomplishing this “glocal” approach, such as e-mail, intranet, bulletins, and old-school training are often ineffective. A burgeoning young workforce combined with an aging cohort that is unable to retire, adds to the challenges of managing today's workforce.

Mobile technology, including the increased use of mobile enterprise applications, offers the opportunity to address these challenges and create a

commonality of purpose and to improve performance by communicating, activating, and motivating frontline employees in otherwise fractionalized workplaces.

Organizations with distributed workplaces have the opportunity to improve their agility and achieve more efficient work flow by

adopting mobile communication tools to engage, connect, monitor and recognize all employees - from head office to the remote sales floor. Enterprises that embrace agile approaches to solving significant problems will have a competitive advantage over their peers.

1

Three major shifts in the workplace are driving organizational change.

● The changing demographic profile

The global workforce is seeing a younger, technology raised generation influence how we all communicate, learn and interact at home and at work, regardless of our age. Even grand-parenting blogs are full of mobile technology suggestions, urging adoption of communication methods that would have been unthinkable for the Boomer generation a decade ago: Skype your grandkids, follow them on Instagram, stay in touch through Facebook - the list goes on.

While progressively younger generations are entering the workforce, work-life expectancy is also increasing. By 2020, it is estimated the workplace will have an unprecedented five generations working side by side.³

In *The Gen Z Effect: The Six Forces Shaping the Future of Business*, the authors⁴ argue that we are all part of a shift they define as the Gen Z Effect: a set of behaviors that finally allow us to work across generations, driven by technologies that all ages are increasingly sharing. It seems counter-productive to segment our employees by their age-defined generations. Rather we should be looking for ways of leveraging their commonalities.

Hyper-connectivity and the rise of mobile are emerging as key uniting factors. The "Digital Generation" may be the more important focus in the workplace, rather than the obsession with age-based generational divides of Boomers, Gen X, Millennials or Gen Z. This shift in approach could be a potential game-changer for forward thinking organizations that can adopt digital and mobile technologies for their entire workforce, setting aside age-based biases.

Regardless of their age based generation, the majority of employees are in the Digital Generation, whether they are Digital Natives (born and raised in a digital environment) or Digital Adopters (adopted digital technology into their everyday lives). Regardless, the use of digital technology extends to both groups' expectations in the workplace.

By 2020, there will be five generations working side by side, with Digital Natives making up 70% of the global workforce.⁵ The Gen Z Effect is felt by all organizations, with many introducing new technologies to appeal to the working styles of today's highly connected employee, regardless of age. While Digital Natives rely on mobile technology more so than their older colleagues, even the oldest band of

employees are Digital Adopters to varying degrees.

New generations expect their workplace technologies, and in particular, the technologies that help them communicate, to be analogous to what they use in their daily lives. They want to communicate and connect in ways that are natural to them. This need holds true for many older employees who have also integrated mobile technology into their daily routine.

Digital as a new reality has been emerging over several years. PwC conducted a long-term study on the future of people management five years ago, in which they surveyed over 4,300 graduates under the age of 31 in 75 countries.⁶

that includes social networking, instant messaging, video-on-demand, blogs and wikis. These social tools will enable this generation to instantly connect, engage, and collaborate with cohorts and managers in ways that are natural to them, leading to better productivity across the enterprise."

Fast forward to today, and mobile technologies in the workplace are a "here and now" reality. Companies that do not embrace them are laggards who are putting their business at risk.

In *The Gen Z Effect: The Six Forces Shaping the Future of Business*, the authors argue that "the way Gen Z will work and learn is the way they game." To be skilled

"90% of Millennials check their smartphone more than once an hour."

– Trends in Consumer Mobility Report 2015, Bank of America

The results were telling of the future *in which we now find ourselves*; 41% of Millennials stated a preference to communicate electronically at work, rather than face to face or over the phone; over 50% said they routinely made use of their personal technologies at work; and 78% believed that access to technology made them more efficient.

PwC conclusions were predictive of what we see today:

"An effective strategy and technologies to engage and retain these workers (Millennials) will be critical to the business's bottom line. Millennials will expect a workplace technology ecosystem

gamers, Gen Z have to collaborate with massive online communities, interacting with and learning from each other. No lengthy tutorials, guides, and boring to-do lists are involved. "Onboarding" of new gamers is achieved through the use of brief videos and interactive examples. Learning occurs organically by doing. Emulating this in the workplace is bound to increase productivity given the "Gen Z Effect" on us all – even those of us who are not Digital Natives, but Digital Adopters.

