How to reach your deskless workforce

Why it matters and what you need to make it happen

Teamvate

Don't leave your deskless workforce out in the cold

Will you be able to sleep at night as hackers become increasingly sophisticated and prey on the shadow IT of your deskless workers? Have you considered that this may be a direct result of you failing to give them a viable alternative? What would happen if your employees missed out on critical information because of inefficient communication processes? And how can you expect them to do their best and remain loyal in the face of competition if they aren't engaged?

You should be concerned about all these issues if you aren't reaching your deskless workforce, but why does it seem so difficult? Well, for years we've been building communication tools, processes and work environments all centered around working at a desk in an office. But these fail to address the needs of deskless workers, leaving them out of the loop. In the past, this was inevitable – but it's not 1990 anymore!

With the latest technology, employees should be able to stay easily and securely connected anytime and anywhere. And yet deskless workers are still being left out in the cold of their company's communications for reasons as mundane as not having a corporate email address or a compatible OS.

However, all is not lost. You can easily reach your deskless workers if you go about it the right way. Start by taking a closer look at what they want and introduce a solution tailored to their specific needs, like an employee app. Reaching them will enable you to achieve substantial productivity gains that will do wonders for your bottom line.

Contents

Three consequences of failing to reach deskless workers

The security stakes are rapidly getting higher, and failure to address the needs of deskless workers will only get costlier. For example, mobile security vulnerabilities are now easier to exploit. Employee expectations for timely and efficient communications are also mounting, especially as younger generations used to instant gratification and fast technology enter the workforce. In addition, the increasingly competitive atmosphere makes high employee engagement more crucial than ever.

1. Security threats and compliance nightmares

One in three organizations suffered data breaches due to mobile devices – the Verizon Mobile Security Index 2019

What do deskless employees do when their employer doesn't help them communicate? They help themselves – by bringing their own mobile devices and apps to work. As different groups of employees use different apps, the total number of apps skyrockets, increasing complexity and making compliance even harder. These rogue devices and apps are a form of shadow IT that makes it very difficult for companies to identify, manage and address security risks.

One third of security breaches will be caused by shadow IT – Gartner

Without a centrally managed communications interface for deskless employees, like an employee app, former employees may retain access to data indefinitely. In fact, IS Decision's survey "A study of insider threat personas" found that as many as one third of former employees still have access to the company's data after leaving. What happens if these employees share your data with a competitor to give it an edge or leak embarrassing internal information meant to be confidential to the mass media? This is why you'll want a solution that makes offboarding clearer and easier.

2. Stressful changes and communication mishaps

Why make everyone reinvent the wheel instead of learning proven ways of working from others?

If your deskless workers continue using different apps, they'll all end up working in silos. The right hand won't know what the left is doing. This prevents groups of employees from learning from other's experience in similar situations and denies them equal opportunities to access the same company-wide information at the same time. This can be disastrous in the context of change management, when it's essential for everyone to be on the same page and working in line with management's goals.

Projects are 6 times more likely to succeed with excellent change management than with poor change management – "The Correlation Between Change Management and Project Success" by Prosci

A lack of coordination in communications can also make it harder for deskless workers to find the right information at the right time. For instance, when deskless workers show up at the wrong time or location because they didn't receive the schedule change is a lose–lose situation for them and the company's productivity. And what about changes in working methods, new regulations and new certification requirements? Inefficient communication processes like these take up unnecessary time and effort, draining your deskless employees of efficiency, motivation and engagement.

3. Poor engagement and no control

Failing to reach your deskless workers is a major reason for poor engagement, and this compounds all the previous problems. Employees who are not engaged are more likely to use shadow IT and exploit the company's data after leaving the company. They are also less likely to respond well to changes and communication mishaps.

