Productivity Link

Contents

The Rise of Mobile Workforce

1. Introduction

The era of the 9-to-5 job is over, as mobility within the global workforce is booming, particularly with the recent trends of increased usage of mobile devices, such as laptops, smartphones and tablets, as well as the emergence of mobile technology and cloud-based applications. Mobile workforce can enhance productivity, motivation, flexibility and staff retention.

2. What is Mobile Workforce?

A study by iPass, published in May 2012, revealed that almost 74 percent of workers globally would prefer an unconventional workday – being online and connected at any time, from any place they choose, throughout the day. While the impact on the traditional office setting is yet to be seen, there are efforts to make the workplace more appealing to today's mobile workers.

Mobile workforce involves a work arrangement where workers work at least 10 hours per week away from their main place of work.

The mobility revolution is driven by five main drivers:

- Businesses (and individuals) like to communicate on the move

- Mobility increases corporate productivity and competitiveness

- Well developed broadband mobile devices, technologies and services

- Mobile technology supports personal communication

- Digital information and content are increasingly pervasive.

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3. What Mobility Means to Employees and Employers

For employees, changing the boundaries of old workplace patterns allows for increased face time with clients, decreased commute time, greater control over workloads, and even a more balanced lifestyle. Combined, these translate into increased employee productivity and satisfaction, as well as increased revenue for the organisation, and higher employee retention.

Reaping such benefits requires an environment that allows organisations to take advantage of worker mobility while remaining organised. The environment must ensure that mobile employees get the resources they need, regardless of their location, and it must ensure that each individual workspace is used as efficiently as possible.

Mobile officing is the answer. Organisations can proactively manage and reserve shared resources (such as workspaces, equipment and services), as well as report on the utilisation of those resources across departments and facilities. Workspace management tools can be used to reserve resources in real-time, automate inefficient processes and track and analyse usage patterns, in order to make wise short-and long-term space decisions. These next-generation tools deliver clear financial and organisational benefits to any business with mobile employees.

In a strategic sense, the term "mobile officing" refers to management strategies that restructure the workplace and work processes in order to improve productivity and space efficiency. Implemented effectively, mobile officing allows workers to perform their primary job duties outside the traditional office without losing productivity and job satisfaction.

Advances in technology, coupled with the shift toward a service-oriented economy, are making the mobile officing concept inevitable. A growing change in public opinion - that mobile officing is beneficial for both employee and employer - has also made it desirable. The technical infrastructure to support worker mobility includes providing them with wireless network access along with portable electronic equipment, such as laptops and mobile phones.

4. Benefits of a Mobile Workforce

A mobile workforce provides benefits to organisations and their employees in several different ways.

Some of the advantages of having a mobile workforce are:

- **Increased productivity**
  Being a mobile worker means getting the flexibility to do work the way he/she prefers. Their approach to work depends on their individual preferences, styles and strengths. Today, mobile applications are a next-generation technology that further improves efficiency and effectiveness by enabling workers to take the office with them. Waiting to return to the office to create a report often results in inaccuracies, loss of productivity and even reduced employee satisfaction. This productivity gain allows employees to free up and utilise more minutes and hours of their day to drive revenue, productivity and company performance.

- **High morale among employees**
  Employees who are a part of a mobile workforce often report higher job satisfaction than their non-mobile workforce colleagues. Mobile employees often feel as if the company has put more trust in them than other employees, and that they are seen as reliable, productive, and independent. They appreciate the work-life balance that their mobility gives them, and also enjoy the challenges that can come with being a mobile employee.

- **Low absenteeism**
  Absenteeism is one of the major problems faced by organisations worldwide. It can be a burden for organisations as it translates into low productivity and extra costs in hiring the services of additional staff. However, with a mobile workforce, the rate of absenteeism reduced considerably.

- **Reduced carbon footprint**
  Since mobile workers need not require office space, it translates into translates into reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, reduced commuting means reduced air pollution.

- **Reduced expenses**
  Employers benefits from reduced capital cost for offices and reduced infrastructure costs. Employees, on the other hand, enjoy reduced transportation costs and parking charges.

5. Types of Mobile Workforce

The table below outlines the typical profiles of the mobile workforce within a company, depending on the nature of their jobs, their roles in the organisation, and the information that they require to get their jobs done.