2 ● An increasing pace of change

Businesses are required to adapt to change more quickly than ever before. According to the 2016 Economist Intelligence Unit Survey of 300 business executives⁷, 74% anticipate an accelerated pace of change in their operating units. Of the top performing retailers, 82% intend to increase tech spending to counter the tsunami of change versus 56% of lower performers.⁸

Everything about companies is moving at an increased pace; in particular, the speed at which businesses are expected to operate. For consumer-facing businesses, keeping up with the new pace of operations has led to the adoption of new practices. These include updating supply chains to accommodate rapid turn-around (e.g. fast fashion retailers like Zara), using predictive analytics to anticipate demand (e.g., Amazon's predictive

shipping method) and using new robotic systems for e-commerce fulfillment (e.g., HBC's automated distribution technology).

Businesses either adapt their upstream and downstream technologies to the new realities, or face displacement by new digitally focused market entrants.

In cases involving adaptation, frontline employees from established businesses are often left struggling to keep up-to-date with the information they need to do their job. Employees at head office can respond in real-time to customer complaints on social media. However, despite all the technologies for response and delivery that surround them, frontline employees are often left last in line for new technologies to communicate with each other and with their customers.



Equipping frontline employees with essential product knowledge is particularly challenging in distributed workplaces, as there are greater barriers to internal communications and less opportunity to mentor, coach and engage with employees directly. Geographically dispersed and pressed for time, frontline employees operate according to the cultures and processes of their local environment, making it difficult for distant corporate communications to have an impact.⁹

The accelerated pace of change that we are seeing in corporations today is exacerbating communication issues.

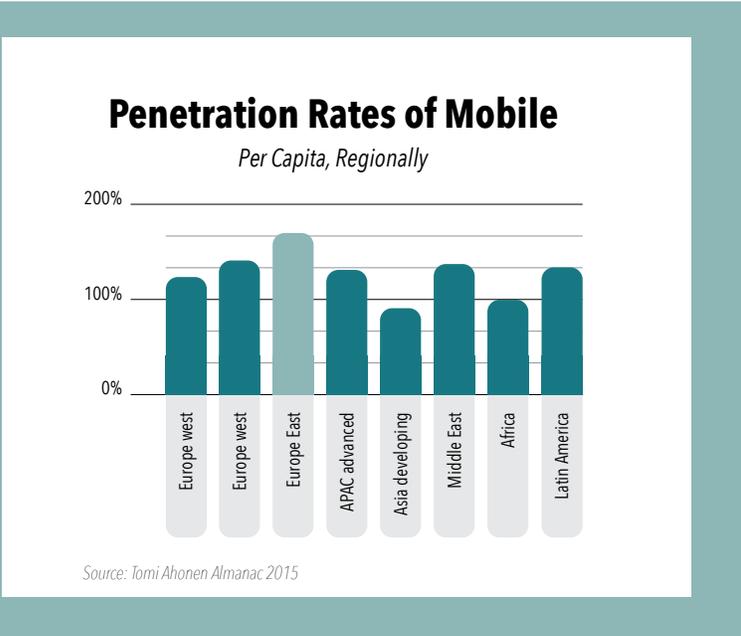
The challenge this presents is substantial when we consider the numbers of frontline employees in the service industry:

- In the United States, frontline retail and food services jobs are among the largest occupational groups with more than 27 million workers.¹⁰
- In the UK there are nearly 2 million frontline sales and customer service employees and managers.¹¹
- In Canada, there are over 1.7 million frontline workers in sales and service occupations.¹²

“Continued use of traditional communication channels such as e-mail or intranet lacks engagement, and can often lead to information overload and confusion on the frontline.”



3 ● New technology



Technology has changed the way we communicate in our personal lives and, by extension, is requiring similar changes in the workplace. Today, 2.4 billion people use social networks on their mobile phones.¹³

Tomi Ahonen reports that in 2015, the world reached a staggering 7.6 billion mobile phone subscriptions, with over 100 countries exceeding 100% penetration per capita and a handful now pushing past 200% penetration per capita.¹⁴ This means many of us have multiple mobile devices and subscriptions. Mobile is the most widely-spread and fastest growing technology on the planet. Enterprises without a mobile strategy will, increasingly, be left behind.

The rise of new communication technologies has not only led to the increased ability to reach one another, but has also fundamentally changed the

way people choose to interact, consume information, and share ideas.

