

An Introductory Review on Nature and Role of Mobile Workforce on Business Outcomes

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Mobile Workforce a Few Facts

The fact we are faced with is the invention in communication devices in terms of features and speed facilitate our mobility at workplace. While, technology is making ground breakthrough in communication the need for empowering geographically diverse organization employees is not within the reach. The mobile workforce is a phenomenon that will require a massive support from the business world to develop and mature. However, mobile or distance workforces are an existing fact in many organizations globally and its role in the future of business world is undeniable. Mobile workforce by nature is similar to any workforce with the difference of minimum exposure to live interpersonal day to day communication of traditional on site workforce. Access to instant messaging, E-mail, Go to Meeting and many more platforms that we use for communicate has made connection with our offices much easier. It is an accepted fact that the need to be physically present for all the meetings or to travel half around the world to attend a business meeting is no more an issue in terms of time and cost for business owners.

According to report published by Cisco the workforce is becoming more mobile each year. What may be news, though, is that 75% of the U.S. workforce will become mobile by year-end 2011. A Cisco Survey conducted by Cisco found that mobile workforce wishes and expectations can mainly be summarized as follows:

- 3 of every 5 (60%) employees believe they don't need to be in the office to be productive, efficient
- 2 of every 3 (66%) employees desire work flexibility
- 2 of every 3 (66%) employees would accept a lower-paying job with more work flexibility than a higher-paying job with inflexibility
- 45% of IT professionals are unprepared or struggling to make their workforces more mobile, distributed ([www.slideshare.net / CiscoSystems](http://www.slideshare.net/CiscoSystems))

As shown in above report around 60% of workforce does not see their physical presence at the office as the factor for increase in their productivity. The productivity is not essentially related to the size and ambiance of an office. Let us remember that for a new business the cost of office is a factor in their success or failures. Roth (2011) stated, "Among my biggest issues was space. Our first office didn't have much room because, hey, offices are is expensive as it is." (p. 226). The communication technology did allow many office based tasks to be done in home offices and since then this type of business shown an increasing trend in quantity and improvement in quality of work. A report by (Brian Osborne, 2008) states that the large percentages shown above are due to proliferation of high-speed networks, Wi-Fi technology, and mobile convergence as demonstrated by devices like the Blackberry, I-Phone and I-Pad. The U.S. will have a run for its money, though. Japan is expected to have the highest percentage of mobile workers by 2011 with nearly 80%. The picture drawn by this report is simple to visualize and understand. Technology has paved the way to maintain a work/ life balance by providing ability to access and connect to the workplace form a distance. The same is true in distance education. However, the issue is that we may not be aware of the fact that access to office from home may disturb the balance between work and life or leisure time. Brian Osborne, 2008 further reports that Companies issue mobile phones, smart phones, with e-mail access, laptops with Wi-Fi compatibility, and cellular data cards mean that even if you are out of the office, then there is no reason why you still can't take calls, access the company's network and programs, and read e-mail. The unfortunate thing is that many companies have also come to expect their employees with these gadgets to do just that. They pay for the gadgets and the monthly subscriptions, and they expect you to use them. That's why bosses or other employees don't feel too bad for reaching you at night, especially if it's via e-mail or on a company mobile phone. This attitude put the demands on some mobile workforce and they feel that they are isolated and overworked. The question is how to make a balance between work and life in mobile workforce

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population. "I would say the best use of mobile technology is maximizing workers' productivity, even while on the go, to ensure they make the most of their family time. In other words, maximizing my 8-10 hour day to ensure it doesn't have to become a 12-18 hour day, which cuts into family time. That's using mobile technology as a freedom enabler" (Brian Osborne, 2008). The other example of challenging yet successful stories of business that uses mobile workforce is the for profit or private universities with their on-line programs. The Apollo Group's University of Phoenix (www.phoenix.edu) has shown a continues growth using distance education that uses distance students and mobile instructors. (Rosenberg, 2001). The following is the success story of a for profit education of university of phoenix one among many in private education industry. "The University of Phoenix (Phoenix, AZ) success story is remarkably simple. Establish a brand over 25 years, improve product based on feedback, and stick to your mission. With this foundation the University of Phoenix Online, though just slightly more than a third the size of the organization's ground-based student-body, is growing rapidly. In September of 2000, the company raised \$75 million for the online division with the introduction of a tracking stock for the University of Phoenix Online. The Apollo Group continues to own all assets." (Nelson B. Heller and Associates). In the wake of growing need for higher education and demographic change that is the many young countries the requirement for higher education is showing rapid growth this requirement can be met by introducing distance education using the mobile workforce potentials.

The Weakness and Strengths of Remote Access in Mobile Workforce Phenomena

According to the recent Connected World Report by Cisco the fear about the mobile workforce phenomena is related to managing a mobile workforce. Security is of paramount concern for respondents and 57% put it first among their fears. Data loss and lost/stolen devices are two other major concerns, though managers admit that these two aren't that dreadful (<http://newsroom.cisco.com>). The issue of isolation, workforce training and development and leadership are a few of many issues with development and management of distance and mobile workforce in a given business setting. However, we all agree on the fact that there is a great potential in use of mobile workforce in the business settings. To form a mobile workforce brings a competitive advantage for your business and enables workers to have unlimited job opportunities and access to a large number of

companies globally (Clemons & Kroth, 2011).

Key Factors in Successful Mobile Workforce Leadership and Management

All in all, mobile workforce and the mobile enterprise are the future, so we need to adapt. For many enterprises the difference between going mobile and staying as it is will be the difference from staying competitive and dropping out of the game. This is why leaders and managers need to learn quickly how mobile workforce is different and how to manage it. The management plan and strategies play a vital role in developing a positive view about the mobile workforce in order to attract the best talents in the field for a given company or business. As Clemons and Kroth (2011) stated to establish well defined expectations should be an absolute priority before hiring workforce who conduct business or does his work away from the company or office or basically on the Net. The leadership, management team will assure the success of using mobile workforce by providing a business plan that makes sure everything works in harmony. The infrastructure requirement for providing flexible platform to transfer the knowledge to mobile employees or learners as the case maybe is a factor that requires the organizational leadership plan for empowerment and involvement of onsite and mobile workforce in decision-making prior and through the process of change from onsite to mobile workforce orientation. The geographical diverse organizations with onsite and distance employees have to remember the key to success to a mobile workforce lies in multi-factorial plans, team work and adaptation to new technologies in training and communication to ensure the success of such programs.

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