Workplace
Automation _{in the}
Post-GFC Economy

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Mobile Applications in the Workplace

An emerging trend?

Absolutely.

If there was one thing to learn from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, it was that businesses, industries and companies of all sizes were beginning to feel the financial sting of having excessive labour capital allocated to workplace administration and document control.

Entirely necessary for the control and management of content within a business, administration has always (silently) been the single most expensive department of any business, company or industry.

Today, as organisations the world over look to outsourcing when realigning facets of their administrative operations, effectively sharing and managing data between customers and suppliers is becoming more important than ever.

Whether it consists of specification documents, internal announcements, or even press releases, a company's content-data must always be controlled and maintained properly prior to and after submission.

However in today's mobile world, Administration (Admin & Document Control) is a slowly dying role. Why? Because companies can no longer afford to pay someone that in essence, technology can do the work for.

Automation[1], as terrifying as it sounds—allows post GFC workplaces to streamline their internal operations, trimming the 'fat' from payroll by replacing obsolete hands and the risk of human error, with mobile application software.

Just to make it clear, we're not encouraging a 'robotic' workplace and administration will always be required for any enterprise, however it is best to understand how to eliminate unnecessary elements of the role through automation.

[1] The use or introduction of automatic equipment in a manufacturing or other process or facility: Oxford.

Choosing the Right Task Tracking, Delegation and Document Control Mobile Application Software For Your Company, Business, or Industry

For your company to make an educated decision on what is required to streamline internal processes, certain aspects of internal management must be taken into consideration. Ask yourself who spends the most time doing what, when, where and why—how is decreased productivity and lack of accountability effecting your yearly fiscal returns?

Simply pick one fundamental issue that limits your workplace administrations ability to control and manage data effectively, and conceptualise how a mobile application could eliminate such setbacks.

Whether it be an iPad, iPhone, laptop, desktop or tablet p.c., tailored industry-specific mobile applications, create a powerful and transparent communication loop between executives, management and administrational staff.
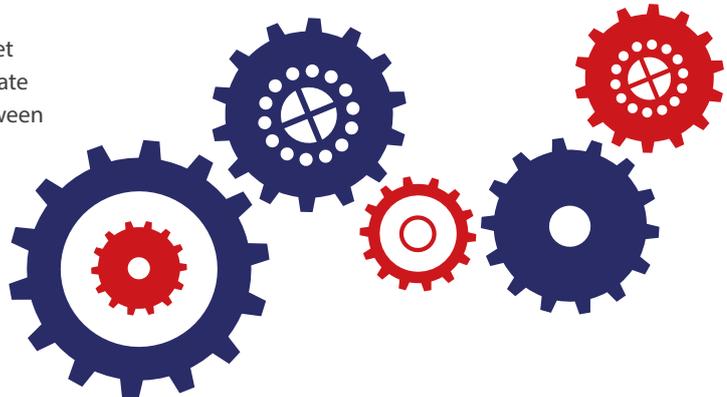
Usability: Ensuring Uptake Through Training and Education

By accelerating the distribution of the correct information within a controlled environment, mobile technologies are quickly replacing older and more ad-hoc systems through:

- Utilising systems that can easily communicate between different areas of the business.
- Allowing administrational staff/management to make quicker and better business decisions.

Therefore, a well-designed mobile platform should make the transition to a new system as quick, intuitive and smooth as possible. This will require thorough training, especially in workplaces where less agile staff remain present.

Based on our own experiences, patience is imperative throughout this process as certain individuals adhere to new systems faster than others. Naturally, a good communicator should not have any qualms assisting those struggling to adapt to an improved and 'cleaner' mobile application system.
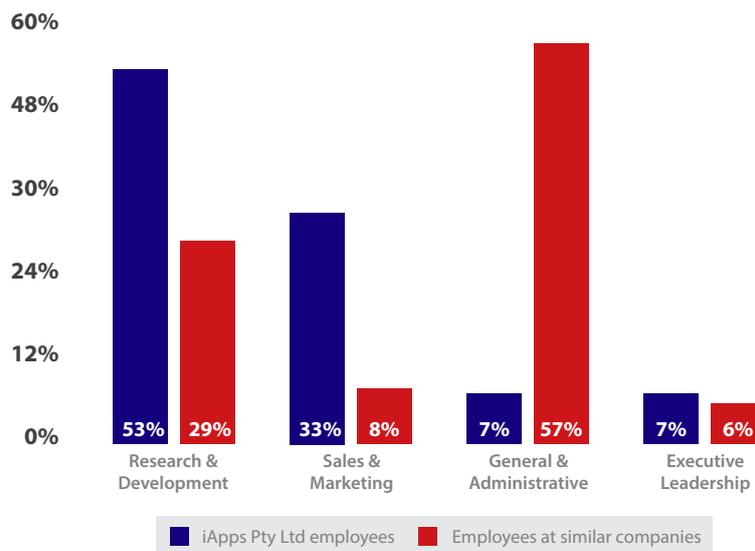
Intuitive Usability

Quicker Decisions

Greater Communication

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Job Function Composition

	iApps Pty Ltd employees	Employees at similar companies
Research & Development	53%	29%
Sales & Marketing	33%	8%
General & Administrative	7%	57%
Executive Leadership	7%	6%

Similar companies are based on the same **industry** and **similar size**

http://www.linkedin.com/company/iapps-pty-ltd/statistics

iApps Pty Ltd: An Example of Successful Workplace Automation

We don't pretend to be perfect 'time maestros' ourselves, we do however—allocate significant resources to ensure that administration and document control remains as automated and minimalist as possible. This has been achieved through implementing an automated administrative system that was tailored 100% around our own challenges, and therefore 100% effective in remedying those challenges.

