Section 2: Week 4: Mobile and Business

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# Mobile Devices and Business

It is a commonplace to see mobile devices making an appearance from the lowly doorman to the top executives of businesses. They enable every member within the organization to always be connected and gain insight into its ever-changing dynamics. It is easy to forget how much progress has been made integrating mobile into business, just in a couple of decades.

When Apple released the iPhone in 2006, the concepts became mainstream, and they successfully monetized the momentum into the 2011 release of the iPad. Numerous case studies were published shortly afterward, describing the improvements to employee satisfaction.

While the technical challenges of connectivity, security, and synchronization are solved, there are lurking problems when aligning the business strategy to the technology (Gruhn & Kohler, 2007). The interrelated domains of (1) service, (2) technology, (3) organization, and (4) finance often cause the misalignments (Haaker, Faber, & Bouwan, 2004). When communication between these departments breaks down, then the solution might not address the original problems.

A great example can be seen with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), as they launched a one billion dollar program to provide 600,000 students with iPads (Tynan-Wood, 2016). The ambitious plan experienced technical, procedural, and political complexities. Due to the program rolling out everywhere at once, several teachers did not have a strategy to align the lesson plans with the technology. Other schools report network outages caused an increase in required bandwidth and related infrastructure. It did not help that some interviewed students expressed more interest in surfing the web than doing their homework.

The leadership team of LAUSD received criticism for these issues; however that is not to say the program was wrong. Through a series of risk mitigation steps such as (1) reducing the blast radius; (2) providing teacher training and support staff; and (3) capacity planning across secondary systems—they could have improved the overall success of implementation (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2015). There would have been fewer missteps, and the program would be a model for every other school district copied.

Other studies have focused on smaller-scale implementations that encompass dedicated office locations (Hess & Jung, 2012). Hess and Jung measured the impact caused by providing twelve staff members with iPads. They reported that (1) response times decreased; (2) joy of use increased; and, (3) more notes were recorded. However, the staff experienced issues around (1) app user experience; (2) data entry (no keyboard) scenarios; and (3) some websites were difficult to navigate.

Additional thoughts and considerations are required to address knowledge gaps in both use cases. Consider the small study that suggested iPads improved note-taking during meetings. Was this because of (a) that specific technology or (b) merely a change in the process? A control group should be given paper and pen to determine. Similar, what value did those notes provide the group? If they are never consulted or shared, then perhaps an auto transcription service is a better solution.

The LAUSD case study relies on annodontal evidence and not empirical facts. The district administrators control both the device configuration and network infrastructure. They could collect telemetry around both the duration and the types of websites student are visiting. It would also be possible to collect available metrics for each networking device. These data points would paint a picture of the holistic state of the program.