For example, the use of mobile has dramatically shortened the number of words used when communicating and increased our reliance on symbols, short forms, pictures, and videos for conveying meaning. Similarly, interactive communication methods such as instant messaging and video-conferencing have increased the volume of communications but reduced their average length. In effect, communication has become easier, with a premium placed on being short and concise. Communication accessibility and variety has resulted in a connected world, where we are available and plugged in at all times.

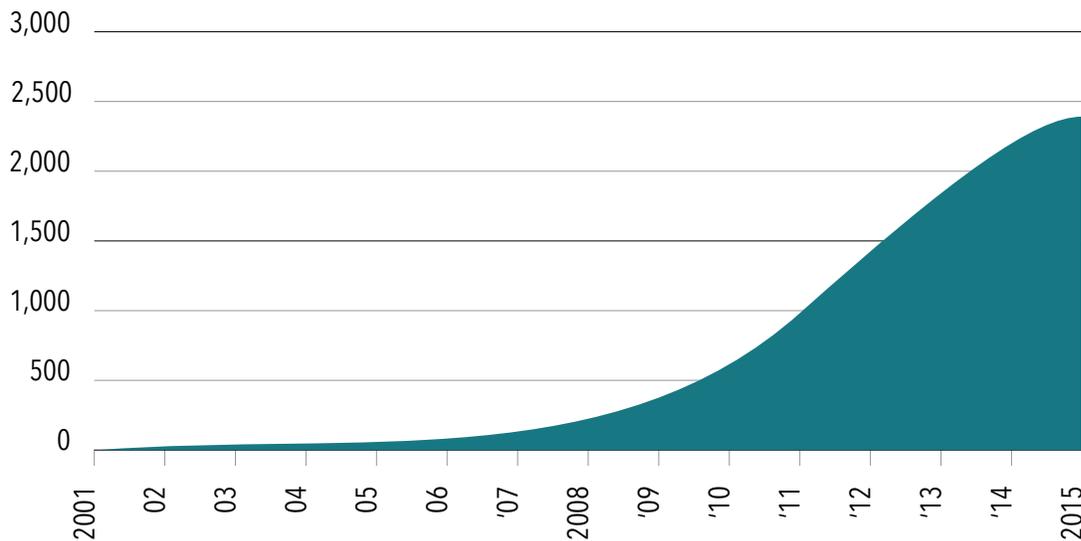
There is a social consequence to the constant exposure we have to new information, and that is that we can easily suffer from cognitive overload. The explosion of available data and sources of information have pushed both individuals and organizations out of “contemplation mode” and into “filter mode” as we try to make sense of the abundance of complex information now at our disposal.

In its 2014 study, *The Individual Enterprise - How Mobility Redefines Business*¹⁵, the IBM Institute for Business Value states that despite being quick to adopt analytics as a competitive differentiator, and an eagerness to embrace mobile, companies are struggling with the full implication of those strategies. Many miss the mark extending the use of mobile as a new channel through which they can transact with customers, or as an enterprise communications tool.

"The time has come for organizations of all sizes, in all industries, to look beyond consumer applications and consider the full transformational potential of mobile inside the enterprise. These "mobility" solutions will increasingly serve as a cognitive extension, empowering employees and organizations to quickly acquire new skills, work more and better together and improve decisions. Information platforms, tailored to each employee's specific needs, can dynamically reconfigure workflows to get the right information (and only the right information) to the right people, at the right time, in the right place."

- *The Individual Enterprise Study 2014, IBM Institute for Business Value*

Mobile Social Networking Users



Source: Tomi Ahonen Almanac 2016

Employee Communications Need to Go Mobile

Demographic shifts, an increased pace of change, and technological innovation have shaped the fluid landscape in which there is a pressing need to adopt mobile technology in the workplace. Enterprises that embrace mobile are set for a competitive advantage because they realize it is not a tactical accommodation of how young people prefer to communicate. Rather, it is a strategic differentiator that helps define their core capabilities:

- Mobile is not about the movement of information; it is about the core agility of the enterprise
- Mobile is not a “nice to have” extra; it is a “critical to have” core capability
- Mobile is not another channel for communicating; it is reimagined processes for ensuring messaging is reaching your audience

The effectiveness of alternative approaches to communication has become difficult to assess when trying to build high-performing frontline teams, particularly in complex and distributed environments. Much of what we know about how people communicate and execute change in businesses is grounded in Management Sciences, focused on large organizations with centralized creation and distribution of their brand value proposition. For decentralized, labor-intensive institutions, it is necessary to think differently about how to deliver communications to the field.