Whether it's customer relationship management, content management, or the mobile handling of data, automation has allowed the company to partially eliminate administration from its operations. Freeing up capital, and allowing it to be funnelled into more important departments such as R&D, and Marketing, iApps understand wholly, the benefits of integrating specific task tracking, delegation and document control mobile application software in the workplace.

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# The Advantages of Automation in the Post GFC workplace

Although 'old school luddites' probably won't agree, the advantages of implementing an automated administrative mobile application into your workplace, are limitless. However, like any good researcher, one must compare the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a system as such.

Typically, this would be done through a social, political and economical advantages/ disadvantages analysis, however the political aspect is hardly necessary (for now), so we'll focus on the latter.

Social Advantages

Market your work environment as being more direct, transparent and savvy—purely through automation, by:

- Increasing workplace transparency – Brand your work environment as being 'no mess', direct and 100% productive and accountable.
- Identifying and alerting you of 'free riders[2]'– Trims the fat from your workplace and greater inspires the team to be more productive.
- Increasing workplace productivity – Encourages staff to perform at a higher level, increases accountability and task transparency.
- Decreasing staff turnover – 'silent achievers' are more easily noticed, alas, empower your staff for keeping up with tasks and staying ahead of schedule.
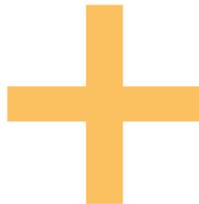
Social Disadvantages

Implementation of a new system will take time getting used to, especially in a workplace were less agile staff remain present. Therefore, it is imperative that appropriate time is allocated to train all staff to best utilize the application, otherwise (without mandatory policy & procedure) it falls at risk of not being used. The social disadvantages of implementing an automated mobile application into the workplace are:

- Technical Glitches and slow internet speed – This can be frustrating and can hinder the general uptake of the application. Nevertheless, you'll get what you pay for, that's why it's important to choose the right developer, and net service provider.
- Paranoia (who's looking over my shoulder and why?) – This is a major one and could possibly cause tension: However, you're workers have nothing to be scared of, if they've got nothing to hide. i.e. laziness.
- Alternate training requirements – Some grasp new technology easier than others, simple. Make sure that clear communication and patience is exercised when teaching less agile staff how to use the application, otherwise you'll struggle if you've got more than 30 staff to teach.

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[2] Party that enjoys a benefit accruing from a collective effort, but contributes little or nothing to the effort.

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Economic Advantages

As aforementioned, 'trimming the fat' from your company's payroll will have immediate economic advantages. Let's face it, no post GFC workplace can afford to have 'that guy' or girl slinking around doing absolutely nothing. Gone are the days of those whom pointlessly conducted trips to the office printer, only to later scribble on their print-outs to make themselves appear busy. Yes, it happens. In fact, it's rife in the post GFC workplace.

Workplace automation through mobile applications will cleanse your workplace of this phenomenon, and you'll be able to sleep easy knowing that your admin staff aren't wasting time. Automation will increase your yearly fiscal returns by:

- Cutting back on non-crucial printing and paper waste – In the age of sustainability, unnecessary administrative printing is considered heresy. Automation eliminates the need for printing, as electronic PDF files and their storage, are increasingly becoming the norm.

- Maximising productivity – As mentioned, get the most out of your labour capital, through increasing staff accountability and eliminating unnecessary downtime. Organisation is the new chaos, and post GFC workplaces simply cannot afford to retain complacent non-productive staff.

- Unwiring business – The less wire, clutter and chords you have around the office, the better. Not only is excessive floor wiring an OH&S[3] issue, but entirely unnecessary in this day and age.

Economic Disadvantages

The cost of developing a mobile application may not be in every workplaces budget and many free 'open source' programs exist that can somewhat assist in the automation process. However, you often get what you (don't) pay for, and based on experience, would strongly suggest tailoring a mobile workplace application with a professional development company—over open source, or platforms designed by 'freelance' programmers. Nevertheless, the economic disadvantages of implementing a mobile application as such are:

- Initial cost – Applications are software, understand this now. Don't expect mobile applications to be cheap just because they're virtual and often listed for a US$1 game sale on multiple app stores. Picture an application exactly as a software bundle, sans the pretty box and disc. Therefore, the cost of developing an application is exactly the same as developing software, as they are identical services, that both require solid financing.

