



Talent Management in an Increasingly Mobile World

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It was a mere 25 years ago that business users were introduced to the cell phone and the ability to call a colleague while walking on a city street or commuting between destinations. Today, mobile communication has surpassed a voice-only experience, giving users fingertip access to an abundance of data. As technology continues to progress, the workforce of the future will have a completely different concept of mobile communication. No longer will we marvel at gaining access to any information we desire from wherever we are – it will just be part of business as usual.

Multimedia demands are spurring new technologies and usage patterns. Business users are incorporating downloaded apps, texts, e-mail, video, games, and social media sites into their daily work. Regardless of role or industry, we're all in the technology business, with mobile communication leading the way.

Mobility will continue to change many facets of business, including talent management. Yet, we have barely entered the dawn of the mobile era. The future holds an increasingly interconnected world that supports a high-performance workforce.

The last several years has seen innovation in mobile technologies, transforming how we interact with information and individuals. There are more mobile phones, tablets, devices, platforms and operating systems powering an evolving mobile landscape. For the first time, the volume of smartphone and tablet shipments exceeds that of desktop and notebook shipments.¹

Of the smartphone platforms available in the U.S., Android reached 39 million users, RIM 16.5 million, Apple

24 million and Microsoft approximately 5 million.² However, mobility is a worldwide phenomenon. According to the research firm IDC, worldwide IT spending will grow 6.9 percent year over year to US\$1.8 trillion in 2012.³ As much as 20 percent of this total spending will be driven by the technologies that are reshaping the IT industry – smartphones, media tablets, mobile networks, social networking and big data analytics.

Against this backdrop, mobile app consumption is also on the rise. The average user now spends nine percent more time using mobile apps than the Internet.⁴ With mobile apps continuing to evolve, and with more users consuming mobile media on a regular basis, it's time for HR strategists to put mobility at the top of the business agenda.

An Evolving Landscape

As the market for talent management applications has evolved, more organizations are realizing the benefits of automating multiple talent processes, including recruiting, performance management, compensation, succession planning, compliance and diversity. And, with more workers working remotely, the availability of mobile talent management apps becomes increasingly important. Mobile platforms provide opportunities for HR to deliver richer, more interactive, emotionally engaging, value-added experiences that drive business success.

However, dynamic digital applications need to go beyond just transferring desktop applications to iPads, androids or other tablets. Moving forward, it will be a “mobile-first” world with solutions architected with the mobile platform and user in mind. According to Constellation Research, the emerging mobile tools that will be most valuable will be the ones that enable new processes and interactions. This new paradigm is about finding information, connecting to people, and exploring and interacting with data.⁵

As mobile solutions gain prominence in the workplace, they are having and will continue to have a profound impact on how individuals work. Transacting business is now possible anywhere at any time. Whether waiting for an airline departure, in-between appointments or while attending an after-hours ballgame, business users rely on mobile solutions to turn downtime into uptime. For managers and employees not traditionally at a desk, they can gain access to business applications similar to their tethered coworkers.

Recent technological advances have also changed the role of the individual in the workplace. With contingent work on the rise and technology fueling the ability to collaborate and work remotely across geographies and time zones, individuals now have the power to create their own ideal work environment. This changing dynamic has created new challenges for HR professionals as they strive to source, recruit and retain the right talent.

Paving the Way for a More Mobile Workplace

There are four key drivers paving the way for a more mobile workforce: tablets, the cloud, employee-owned devices, and social media.

Tablets – While smartphones have served as a catalyst for a more mobile workplace, the proliferation of the iPad has changed the business user's experience and expectation of technology. Although the iPad was originally introduced as a consumer device, users quickly realized the possibilities for keeping track of data and increasing productivity while on the go.

With its lightweight design and range of apps, it has become a more useful business tool than ever imagined. Real-time access to information and social connections enable workers to leverage data in a way that drives business and financial performance. Ray Wang of Constellation Research notes that mobile devices will soon become an employees' first contact with enterprise software.⁶

The Cloud – An increase in cloud services has also given rise to a more mobile work environment. Last year, the research firm IDC noted that as many as 80 percent of enterprise apps developed in 2011 would be for so-called cloud services delivered over the network.⁷ By 2014, about 30 percent of all business apps used will be via the cloud. Among other benefits of cloud services, this supports the anywhere, anytime access to information model.