Mobile Workforce Type	Sample Professions	Work Characteristics	Typical Devices
Road warriors	Executives, outside sales force, consultants	▪ Spend more than 80% of their time away from the office travelling or at customer and partner locations ▪ Heavy e-mail and voice usage ▪ Lower use of back-end business applications	Typically use smartphones
Campus mobiles	IT support staff, healthcare givers, teachers, manufacturing and production staff and managers, retail associates and managers	▪ Spend 60% of their time away from their desks; mobile within their campus ▪ Heavy, often continuous, application use	Typically require laptops, ruggedised computers, or industry-specific devices
Corridor cruisers	Marketing, human resources, finance, R&D, IT, auditors and inspectors, plant and facilities management and maintenance, safety and security staff	▪ Spend more than 20% of their time away from their primary office desks ▪ Heavy application access and voice services use, moderate e-mail access	Typically require a laptop
Field force	Supply chain, fleet, delivery, logistics, public sector and safety, and case	▪ Spend most of their time outside the campus, often	Typically require an industry specific rugged device or a mobile phone

	workers	moving to multiple sites during the day to complete tasks ■ Specific application access, light e-mail usage, and moderate voice usage	
Teleworkers	Customer service representative, IT help desk, inside sales	■ Primarily works from home ■ Continuous heavy application access in addition to e-mail ■ May also be voice-intensive depending upon job duties	Typically require a laptop and an IP phone

Source: Undestanding the mobile workforce in your business. (2006). *Cisco.* Retrieved July 23, 2012, from http://www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/collateral/ns340/ns394/ns348/ns772/networking_solution_solution_overview0900aecd806f43d3.pdf

The following table presents the major competencies required of a mobile worker.

Competencies	Mobile Workers	Office-based Workers
Communication	Need to stay in touch with relational networks, work in multiple teams, bridge massive chasms of communication and communicate using a variety of mediums.	Are surrounded by people; communication is required but happens more naturally.
Achievements and results orientation	As there is less support and much less monitoring, there is a need for higher self-motivation.	Have support in the office and people to monitor and 'push' them on.
Customer focus	Spend a lot of time going between clients, seeking clients out and working at client premises.	High, although they need to be good as they tend not to be facing customers all the time.
Teamwork	Take part in less collaborative work than office based workers, display less supporting and less helping out. However, teamwork skills are vital when working in	Tend to work predominantly in teams and need to be highly co-operative, supportive and collaborative.

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	multidisciplinary teams, and to avoid isolation.	
Planning and organising	Need to be able to plan for changing circumstances and need contingency plans in place and higher order of planning ability.	Need to plan but on a more basic level, not so far in advance. Less risk and fewer contingencies.
Commercial and business awareness	Need to be independent in making decisions and taking action when commercial opportunities arise. Often there is no one available to check things with.	Need to possess some commercial and business awareness, but the abundance of support means there is opportunity to get help and check decisions with others.
Flexibility and adaptability	Need to be able to cope with changes, work in different situations and locations. Need to be flexible in order to work with a variety of different people and communications media.	Much more likely to work in a more routine role where change does not occur daily and there are fewer problems to work around.
Problem solving	More likely to suffer from non-work related problems with technology and travel that they must solve independently.	There are more options for support when things go wrong, e.g. technicians to mend computers instead of having to do it themselves
Building relationships	This is a key aspect of the mobile workers role and fundamental to their success. They need to build relationships with clients, colleagues and to fulfil their own personal needs. Building trust is important within this.	This is also important but likely to happen much more naturally due to proximity.

Source: A study: Understanding and managing the mobile workforce. (2007, July). *Cisco*. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from
http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2007/eKits/MobileWorkforce_071807.pdf

6. Challenges of a Mobile Workforce

5.1. The Health and Well-being of Mobile Workers

Mental workload leads to mental strain, which can have positive and/or negative consequences. The negative consequences are reduced when the worker has personal control, the ability to do the job, and the resources and support. Since mobile workers frequently work alone and do not always have the support and resources they need, they are at risk of fatigue and burnout.

Hence, organisations need to be particularly mindful of the mental health of mobile workers, and look to

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provide support and resources to prevent unnecessary mental strain. Mobile employees should be given strategies to help them manage negative emotions in the absence of peer support, such as relaxation and positive self-talk techniques. Technology must be appropriate and reliable. IT support should also be available for times when there are technical problems or failures. Technology must also enable easy-to-use links to mobile workers' support networks in order to reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation. Managers also need to act as a bridge between office-based workers and mobile workers. Both groups need to be encouraged to communicate and help to appreciate the unique difficulties each faces.

5.2. Mobile Workers Experience Isolation

Research shows that being with others at work has a strong impact on positive emotions. Positive emotions lead to increased goal-directed attention, creativity, open-mindedness, work performance and motivation. It is important that mobile workers who are physically separated from their colleagues do not also perceive themselves as being emotionally distant.