- A change in circumstances – What happens once you've had the application developed, and then realised that you've forgotten to include a fundamentally important command? Simple, consult the company you had develop it and ask for it to be modified in the form of an updated version. Be warned that this will incur a fee, and if you've decided to take the freelancer approach—you're in major trouble. Why? because chances are you'll never hear from a freelancer again, that's if they decided to finish your project.

En precis, it is important that you take a stellar look at who, what, when, where, and why your workplace is not performing at its peak. A simple SWOT analysis will definitely assist you in locating those pitfalls, then it's advised that you take such problems to the right developer, and have them remedied with an application tailored for your workplace.

[3] OH&S: Workplace Health & Safety.

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Productivity 2.0: Better Perform & Retain Staff

A happy, efficient and productive workplace is one to be reckoned with—as innovation and an enhanced work environment always follows. Nevertheless, the positive social spill-over effects of having a transparent and 100% accountable workplace mentality, empower entire departments to better perform and communicate.

There is simply no room left in business for the piecemeal delegation of tasks and the rampant 'he said she said' type rot. Take into account, the extreme bitterness and detrimental effects that the above mentioned and outdated mentality entails. Staff whinge, alliances are formed and broken, and suddenly, you're work environment becomes reminiscent of Kabul, circa 2001. Automation, it could be suggested—eliminates assumption from your workplace, and consequently, productivity levels will increase.

Increasing Staff Retention:

Transparency is a fantastic attribute to any workplace, and without transparency, managers and executive staff find themselves running around seeking 'labour justification' from their staff. By labour justification, I mean managers and executive staff having to look over the shoulders of their employees when they shouldn't have to.

The clown constantly on YouTube, whom laments in spamming other staff with pointless web content all day, finds it very hard to survive in a workplace whereby staff are 100% accountable for completing their own tasks, on time. He/she has no desk space in a mobile workplace, therefore you should take immediate steps to replace this person with someone who can consistently deliver.

In addition to a better work environment, staff turnover will consequently decrease—as you know exactly who is doing what and when it's going to be delivered by. There's less room for discrepancies, communication generally improves, and a happy, productive work-force that fully understands their job roles will indefinitely follow. Never have to train staff again, just retain and continuously improve their processes, albeit with little tolerance for repeated critical error.

Viewing Labour as ROI:

Post GFC workplaces have shifted the way a typical employee is perceived. Bosses and increasingly, recruitment agencies, no longer rely on here-say when screening a potential job candidate. These days, employers need physical, cold, hard and raw evidence that someone they are about to hire, can justify the $AUD60,000 wage they're due to receive. Labour, whether it be physical or intellectual—is a Return on Investment for any employer.

Alas, mobile applications and workplace automation, will decrease your chances of feeling burnt by 'free riders'. Finito are the days of bashing yourself over Joe Blow managing to fly under the radar doing nothing for 3 months—he'll be caught out straight away in an automated work environment. Mobile technology does not fool.

Out With The Old And In With The New: Where to next?

A fundamental shift in workplace tradition is attributed purely to recent technological innovations. How we communicate with each other both at home and in the workplace is changing. Born out of the ashes of the post GFC economy is a trust–poor society that is penniless, broken and technologically confused. Fear not, the digital age haveth arrived, and out of the post GFC ashes—grows a robust and highly profitable opportunity for struggling companies, businesses and entire industries to re-structure.

Although half the struggle is remaining agile in this rapidly changing technology rich environment—the proliferation of mobile applications and the devices that host them, will soon influence multiple facets of our daily lives both at home, and at work.

Just take a look at the stock markets, companies such as SAP, IBM, ORACLE, Accenture and CISCO to name a few—are witnessing their shares skyrocket, whereby companies whom refused to adapt to the current change facing markets, i.e Motorola, Hewlett Packard and RIM—are suffering greatly. The worlds most innovative workplaces have gone mobile, just take look at the glittering quarterly revenue figures these mobile-centric companies are generating.

Now, I don't pretend to write from the desk of a large multi-national company, that's not the point. The point is however, to inform as many people as possible that mobile applications and automation will enable your business, company, or industry to perform at its pre-GFC capacity.

Excessive allocation of labour towards administration and document control, is choking post GFC businesses. Therefore, without addressing the 'fickle' morals & ethics of implementing an automated mobile application system in your workplace, ask yourself how long you can afford to sustain a workforce performing at only 35% of its overall capacity? Surely not for long given the current economic climate.

"You can resist an invading army; you cannot resist an idea whose time has come."

Victor Hugo

About the Author:

Louie Thompson represents Marketing & Media for iApps Pty Ltd, a specialist mobile application development company with offices in Australia and Asia.

Louie is passionate about economics, political science, media and sailing. Having recently returned from a lengthy stint as a small business owner in China's capital, Beijing—Louie enjoys analysing Asian Financial Markets, demographics, consumer behaviour and cultural trends. He is currently studying Mandarin Chinese at Brisbane's Confucius Institute.

Louie Thompson

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