



April 2011

Document L52

RESEARCH NOTE MOBILE TECHNOLOGY MEETS THE FRONTLINE WORKFORCE

THE BOTTOM LINE

Nucleus Research investigated mobile apps designed to improve workforce productivity. Nucleus found that Kronos mobile workforce management apps help managers and employees better manage work time and schedule information remotely using a mobile device. Kronos mobile apps also respond to the needs of the changing workforce by improving usability and increasing employee satisfaction.

Productivity improvements, mobile application ease of use and familiarity, and employee workflow are converging and changing the way organizations perceive, utilize, and deploy mobile app technology. Combined with the needs of the remote workforce, workforce management vendors are providing benefits to organizations and its workers by offering apps that leverage mobile technology. Kronos Incorporated offers mobile apps that allow employees and managers to work more effectively through the use of mobile devices.

MOBILE WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT NEEDS

Nurses, retail employees, construction workers, and many other non-stationary workers perform tasks by being at various places throughout each day. Because of this, managers have difficulty locating employees and discussing work-related issues and changes. One way to more effectively manage these workers and their workload is to use mobile communications and workforce management apps.

While discussing and responding to workforce changes is important, it also can take time away from other work. Although filling out timecards, reviewing schedules, and recording job changes are necessary activities, they are unproductive. Every time an employee enters or reviews their work or work details, time is taken away from other work and productivity decreases.

Mobile apps offer organizations a way to deploy workforce management capabilities to on-the-go employees and improve workforce productivity for all users. This occurs because workforce management functions can be performed quicker and easier. Compared with other methods, mobile devices accompany workers while they perform work, on-site or remotely, and eliminate the need to return to a computer or designated timekeeping areas.

TOPICSEmployee Management
Applications

Enterprise Applications

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY MEETS THE FRONTLINE WORKFORCE

Kronos provides workforce management solutions to small and large organizations in various markets including healthcare, manufacturing, retail, services, distribution, and the public sector. Kronos offers time and attendance, scheduling, absence management, HR and payroll, hiring, and labor analytics applications as well as training and services around the world. Kronos serves its customers in the Americas, EMEA, APAC, and Australia through local offices and distributors.

Kronos Workforce Mobile apps support iPhone, Android, BlackBerry and other mobile device users. Using these apps, employees can perform workforce management tasks such as:

- Punching in or out
- Reviewing and approving their timecard
- Checking their schedule
- Requesting time off.

Managers can perform tasks such as:

- Entering punch information for employees
- Reviewing and approving timecards
- Reviewing and approving time off requests.

Kronos believes that tailored design considerations will help user adoption and use. For example, Kronos apps designed for iPhones, Android, and BlackBerry devices are designed differently by device in order to use gestures and controls most frequently used and therefore, familiar to users of each device type. Kronos has also studied 'high-touch' features and functionality and provides limited features its users use most often. This means that not all Web client features, for example, are accessible via mobile app for the sake of ease and access to particular features used most often.

MOBILE WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT BENEFITS

Mobile workforce management applications are not only useful for the remote worker, but also provide convenient and quicker access to workforce management operations that translate into improved productivity, accessibility, data accuracy, and employee satisfaction because of minimal impact to a worker's normal workflow.

Additionally, workers want mobile ease of use and access. The generation of employees entering a workforce has grown accustomed to iPhone ease of use, instant access to information, and tends to rebuff cumbersome, dated technology. Proven by expectations that smartphone sales are expected to surpass desktop computers in 2011, the way consumers - and consequently workers - engage with technology is changing.

Improved accessibility

For many organizations, it is not financially feasible or physically possible to provide time clock or separate time recording devices to its remote workforce. From construction work sites to golf courses, mobile devices make it possible for mobile users to perform workforce management operations, not otherwise possible before, where they are during the day.

Improved productivity

Mobile app providers typically analyze and, in turn, provide only the features and functionality most commonly used on a regular basis by mobile users. This translates into time saved because of easier and quicker navigation to features compared to, for example, more comprehensive desktop or Web use. Because users of workforce management apps are entering or reviewing information quicker, productivity improves.

Improved accuracy

Intuitively, data accuracy improves when information is recorded immediately. For example, employees recording daily activity during the day compared to recording daily activity at the end of the day results in improved accuracy. Because mobile devices are instantly accessible, users are more likely to record workforce management information on-the-fly than wait until the end of the day.

Improved workflow

Early ERP systems gained a reputation of forcing workers to change the way they do their jobs in order to improve the way information was managed. In many cases, this meant that productivity decreased along with employee job satisfaction. Mobile workforce management apps, compared to time clock technology, for example, accommodate the way workers already lookup information, communicate, and manage day-to-day interactions. Workflow and job satisfaction improves when apps accommodate the way workers are used to managing information.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN MOBILE WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Kronos anticipates a number of app improvements it will be making to mobile workforce management.

GPS technology

Kronos already employs GPS technology which can help prevent employees from 'phoning it in'. Many organizations need to verify that employees are at specific locations performing work to help ensure valid time recording and work performed. Kronos mobile apps capture and record punch location information. GPS technology helps organizations prevent payroll error because employees cannot create false records; in this case, indicating work performed on-site when they are not actually on-site.

Kronos believes that GPS geo-fencing technology will be useful to organizations by restricting, or not accepting, time records based on location. Kronos is developing capabilities that will allow managers to use geo-fencing to assign employees to work in specific regions based on their GPS location. Once these regions are defined, time entry can be denied or managers can be alerted when employees attempt to work outside of acceptable work locations.

Team and work detail tracking features

Initially, Kronos apps provide start and end time recording capabilities. However, Kronos is also developing features that will allow employees to enter work or 'job' detail information and 'crew' capabilities for managers to input start and end times for teams of workers with one transaction.

CONCLUSION

While mobile workforce management apps like Kronos apps provide many benefits, other options like Web, time clock, and IVR methods exist. Before deploying mobile workforce management apps, organizations need to consider their needs as it relates to employee and manager use, security, cost, connectivity, and support.

That being said, Nucleus found that mobile workforce apps provide a method, otherwise not possible in many cases, for remote workers to manage work time and schedule information. As a result, organizations can improve workforce productivity, increase employee satisfaction, and deploy efficient workforce management functionality by using mobile apps like Kronos's.