Mobile workers do not have the natural support around them that office-based workers have. Instead they must make significant efforts in planning and managing their interactions with colleagues, clients and others. This means that unless mobile workers are explicit in communicating their needs for support, others are much less likely to identify and respond to those needs.

Mobile workers could be encouraged to share contextual information to help them feel more connected. Communication technology should be provided to enable them to stay in touch with colleagues, friends, and family when they are away, which could help to reduce feelings of isolation.

5.3. Blurred Boundaries Between Work and Home

Maintaining work-life balance is the most significant psychological challenge. Spending time away from home on a regular basis is a major source of work-life discord. Mobile workers often struggle to maintain relationships and friendships as regular contact is difficult to establish. It is also difficult for mobile workers to commit to hobbies or personal

interests as they cannot attend classes or groups which require regular weekly attendance. Working from a home office when not travelling removes the physical boundaries between places of work and family life. This means that the mobile worker is constantly faced with the challenge of maintaining disciplined boundaries.

Mobile workers are likely to have a positive experience of dealing with work-life balance when:

- They feel that they can be flexible and in control of when they work

- They have a good relationship with their boss

- They have access to the appropriate technology for communications

- They are based in a feminine culture with a history of family friendly work arrangements.

Employers must understand the impact that travel and unpredictable mobile work can have on an individual's home life, and recognise the extra stress this can subsequently cause. Employees with childcare responsibilities will benefit from a management approach that encourages work-life balance and promotes flexible working approaches. Overworking can become a problem, especially if it leads to burnout.

The results of burnout for the organisation include increased turnover of staff and decreased productivity.

Case Study

Cigna

Cigna is one of the largest health service companies in the United States, which also operates internationally in 30 countries. In 2002, Cigna Corporate Services Department in Philadelphia was looking for more efficient ways to use real estate and reduce the costs of employee overhead.

Telecommuting Solution

The department conducted an assessment and decided there were two job classes that were particularly suited to working at home:

- Claims workers: this class of workers has defined work steps, does not require minute by minute supervision and can be managed with metrics such as accuracy and the number of claims processed.

- Field care managers: these nurses manage a caseload and conduct home visits. Requiring field care managers to go to a central office was considered by the employees an imposition and burden.

Cigna introduced e-work, its formal telecommuting option as a pilot in 2002. The resounding success for nurse case managers resulted in the extension of formal telecommuting to the claims processing department a year later.

Key Telecommuting Challenge

Executives found it was critical that employees understand and agree to company expectations for the e-work programme. To facilitate that understanding, a written policy was developed and reviewed with each telecommuter during a face-to-face meeting. One of the items specifically concerns child care and explains that e-work cannot be used as a substitute for day care arrangements.

Telecommuting Results

- Turnover down
  The pilot e-work programme for nurse case managers cut turnover by 55% between 2002-2003. This was particularly important to Cigna, in light of an ongoing nursing shortage.

- Major savings on real estate
  By 2005, 11% of Cigna's workforce worked full time from home. Cigna Corporate Services closed a building and discontinued space allocation for those workers.

- Improved productivity
  Cigna attributes measurable productivity improvements to reduced absenteeism, less time commuting and reduced turnover. Additionally, participating employees are found to be staying longer with the company.

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a non-profit social service organisation. In 2002, it faced a dual challenge: to put a new organisational structure in place to improve service delivery; and to reduce operating expenses.

With 20 customer contact employees working from two separate satellite offices and part-time work spaces, BBBS was saddled with unnecessary lease obligations and operating expenses. Moreover, employees spent a considerable amount of time sitting in traffic often at the expense of being with clients.

BBBS' initial experiences with teleworking had shown that cost savings could be considerable. More importantly, employees who were working directly with youths and adults found they could have more time for one-on-one contact if they were able to work from home. In addition, employees staffing the main office were more productive if allowed to work away from the office on a part-time, but routine basis.

BBBS sought the assistance of the Valley Telework Project to identify organisational and technological considerations of teleworking and to help implement a telework programme.

BBBS' telework steering committee comprised representatives from finance, information technology, human resources, and the organisation's executive management team. Over a three-month period, the steering committee identified telework strategies, assessed benefits and costs, and devised implementation techniques and guidelines for teleworkers. Employees that had been teleworking provided advice on how to expand remote working to co-workers. The steering committee made sure that teleworkers would be productive by modifying existing and acquiring new technologies to allow seamless communication and data access.
Benefits Gained

Business benefits
- Reduce lease expenses
- Increase time devoted to client contact
- Improve productivity

Environmental and travel benefits
- BBBS' teleworkers reduce over 9,000 vehicle trips and 121,000 miles of travel, resulting in a reduction of over 3,200 pounds of pollutants annually

Lessons Learned

- Involve representatives from departments affected by teleworking including finance, executive management, facilities, information systems/technology, and human resources in developing telework arrangements.