Multi-unit enterprises with distributed field sales and service employees have particular challenges communicating their brand values, versus that of firms with centralized operations such as manufacturing. The reality for highly distributed enterprises is that employees in the field can vary the



quality of product and service delivery substantially. This fact becomes self-evident when we reflect on our experiences as a customer.

We can all recall experiences as a customer when we have been ignored by a wait staff or found a sales person without knowledge of the product, putting you off the brand, even though their head office may be working day and night to produce the perfect offering for you.

Starbucks baristas ask customers for their name to both increase operational accuracy (the right customer getting the right beverage), and enforce the cultural imperative of being highly personable.

“Successful leaders of decentralized, labor-intensive industries become masters of “material focus” putting intense attention on symbolically oriented brand behaviors that become trademarks of their value proposition”

Southwest Airlines flight attendants make their passengers laugh before getting on board a flight to improve operational efficiency by obtaining customers’ buy-in to get themselves seated quickly, while also reinforcing a “we are in it with you” culture. Disneyland employees are trained to be “assertively friendly,” meaning they actively seek out contact with guests to do things like pre-emptively offer directions.¹⁶ In each of these instances, effective communication with frontline employees is essential for achieving consistency in delivering an exceptional customer experience.

As much as traditional methods work well in establishing consistent standards, or “brand habits,” the amount of effort needed to sustain these behaviors also exposes the challenge of having frontline employees do things differently from time to time. Distributed workplaces need to also build agility of communications and action in their frontline employees.

Traditional communication approaches fare poorly when the need is to prompt a change in these circumstances through new information given to frontline employees. Unfortunately, many organizations rely on the same techniques in one circumstance as the other.

Other businesses have taken a hard look at their current communication methods to drive organizational change more efficiently. The simplest of examples is use of email in the workplace, which has suffered from

overreach, becoming a tool for blasting out directions to the masses, followed by using it as a “system of record” determining follow-through. Email fundamentally falls short. It is disengaging with few interactive qualities. Further, it is not an optimal communications tool when it involves interaction with scores of people in a group. Once the epitome of workplace communication technologies, email is no longer a “one-size fits all” approach to achieving different communication objectives in the modern workplace.

In her book, *Unsubscribe: How to Kill Email Anxiety, Avoid Distractions,¹⁷ and Get REAL Work Done*, Jocelyn K. Gleib argues:

“Email is killing our productivity. The average person checks their email 11 times per hour, processes 122 messages a day, and spends 28 percent of their total workweek managing their inbox. What was once a powerful and essential tool for doing our daily work has become a near-constant source of frustration, anxiety, and distraction from our work.”

A new paradigm of workplace communication is needed; one that better fits with the way that Digital Natives and Digital Adopters prefer to communicate.

In fragmented workplaces with remote employees, email “to-do” lists informing the workforce on expectations are particularly ineffective, especially since most employees on the frontline do not even have a corporate email. “Communication” then becomes memorandums stuck on a back-office wall. In either event, these traditional communications do not resonate in the digital age. When the task at hand is to influence the thinking or behavior of remote employees, failure is inevitable. Compare using mobile technology or social media channels, where communication comes through 3-second videos or 140 characters, and you will understand why a long email with a memo attached has a low chance of getting through.

With the failure of traditional communication approaches, frontline employees often have inadequate information to do their job. This problem manifests itself in poor customer service, with employees often being unknowledgeable in front of the customer. For example, in retail store operations, pricing promotions change frequently, and part-time shift workers find themselves challenged to know the details. In these instances, frontline employees may wish to excel, but they do not always have the tools and information needed to do so.

This communication shortfall often leads to employees being deprived of essential knowledge about their work and becoming disconnected from the corporate culture. One of the consequences is that only one-third of U.S. and just 13% of worldwide employees are fully engaged at work.¹⁸

In fairness, frontline managers can be overwhelmed as conduits of information, spending their time informing rather than coaching and leading their employees. This time waste is exacerbated by high turnover rates, trends of hiring part-time over full-time employees and, of course, bringing in seasonal employees. These circumstances



make communication more difficult and decrease the average levels of engagement per employee. It is easy for managers to underperform at their jobs when their role simply becomes cascading information from head office, versus enacting change by engaging and motivating their teams.