Employee-owned Devices – Business users also aren't waiting for the IT department to determine the company's position on mobile devices – they're bringing their own personal technology to the enterprise and expecting the IT organization to provide support and access to the corporate network. The bring-your-own-device (BYOD) phenomenon has been building momentum as users become more dependent on mobile access for personal and business communication.

In a 2011 survey from Cisco, two-thirds of Millennials indicated that not only are mobile devices the most important technology in their lives, but they would take a job with lesser pay in exchange for workplace flexibility around using the mobile device of their choice.⁸ Of course, organizations that permit employees to bring their own devices need to consider security and management implications when designing a mobile strategy.

Social Media – Mobile social media, already a mainstream occurrence, is also driving the need for organizations to embrace social mobility. Giving rise to this trend is the immediate and personal nature of mobile communication. It fosters greater collaboration and interaction among users and has created new ways of connecting. It has also changed business processes such as recruiting. Job seekers expect a more interactive experience when it comes to their job search. Companies are using social sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to foster relationships with candidates, grow the talent pipeline and raise awareness of the employment brand, and should take advantage of real-time interaction enabled through mobile social media.

Social media has also blurred the line between an individual's work and personal life. The social network is how work

gets done, expanding control of managers and improving the quality of productivity. With social media, individuals can collaborate inside and outside of the organization and take the walls down that separate the two.

Mobile and video technologies further enhance the social experience and provide a competitive advantage. We have become an experience economy, where the expectation is entertainment mixed with discovery, leading to more visual, interactive presentations for accessing and simulating information. Geo-tracking, voice recognition technologies, gamification and other interactive technologies are changing the way we learn by reshaping technology experiences and becoming more and more useful. With location data, video, and games being integrated into available services, they are going to become an increasingly important part of a connected business user's life.

As people continue to work remotely, mobile applications with access to enterprise information and business systems are a necessity. Checking one's mobile device may not currently be associated with talent management, but with mobility mainstream, change is coming. The immediate future will include an increase of talent management applications geared toward the tablet and other mobile devices, increasing convenience, control and connections.

The Unshackled Enterprise

The evolving talent management landscape will see more organizations introducing apps for iPad or other tablet devices. According to a 2011 survey from CedarCrestone, most companies report plans to grow their adoption of mobile processes in the more strategic areas of succession planning, employee development and performance management.⁹ More cross-platform apps will support mobile device diversity to ensure greater usability for workers who may bring their own devices into the corporate network. Given these plans, there are several key factors to keep in mind.

Different levels of maturity – While mobile provides managers with actionable information for real-time decision-making in a consolidated interface, it's important to recognize that different markets are at different levels of maturity. These considerations need to be taken into account when designing a mobile strategy. For example, some cultures such as Japan are ahead of the curve and likely to adopt tablets faster than the U.S.

The intended audience – It is also important to consider the end user, the business line manager, when implementing a mobile solution. Talent management apps on mobile platforms such as the iPad provide an emotional connection for managers to explore information and inform discussions about talent. They offer new opportunities to reimagine the possibilities for mobile talent management and deliver a unified, emotionally engaging experience.

Multiple form factors – With mobile access to integrated solutions, businesses can provide line managers with a holistic view of an employee across the talent life cycle while delivering a rich user experience. Even though more applications will be created with the mobile user in mind, multiple form factors are required to meet a range of business needs.

For example, a smartphone screen size may impede the ability to perform complex tasks such as completing performance appraisals. While that activity may be better suited for the PC, the smartphone is conducive for approving a requisition or moving along workflow.

Other functions are well-suited for tablet computing, such as compensation. Using a tablet, managers can interact with visual information to make decisions, see how rewards are allocated and confirm that people investments are being provided to high-potential or high-performing employees from any location. Portraying information in a visual way provides a sensory-rich experience and makes complex information easier to absorb for visual learners.