- Examine technological considerations carefully to make sure that employees working away from the office can function as if working in the 'main' office.

- Review communication protocols prior to starting telework arrangements in order to develop common expectations.

- Provide work spaces in a 'main' office for teleworkers to make sure that time spent in the office is productive.

- Coordinate schedules of 'in-office' meetings to minimise teleworker travel time.

- Have contingency plans for work to be performed if, and when, technological problems occur.

- Designate a contact to provide support for actions that require 'in-office' attention.

- Have teleworkers 'network' with each other (e.g. instant messaging, schedule lunch meetings) to help resolve problems specific to teleworkers.

- Make arrangements with business service centers to give teleworkers access to specialised services such as copying, etc.

- Have in-house information technology system staff orientate teleworkers to equipment and communication services prior to launching telework arrangements.

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Articles can be retrieved from NLB's e-Resources –
http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg

Books are available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.

Recommended Readings

Clemons, D, (2011). *Managing the mobile workforce: Leading, building, and sustaining virtual teams*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
[RBUS 658.3 CLE]

Illegems, V., & Verbeke, A. (2003). *Moving towards the virtual workplace: Managerial and societal perspectives on telework*. Cheltenham, U. K.: Edward Elgar Pub.
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SINGAPORE PRODUCTIVITY ASSOCIATION

The Singapore Productivity Association (SPA) was set up in 1973 as an affiliated body of the then National Productivity Board, now SPRING Singapore. Its objective is to promote the active involvement of organisations and individuals in the Productivity Movement and to expedite the spread of productivity and its techniques.

CPP Course Syllabus	
CPP	**CPP (Retail)**
Module 1: Understanding Productivity (Duration: 1 day) • Introduction to Productivity and Quality Concepts • Factors Affecting Enterprise Productivity • Productivity Movement in Singapore • Productivity Promotion in Businesses • Productivity Challenges	

Module 2: Productivity Tools, Techniques & Management Systems (Duration: 3 days)
 	
• Business Excellence
• Productivity Measurement & Analysis
• Process management:
  ▪ Cost of Quality
  ▪ Lean Six Sigma
  ▪ Process Mapping & Analysis
• Integrated Management Systems
	Module 2: Productivity Tools, Techniques & Management Systems (Duration: 3 days)
	
	• Delivering Service Excellence
	• Productivity Measurement & Analysis
	• Process management:
	  ▪ Cost of Quality
	  ▪ Lean Six Sigma
	  ▪ Process Mapping & Analysis

Module 3: Innovation & Service Excellence (Duration: 3 days) • Knowledge Economy & Innovation • Service Excellence • Team Excellence	**Module 3: Innovation & Service Excellence (Duration: 3 days)** • Introduction to Service Excellence & Sales Productivity • Store Management & the Roles of a Store Manager • Minimising Operational Constraints & Focusing on Sales • Setting Goals & Analysing Statistics • Coaching & Motivating Sales Staff • Service Behaviours that Encourage Business
Module 4: Critical Success Factors (Duration: 1 day) • Management Commitment • Managing & Sustaining Change • Overcoming Resistance to Change • Training and Education • Planning for Implementation and Control of Productivity Improvement Programme • Briefing on project assignment & Role of Productivity Practitioner	

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As part of the CPP curriculum, participants are required to start a productivity improvement project upon completion of the in-class component. Project guidance will be provided by a professional consultant assigned for this purpose and is for a total of 2 man-days.

Funding & Payment

The course is supported by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA). Funding is available at 70% and 50% of the course fees respectively for SMEs and MNCs/LLEs/Statutory Boards. Please find the prices payable in the net fee table below:

For SMEs:	Net Fee	Nett Fee with GST
SPA Member (S$3,700)	S$1,110	S$1,187.70
Non-Member (S$3,950)	S$1,185	S$1,267.95
For MNCs/LLEs/Statutory Boards	Net Fee	Nett Fee with GST
SPA Member (S$3,700)	S$1850	S$1979.50
Non-Member (S$3,950)	S$1975	S$2113.25

Core Faculty Members

MR. LAM CHUN SEE
B. ENG IN INDUSTRIAL & SYSTEMS ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE)

Chun see manages his own consultancy practice, Hoshin Consulting and is also an associate consultant/trainer to the PSB Corporation and Singapore Productivity Association. Prior to running his own practice, he has had years of experience as an industrial engineer with Philips, and trainer and consultant with the then National Productivity Board, APG Consulting and Teian Consulting, He was conferred the Triple-A Award in 1989 for helping to transfer Japanese know-how, particularly in the area of 5S, into local programmes and packages. Throughout his years of consultancy experience, Chun See has assisted many businesses in analyzing their productivity and quality objectives and performance; primarily through the application of the PDCA technique and basic QC tools.