“Built-for-business” collaborative social communication tools have risen as a beacon in the communication vortex and provide a solution to many frontline engagement challenges. These tools include what we conceive, what we agree to get done, what we write, what we program, what we share, what we communicate, and so on, filling almost all possible business needs. Most notably, these digital tools are built largely for individual contributors to collaborate and share within their teams. Co-creation with others largely determines how we succeed in the journey to our business goals.

Workplace communications are now significantly improving, thanks to digital innovations that fit with new cultural norms, particularly with a younger workforce more accustomed to Snapchat than email. Human beings of all ages make irrational decisions and mistakes because of insufficient knowledge, a lack of immediate feedback, and an ever-increasing information overload. We tend to live in the moment, resist change, have selective memory, and are affected by our emotional states. To counter these tendencies, we need to create environments and design communications that go with, rather than against, the grain of human psychology.

Performance-based and behavior oriented mobile communication tools provide the means to keep teams of employees informed, engaged and “nudged” to adopt the needed behaviors while collaborating with their teammates. Redefining the way companies with highly distributed workforces communicate to get tasks done by keeping employees motivated and

engaged is crucial. Active organizational change comes through communication methods that appeal to how people absorb information.

The fact that we are social animals susceptible to societal norms and a need for validation is the basis for either chaos or change. Thoughtful design of interventions to instigate new behaviors can build on our propensity to rely on peer recognition. Gamified micro-communications with small “calls to actions” are found to be highly effective means to instigate tasks that matter. For highly distributed workplaces, a collaborative tool for communication and task management, in particular when those tasks require new thinking and actions that otherwise get ignored, has proven effective. Mobile technology, when thoughtfully applied, can get the job done when emails, weekly meetings, and traditional micromanagement fall short on motivating specific actions that workplaces require.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a denim shirt and a grey apron, is standing behind a wooden counter in a kitchen. She is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding. On the counter in front of her is a white digital scale. To the left of the scale, there is a small potted plant and a black container. The background is a light-colored wall with horizontal lines.

60%
of employees say
mobile technology
makes them more
productive.

- The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016

Managing Today's Distributed Workforce

Mobile devices are changing how we communicate at home and at work. Many, if not most companies now encourage their employees to use personal cellphones and tablets at work for information gathering, communicating and managing schedules. Mobile is a part of many companies' strategies going beyond just an efficient means to talk or chat. Mobile enterprise applications, when thoughtfully applied, can enable improved productivity, increased sales and better customer service.

Bring your own device (BYOD) to the workplace is an increasingly standard policy, with the number of employee-owned smartphones and tablets used in an enterprise well on track to exceed 1 billion by 2018.¹⁹

In addition to being a tool for achieving increased sales and profits, there are two other key tangible benefits of using mobile enterprise applications:

- Greater agility with improved capabilities for bringing products and services to market
- Improved employee engagement by redesigning how work gets done to foster creativity and the ability to solve problems

Indeed, new digital capabilities are proliferating throughout organizations. For example, social media platforms

“Mobile app users at workplaces say they allow them to stay on top of their daily tasks and to help them work when they are not at their desk or in the workplace. Most directly, they simply save time, some 86 minutes per week on average, amounting to almost an entire workday by the end of a month.”

- The Digital Workplace: Think, share, do. 2011, Deloitte.²⁰



have improved the ease and efficiency of communication, which is of immediate and evident value for businesses. An obvious example is instant messaging platforms like Facebook Messenger which are intuitive, simple to navigate and do not require the exchange of contact information.

For businesses, a messaging application is a convenient way to communicate with team members and managers. It also avoids the need for employees to exchange personal contact information, which is important in jurisdictions where employers are not allowed to give out such information to other employees.

A recent Pew Research study confirms the large role social media plays in the lives of many American workers. As consumer applications, they can simply offer a mental break from work. As a business application, they offer the potential to enhance employee productivity by fostering connections with colleagues and resources from around the globe.