Higher engagement = better bottom line

- The behaviors of highly engaged business units result in **21% greater profitability**[1]

- Companies with an average of 9.3 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee **outperformed the competition in EPS by 147%**[2]

- Companies with the best corporate cultures had **682% revenue growth**[3]

1 "The Right Culture: Not Just About Employee Satisfaction" by Jim Harter and Annamarie Mann for Gallup 2 "How Employee Engagement Drives Growth" by Susan Sorenson for Gallup
3 "Corporate Culture and Performance" by John P. Kotter and James L. Hesket

### Organizations with the most engaged employees achieve
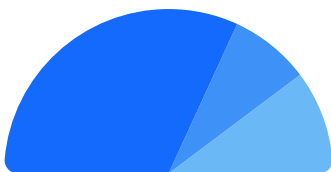
65% greater share-price increase
15% greater employee productivity

"Best Small and Medium Employers (BSME) in Canada Study."
Cited in "Engaging Employees" by Shelley Pleiter

Engagement has also been shown by several studies to have a direct correlation with the bottom line in terms of greater profitability, earnings per share, revenue growth and employee productivity. But without a centrally controlled method of communication, like an employee app widely adopted by deskless workers, you have little to no way of measuring and driving engagement or controlling how your employees experience your brand. How would you find out what percentage of employees read corporate messages, are invested in meeting goals, use communication tools and experience your brand positively?

Don't leave your employee experience to chance.
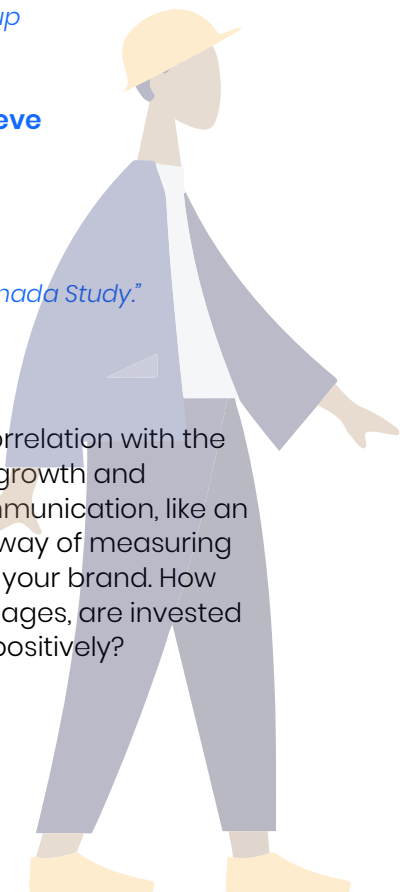
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What deskless workers want

If you could go out and survey your own deskless workers over time, that would surely give you some fantastic insights. You could pick their brains on questions like what kind of information they want more or less of, when and how they want to see it and what they feel would improve their experience. Luckily, you don't have to wait to gain some valuable insights thanks to the survey of deskless employees conducted by internal communications agency tribe.

Deskless workers tell it like it is

- **72%** called communication from top management important
- **84%** said they do not get enough information from the top
- **38%** take all corporate comms with a grain of salt
- **84%** feel change management comms are handled poorly
- **22%** feel their job is important to company vision
- **10%** feel strongly connected to the company
- **66%** want training
- **53%** want online tools

All figures above from "Non-Desk Communications" by Tribe

"Make our concernes a priority."

"Tell us more."

"*Be respectful.*"

"Just keep it real"

"Be honest about the issues."

It is clear from Tribe's research that deskless employees want better, more credible and more frequent communications, especially in the context of changes. Many do not see how they fit into the company's vision and feel no strong connection to the company, which are signs of poor engagement. At the same time, more than half would like to have more training and online tools. These issues are just what a communication, learning and process automation solution like an employee app can help with.

What you need to make it happen

To meet the needs of deskless employees, management needs a more effective means of communication than passing messages down the chain from manager to manager, posting messages on the wall or blasting emails, especially considering that some deskless workers do not even have a corporate email address. In addition to serving as an effective means for top management to communicate with deskless employees, an app with learning capabilities and tools like streamlined approval processes may be just what your employees are clamoring for. But be careful how you implement this or else you'll hardly reach anyone.