MR. LEE KOK SEONG
M.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (IMPERIAL COLLEGE, LONDON UNIVERSITY), B.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY)

Kok Seong has accumulated vast experience in the areas of productivity training and management consultancy throughout his 30 years of experience with the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING). He has provided consultancy assistance and training for numerous organisations both within and outside of Singapore in the areas of Productivity Management, Operation and Production Management, total Quality Management, Total Productive Maintenance, Shopfloor Management, Occupational Safety Management, Industrial Engineering Applications and Supervisory Management. He has also been greatly involved in the pinnacle Singapore Quality Award (SQA) initiative since its inception in 1993. his track records include the assessments and site visits of award recipients like Micron Semiconductor (formerly Texas Instruments), Motorola, Baxter Healthcare, Philips Tuner Factory and Teck Wah Industrial Corporation Ltd. Mr. Lee is currently a certified SQA Senior Assessor, as well as a resource person for Basic and Advanced Training Courses for Productivity Practitioners, a position he has taken on since 2007.

MR. LOW CHOO TUCK
M.SC. IN INDUSTRIAL ADMINSITRATION (UNIVERSITY OF ASTON, UK); B.SC. IN PHYSICS (NUS); DIP IN QUALITY CONTROL INSTRUCTORS (INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CENTRE, NETHERLANDS); CERTIFICATE IN PRODUCTIVITY DEVELOPMENT (JAPAN PRODUCTIVITY CENTRE); CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT (INSEASD)

Choo Tuck currently provides training and advisory services in productivity and quality management to businesses and government in the Asean region and Middle East. He was previously the Executive Director of the Restaurant Association of Singapore as well as the Singapore Productivity Association, and was also the Director for Strategic Planning in SPRING Singapore. During his many years of service with SPRING Singapore, he gained wide experience in productivity training, management consultancy and productivity promotion, and has helped more than a 100 businesses in improving productivity, quality control and business excellence, including organisations such as Cycle & Carriage, Motorola, PUB and DBS. On top of that, he has also served as an Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) expert on Productivity for several APO member countries, and was part of a team of experts engaged by the Singapore cooperation Enterprise to provide productivity expertise to the Government of Bahrain in 2007 and 2008.

MR. QUEK AIK TENG
B.ENG (HON.) IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD); DIP. IN BUSINESS EFFICIENCY (INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING_ (PSB-ACADEMY); CERTIFIED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (CMC); PRACTISING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (PMC); MEMBER, INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS (IMC) SINGAPORE

Aik Teng currently manages his own consultancy, AT Consulting Services. One of his most recent projects includes being the LEAD Project Manager for the Singapore Logistics Association. Prior to running his own consultancy, he has been with SPRING Singapore for 20 years, and was the Head of the Organisation Excellence Department from 2004-05. He was also SQA Lead Assessor and Team Leader up till 2008 and has been involved in the SQA initiative since its inception in 1993. tasked to start up the consultancy unit within

the then Productivity & Standards Board (PSB) to provide training and consultancy services to organisations, his consulting team assisted close to 30 organisations during that period. He was also involved in a project coordinated by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) to assist the Bahrain Labour Fund in their Labour Reform strategy, which included helping the Bahrain government to initiate a Productivity Movement as well as develop the productivity of the local enterprises. In addition, he was appointed as Project Manager to assist the Government of Botswana to implement a national Productivity Movement, from 1994 to 2003. Botswana is currently held as a model of Productivity in the Pan-Africa region.

MR. WONG KAI HONG
MBA IN STRATEGIC MARKETING (HULL), BSC (NUS)

Kai Hong is a business consultant, management trainer and company director. He has spent almost 2 decades in the consumer products industry, having worked with retailers like Isetan, Metro, Royal Sporting House, The Athlete's Foot and Sunglass Hut; brands like Reebok and Doc Martens; and technology group Wearnes Technology. He has been involved with various functions including operations, business development, project management, human resource, training, marketing, logistics, budgeting and general management. He has developed businesses in Singapore and many Asian cities such as Seoul and Beijing.

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Alternatively, you could also contact our secretariat:
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