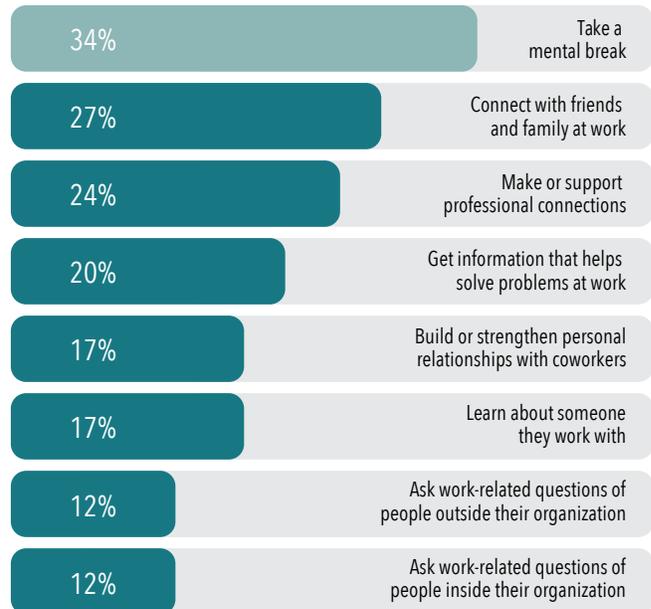
Frontline employees often suffer from information overload and are, as a result, unable keep up with all the information they need to do their job. They also face difficulty in digesting dense, unengaging information. For example, head office merchandisers and restaurateurs enamored with their product message (think: “special of the day”) should not mistake their own enthusiasm with how engaged someone in the store 1,000 miles away is in delivering the message to customers.

For frontline employees, unengaging content only gets worse when communicated through what they perceive to be antiquated channels. The reality for many multi-unit enterprise brands is that with an absent BYOD strategy, communication is reduced to an email to a store or unit manager, who then prints it off and either posts it on a bulletin board or reads it at the onset of a shift. This process makes disseminating information throughout the enterprise very cumbersome and tedious.

Social media outlets like Twitter became successful because they use succinct messaging which works with, rather than against, short attention spans. Similarly, enterprise mobile applications should be used to communicate with short, bite-

Social Media At Work

% of workers who ever use social media platforms to...



Source: Pew Research Center, 2014

sized messages to overcome this attention span and information overload problem. When businesses commit to training using micro-communications, they are forced to become disciplined in the way they craft their messages. With this approach, companies focus on communicating critical information and not just doing “data dumps.”

Further, push notifications are designed to overcome information overload by breaking through the clutter and alerting the user only for must-read information. Businesses who leverage this tool avoid the need for employees to check-in on information. When a new piece of information is released, employees are alerted and directed accordingly. Limiting the time employees spend trying to keep up-to-date creates efficiencies in other areas of their work.

Another common problem businesses suffer from is the lack of an effective feedback loop from the frontline to head office. Frontline employees are the first point of contact for your customers and can provide desirable insight into their needs and expectations. Most businesses do not devote sufficient energy into employee feedback systems and, as such, lose the opportunity to both improve and course correct programs and activities to better align with customer expectations.

A 2015 survey of 1,000 American frontline employees by Medallia Institute²¹ found that 20% of respondents were never asked for suggestions to improve company practices or customer service, while one-third of interviewees were asked once a year or less. Of the frontline employees solicited for their feedback more than half said their employers were not asking the right questions. By contrast, 61% of respondents said they were likely or very likely to come up with new ways to delight customers, 56% stated that they had suggestions for improving company practices, and 43% said their insights could reduce business costs.

While businesses pay lip service to employee engagement and customer service, there is

significant room for improvement in the way companies generate feedback from their frontline employees.

Businesses can learn from examples, such as Reddit, which highlights peer-validated content in an easy to consume way. This model can be applied to employees by similarly soliciting valuable, peer-validated insight from the frontline. In addition, commenting forums allow users to share thoughts and engage with an online community. Businesses that internalize these concepts in their communication approaches enable employees to share feedback and respond to each other's ideas. This method is especially important for soliciting feedback from younger employees, as they are often more comfortable providing commentary digitally rather than verbally.

New communication tools and management approaches bring increased opportunities to drive innovation, competitive advantage, and value in the workplace. Mobile applications give large enterprises the opportunity to embrace digital innovation and increase agility in supporting their customer base.

" Technology helps replicate what great managers do effortlessly: communicate, engage, reinforce habits, and accelerate the performance of their teams."

Using Mobile to Cross the Last Mile of Communications

The Last Mile is a phrase originally coined to describe the challenges of delivering the final leg of telecommunication services to retail end-users: in-home service. When you imagine thousands of miles of wires getting strung, buried and otherwise webbed across the globe, it is hard to believe that the bottleneck could occur within the last mile (or less), connecting a home to the desired telecommunication service. However, this is often the case.