Anytime, anywhere

Most deskless workers use their personal devices for work, so make it official with a BYOD policy and ensure your solution is BYOD-ready. They also need to be able to access information anytime and anywhere, regardless of operating system (IOS or Android) or internet connection. To move away from email, which does not align with the needs of deskless workers, turn to mobile-based push messaging and file sharing instead.

Tailored information

However, not just any push messaging setup will do, as out-of-the-box messaging apps are liable to bombard the user with notifications that may not always be relevant. The experience needs to be tailored to deskless workers' needs. Henry Albrecht, who was interviewed in "3 Communication Strategies to Engage Your Deskless Workforce", gave the following examples of how messages need to be relevant, add value and fit into the busy lives of deskless workers:

"Floor workers might need to see an updated safety procedure during a 20-minute lunch break, while a barista might want an update on same-store performance while riding the bus to their next shift."

Albrecht also points out that, to drive engagement, communications must be both personal and intuitive by delivering value in 15 seconds or less. To achieve this, the entire information flow should be tailored to the needs of each individual employee, making it easy for them to find what they need when they need it.

Adoption and measurement

No matter how good a solution you come up with, it won't matter if you can't get everyone to use it. Try using a branded app featuring your company's brand name and logo instead of some third-party vendor your employees couldn't care less about. This can go a long way toward driving adoption by making employees feel a sense of pride and ownership. And don't drop the ball after initial implementation -- follow up with surveys to measure the adoption rate and impact while finding potential for improvement, but make sure they are short, as your respondents don't have all day to respond.
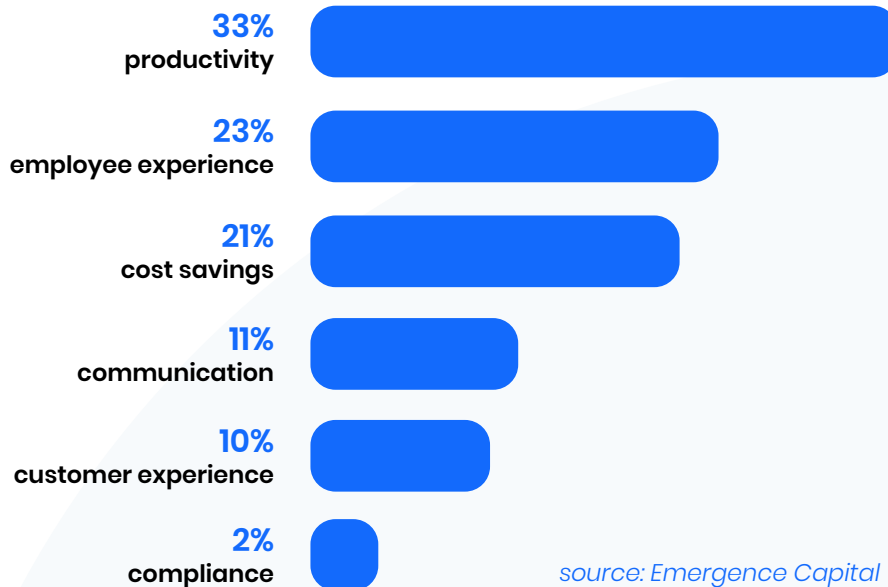
Checklist to reach everyone

If you want to reach your entire deskless workforce, use the following checklist to ensure the solution you implement brings everyone onboard:

☐ Push-based messaging and file sharing

☐ OS-agnostic

☐ Offline support

☐ BYOD-ready

☐ Tailored information flows

☐ Branded

The key to long-term value creation

Top reason for investing in deskless technology

33%
productivity

23%
employee experience

21%
cost savings

11%
communication

10%
customer experience

2%
compliance

source: Emergence Capital

Businesses are increasingly investing in technology for deskless employees to boost productivity and communication, enhance employee and customer experiences, cut costs and improve communication. If you succeed in reaching your deskless employees, you'll have laid a solid foundation to make ongoing progress on all those fronts. But most importantly, your employees will be motivated to do their very best work and be empowered to outperform your competitors and create lasting value.

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