Unique mobile features – Winning mobile apps will have unique features that cater to the mobile environment rather than act as a mobile extension of their desktop counterpart. These include design elements that make for a more readable, visually appealing, interactive experience. Native mobile apps allow users to share information, conduct virtual meetings, collaborate on documents and make better decisions about talent while forging stronger relationships among team members.

In addition, media-rich talent management dashboards can help with candidate and employee interaction, deliver interactive presentations or map efficient locations for interviews and compensation reports. Apps allow managers to put their fingers on the pulse of the company's supply of talent and respond quickly to business demands. Regardless of how information is collected or obtained, workforce analytics remain vital to the analysis of information.

Driving Business Outcomes through a Richer, Interactive Experience

Mobile tools are opening the possibilities for a richer, interactive talent management experience. Not only will they help to redefine the way executives and line managers manage talent, but also how they drive business decisions.

In this transformational mobile world, where any and all business activities can be performed from anywhere at anytime, there will be more attention placed on the user experience. Graphic-rich visual presentation of information will enable new ways of interacting with information. For example, users can play a game to learn how to use talent apps effectively or to increase knowledge about the organization's talent. Using an iPad tablet or other device, managers can drill down to performance, potential, readiness, and flight risk information and gain access to detailed employee and contingent labor information with the swipe of a finger.

Also, organizations that use a single integrated talent management system can more easily interact with data without requiring complex reporting and metrics. Mobile talent management apps for recruiting, compensation, employee performance, and leadership development provide information across the entire HR spectrum and enable organizations to drill down into the data via live analytics and dashboards.

By improving the speed and quality of information, and empowering line managers with real-time access to business

intelligence, the organization can make better decisions and increase productivity. And, looking at talent management through a consolidated lens allows organizations to improve the performance of the business by improving the quality and performance of key talent.

One of the biggest opportunities for mobile applications is to take the benefits of cross-functional talent information and use it to inform discussions around talent. From sourcing candidates through social networking sites to collaborating with colleagues and business partners on specialized topics, social collaboration sites and tools accessed via mobile devices are becoming an important part of how work gets done.

Empowering line managers with all the data they need at their fingertips helps them to make key decisions and turn information into action. Using mobile solutions, gamification and other interactive experiences, businesses can capture the power of an emotional connection, deliver an immersive experience, and put fun into functional business processes.

Mobility Reshaping Business as Usual

We live in a time like no other. The amount of information coming at us is staggering. A perfect storm of change has brought globalization and consumerization together to redefine the landscape of talent management and many HR-related applications. And, to complicate matters, the new workforce is connected and tuned in to each other in ways that blur the lines between social media and business operations. To attract and retain the best and the brightest for the future of the company, HR also needs to be connected and tuned in.

Mobile applications provide an engaging user experience that is designed to take advantage of the tablet touch interface, allowing users to directly interact with the data they care about. Information is highly visual and the design invites the user to explore, communicate and learn. Studies show that students remember information better, when it's represented and learned both visually and verbally. In the case of talent management, the user could review compensation budgets, facilitate the employee performance process and/or provide feedback on job candidates, all with the touch of their fingertips.

With so much information competing for our attention, visual communication is a powerful tool to help individuals interpret information and interact more effectively. That's because, in the end, mobile communication is collaborative communication that supports better, faster and fact-based decision-making. It's undeniably an increasingly mobile world – are you ready to go?

Endnotes

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About the Author



Charles S. Jones is chairman and CEO of Peoplefluent. He has a reputation for innovation and customer-centric growth strategies and a proven and highly successful track record in integrating software companies, identifying key inflection points of differentiation and unleashing the inherent value to the market. His strategic focus is on technical innovation and the extension of value throughout the business through the optimization of existing and new technologies for Peoplefluent customers. Under his leadership, the company has received numerous awards and accolades, including Peoplefluent Mobile Applications being selected for the coveted "Awesome New Technologies" spot at the HR Technology® Conference & Exposition, winning the HR technology industry's Integrated Talent Management Shootout at the 13th Annual HR Technology Conference & Exposition, and named a finalist in the Cloud Computing/Software-as-a-Service Category in the Eighth Annual American Technology Awards. For more information, visit www.peoplefluent.com.