In his book, *The Last Mile: Creating Social and Economic Value from Behavioural Insights*,²² Dilip Soman states, tongue in cheek, that the last mile is not the least mile:

“The last mile or so of a journey home is perhaps the most inefficient as compared to the highway experience. Unlike the expressway, it’s also the part where the behavior of individual agents - drivers, construction workers and pedestrians - plays a large role in your progress.”

Today, businesses face the same conundrum when it comes to employee communication. Hours of effort are put into developing materials, posting them on intranets, e-mailing them out and perhaps even printing them out on glossy paper. While this may be enough to make a message available to your employees, is it sufficient to reach them? In a now digitally connected employee audience, the answer is no, and continuing to postpone corporate communications reform is a fool’s game. The lag in “last mile” communications can be especially challenging for a distributed workforce, where a company relies on its frontline employees to be in the know, take the right sales steps, and help create happy customers.

A practical, modern communication approach can bridge the “last mile” of communication, so that frontline employees



have the information they need to do their jobs. As traditional internal communication methods continue to fall behind the speed of change, modern communication strategies need to help a transient workforce care about and excel in their work.

A 2013 Mobile Helix survey of 300 IT decision makers in the US and the UK found estimates of an average 36% boost in productivity if critical enterprise applications were mobilized.²³ Mobile Applications can bridge the “last mile” problem and ensure frontline employees have the information and tools they need for success in a way that is fun, engaging and intuitive for all ages.

"The last mile or so of a journey home is perhaps the most inefficient as compared to the highway experience. Unlike the expressway, it's also the part where the behavior of individual agents – drivers, construction workers and pedestrians – plays a large role in your progress."

- *The Last Mile: Creating Social and Economic Value from Behavioural Insights*, Dilip Soman



Conclusion:

New Approaches in Action

To effectively produce change in the modern workplace, companies need a new approach to communicating and engaging with employees, and especially those who are Digital Natives. **Consider the following six steps to success:**

1. Build internal capabilities in your business to keep up with changes in technology. Consider the following to start:

- Creating 'Digital Native' focus groups with your management team
- Partnering with local accelerators to 'bring the market inside'
- Building an innovation team with the mandate to test, perfect, and launch new digital technologies internally

2. Leverage mobile technology with your frontline employees to bring you and your team closer to the customer. Once you have buy-in, test new mobile technologies with employees in the field to determine what works best for your organization.

3. Establish 'success criteria' to ensure that new technology drives real business impact. Successful brands establish criteria including the following:

- Ease and speed of implementation
- Management usability
- Robust security
- End-user engagement and satisfaction
- Business outcomes (e.g. cost, time-to value, and customer satisfaction)

4. Focus your frontline teams on the critical few. As Pareto taught us, 80% of the benefit in any area comes from 20% of the work. It is no different when mobilizing your frontline teams. Successful companies ensure that they limit the number of new initiatives to a critical few, including one that will produce long-term and sustainable behavioral change. This can be executed by:

- Setting rules around frequency and length of communications to the frontline
- Focusing on providing recognition and rewards to achieve goals
- Leveraging mobile software to facilitate teamwork and to foster a sense of belonging among your employees

5. Build a long-term view of success by tracking your performance over time and using these insights to continuously improve your outcomes. Most brands start simply by measuring team engagement vs. outcomes achieved (e.g. open rates vs. sales growth by location). Over time, successful brands develop a taxonomy of inputs (independent variables - 'what we did') and outputs (dependent variables - 'what was achieved') to maximize their performance in any one area of focus.

6. Stay curious, and stay a little paranoid. Andy Grove, the much-heralded leader of Intel, taught us, "only the paranoid survive." All business leaders should develop reliable internal systems to capitalize on paranoia by being ever vigilant. Successful brands establish innovation departments and policies that drive this activity, such as requiring a certain amount of 'new' from each business unit leader every year.

