

Why Using Cell Phones at Work Can Be a Good Thing





Mobile and social technologies are a strong trend in the consumer market. More than two billion people across the globe use social media and over half of the worldwide web traffic comes from mobile devices, according to eLearning Industry. No wonder the consumer traffic served as a driver for businesses to follow the trend.

Adoption of mobile and social technologies has become a top priority in the corporate strategy of most enterprises. At present, organizations are embedding enterprise mobility and social technologies in their work environment.

Mobile applications and social media enable employees to communicate within a wide context, breaking down organizational boundaries. Employees can get instant access to business information anytime and anywhere. They can work with company information in the way that is comfortable and familiar to them — via social and mobile channels.

Organizations are able to increase employee engagement through social collaboration. Given the great popularity of social media, companies can use social technologies to improve employee communication and collaboration.

Leading IT providers are paving the way for enterprise mobility by implementing BYOD (bring your own device) IT policies and introducing social media technologies in their intranets and collaboration tools.

Social and mobile technologies offer new opportunities in terms of ubiquitous training and different ways of learning. Informal learning can embrace a wealth of resources designed to help employees in their development. In many cases, it can be more efficient than traditional formal education and also imply lower training costs for the company.

Case Studies:

Training on your Cell Phone

As an outsourcing software development provider, we have been involved in a project designed to make an online employee education solution available on different mobile devices. The online learning system uses ratings and Like and Share buttons typical for social media. Based on the ratings, a built-in analytical application generates a list of the most recommended training courses and sends a recommendation to employees to attend a course that meets their interests and goals.

Planning Virtual Events

Knowledge exchange is provided through the use of social technologies, when a community can share information between its members, exchanging comments or recommendations. The tools that are used to set up and manage virtual events, from soliciting content for the event to sending out surveys to the event's participants, also are instrumental.

Finding Experts

Another example of a solution that takes a social approach is an expertise finder. The user searches for people who have relevant skills through their digital footprint. It also is possible to get in touch with the required experts using a messenger that functions both on a company PC or notebook, and on a personal mobile device.

Building Communities

We were also a part of the team that developed an application enabling the user to work with online communities, grouping these by subject, communicating with specific groups, and reading their news. Discussion of innovations with subsequent patenting is also an example of a social media technology applied for business collaboration.

10 Best Practice Recommendations

Mobile and social technologies bring about great opportunities but also challenges. Based on our experience, here are 10 recommendations for companies to consider in a mobile or social engagement:



Make the Investment

The transition to mobility and social technologies requires additional skills and extra effort. Companies need to adopt new policies and rules to cover ethical and security issues. They need to design new architecture, new user interface (UI) and new function tools for their solution.

Design Simply

Mobile design should be clear-cut, the content well-structured and concise, and the functions simple and limited. The applications should have responsive or adaptive design that fits in different screens. As the server connectivity may be slow, it is essential to minimize the amount of data transferred between the application and the server.

Engage Users Early

It is desirable to engage end users at the very early stages of the project lifecycle. They should be involved in prototyping and in focus groups and be able to give quick feedback. Overall, the company needs to stick to the Agile methodology that promotes adaptive planning, evolutionary development, early delivery, continuous improvement, and a flexible response to change.

Think Offline Too

To be fully effective, a mobile solution should work not only online but also offline. Photos, worksheets and other data that are entered in a mobile device are automatically transmitted to the server once coverage is regained. Server updates are also transmitted to mobile devices. Poor integration between the field and back office systems or poor synchronization can make the mobile solution inefficient.

Chose the Right Software Development Approach

Developing mobile applications for the business sector, we recommend customers take time and effort to decide on the right approach to software development. They need to choose between hybrid and native application development. When developing from scratch, analyze the solution's complexity and requirements to user interface and power consumption. If the solution is not complicated and has no strict requirements to UI and power optimization, hybrid

development is relevant. It is also logical to develop a hybrid mobile application when rolling out a web solution to mobile devices. In this case, similar technologies as in the original application and a service-oriented architecture (SOA) are suitable. Therefore, it is possible to deploy and publish in a short time a mobile application that has the same features as the original web application.

Consider Added Features

Whenever a need arises, you can expand the solution's functionality by adding the features that are specific for mobile devices, such as a GPS location sensor, a camera, and a mike. Although other technologies can provide these functions, we do native development based on the user feedback and experience. This approach accelerates the speed and improves the usability of the solution.

Mobile Platforms Matter

The customer also needs to take into account the platforms for which the application is intended. For example, native development for iOS, Android, and Windows 10 may be costly because it involves development of three different applications and three different development teams. With hybrid development, a part of the code can be used for all of these platforms.

Protect your Company Confidential Info

The organizations that engage in mobile/social transition should re-assess their data security system. To be able to work offline, employees need to keep company information on their mobile devices. Employees can leave or lose their mobile devices that contain confidential company information. Therefore, all mobile devices that access corporate intranets should be registered with the organizational server and the administrator should be able to delete or install applications or to reset the device to factory settings. MDM (mobile device management) solutions address the issue. In addition, a number of security, technical and organizational issues should be resolved when providing a wireless access to the intranet.

About the Author: Sergei Zhmako, COP, has led business development and operations of IBA Group in North America since 2005. He joined the company in 2000 as a Program Manager for a portfolio of projects with IBM Germany. Zhmako plans and executes North America business development activities focused on expanding the client base; manages client relationships at executive, director and manager levels; and ensures successful software service delivery to IBA Group North America clients.

Change your Culture and Make it Fun with Games

Mobile and social technologies may be perceived by employees as disruptive and their introduction may cause resistance. It is necessary to persuade employees that enterprise mobility is a serious option rather than a trick. New routines need to be defined to smooth the path during the process of change. Gamification can also contribute to easier transition to enterprise mobility.

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Consider Interfaces that Employees are Comfortable With

If the user interface in a company's collaboration or education application is similar to UI in public social networks, it is a plus because employees are familiar with it. However, one should bear in mind that the users cannot maintain the same level of anonymity as in social networks.

In conclusion, I would like to call on organizations to take decisive steps in adopting mobile and social technologies in their everyday operations. By using social and mobile technologies, your company can benefit by being more agile, and achieve higher workforce productivity and employee satisfaction.