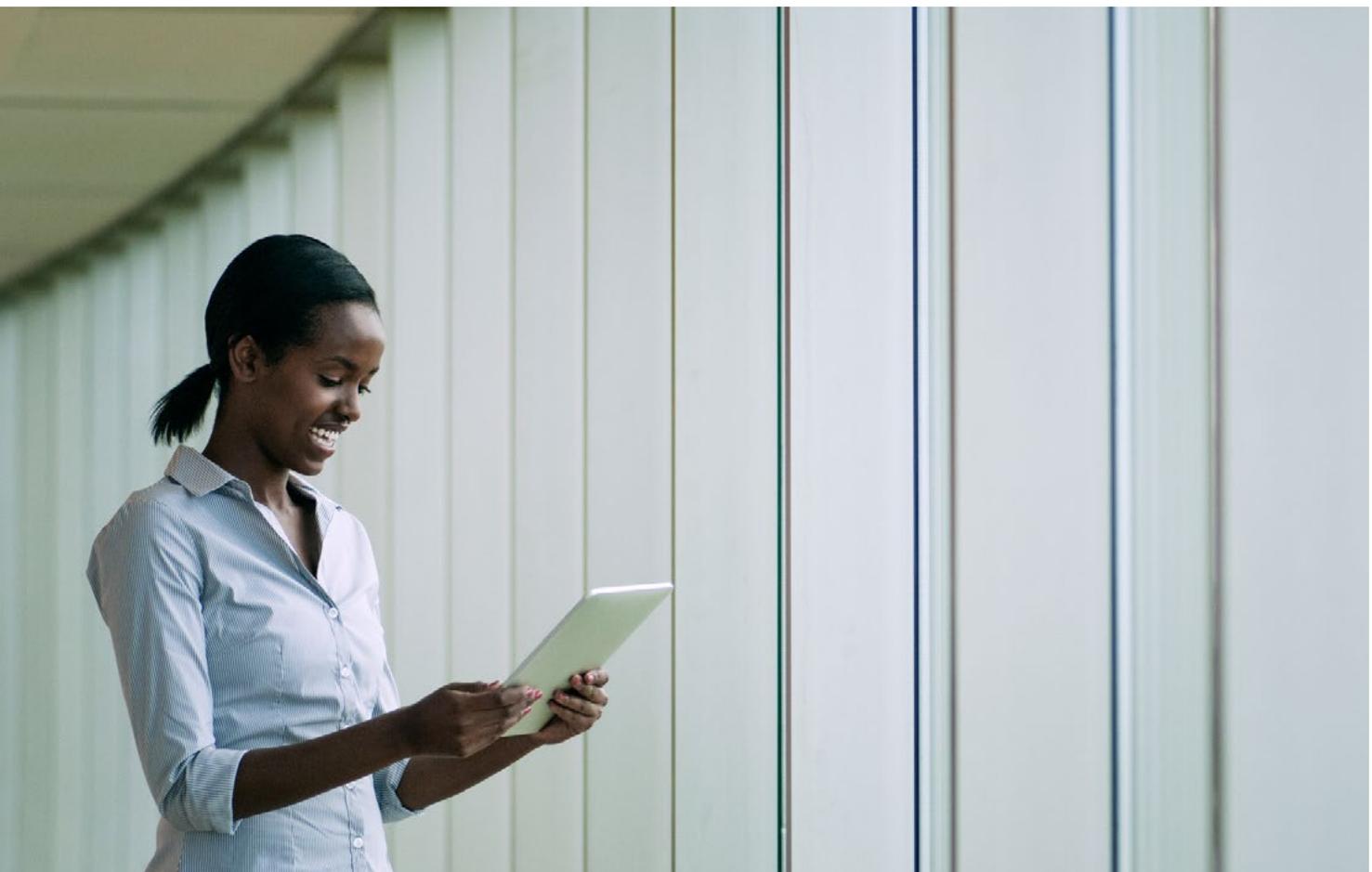
All in all, implementing mobile friendly approaches can simplify the functional changes required to improve frontline employee communication and engagement. The best mobile enterprise applications replicate the activities of great sports teams:

- They have knowledge of the playbook
- They share and practice best tactics in the field
- They have a goal they are working towards
- They have an incentive (recognition) to achieve the goal
- They collaborate in achieving that goal
- The scoreboard (competition) drives behaviors

Mobile applications afford the ability to reach employees on the frontline in real-time through social experiences, overcoming the

last mile problem at a fraction of the cost and effort of other communication methods. While enterprise adoption of mobile technology is still in its early stages, rapid growth is forecasted and inevitable over the next few years.

Those who take a “wait and watch” approach risk being left behind by the competition. By contrast, those who embrace innovation in mobile enterprise technology to foster creativity, customer-centricity and nudge based principles, will drive employee engagement, improved performance and enterprise growth. By using mobile to engage new entrants into the workforce alongside those who have spent a lifetime working, workplaces can come together to drive successful change like never before.



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