MIS Quarterly Executive

Volume 11 | Issue 4 Article 1

12-1-2012

Editors' Comments

Carol V. Brown
carol.brown@stevens.edu

Dorothy Leidner
dorothy_leidner@baylor.edu

Shan Pan
pansl@nus.edu.sg

Juliana Sutanto
jsutanto@ethz.ch

Editors' Comments

The proliferation of mobile technology is creating a highly mobile workforce in which the notion of work mobility wherein a worker spends a good deal of time travelling to meet with clients and business partners is shifting to a notion wherein the work itself travels, often accompanying the employee wherever the employee may be – at home, on vacation, out to dinner, at a sporting event. The very notion of what constitutes "work" and what constitutes "private life" are being continually renegotiated in today's world where individuals grapple with the expectation placed upon them by both employers and family that they be available anytime/anywhere.

Mobile technologies and the accompanying work mobility provide both benefits to individuals as well as strains on them. The individual benefits are typically framed in terms of accessibility to information, flexibility of work hours, and opportunity to collaborate, all of which might conceivably yield greater individual productivity. An individual's ability to quickly and readily gain access to important information for decision making is an oft-cited justification for anytime/anywhere access to corporate systems via a mobile device. And the flexibility of conducting in-office work on certain days or at certain times helps employees maximize their work time, avoiding long commutes in rush hour traffic. Flexibility of when and where work is conducted is related to the third benefit of collaboration. Mobile technology improves collaboration by allowing individuals to connect to distant teammates and important documents on a just-when-needed basis.

Together, these three benefits of *information accessibility, work flexibility,* and *collaboration* help make individuals more productive. Yet along with the much hyped benefits of mobile technology for individuals comes a downside: individuals may be unable to escape work, may experience such blurring of professional and private life that they are unable to function effectively in either, and may find themselves constantly distracted by their own accessibility as well as the availability of information.

The first two papers in our special issue explore the implications of mobility on workers: the first focuses on what can be learned from an extensive study of mobile IT workers, and the second captures learnings from the perspective of knowledge workers in general. In the first article, "Managing Employees' Use of Mobile Technologies to Minimize Work/Life Balance Impacts," co-authors Suprateek Sarker, Xiao Xiao, Saonee Sarker, and Manju Ahuja share insights into three perspectives of work/life balance (WLB) held by IT workers: work-life as separate domains, work-life as overlapping domains, and work-life as an integrated domain. Somewhat ironically, individuals in all three domains experienced stress, in part because they find themselves working for, or working with, individuals who do not share their WLB perspective. For example, individuals categorized as in the work-life "integrated" domain disliked having difficulties reaching those in the work-life "separate" domain during after-work hours, just as much as individuals in the "separate" domain disliked being disturbed by "integrated" colleagues outside of their preferred work hours.

In the second article, "Managing Mobile Technology: The Shift from Mobility to Connectivity," co-authors Kristine Dery and Judith MacCormick reveal how early adopters of mobile technology shifted their focus over a five-year period from purchasing mobile devices to enabling mobile connectivity, and the concomitant shift in emphasis from availability to connectivity. The authors identify four states of connectivity: hypo-connectivity, requisite connectivity, hyper-connectivity, and optimal connectivity. They suggest that knowledge workers need to be able to control their own level of connectivity in order for them to achieve optimal connectivity.

The authors of both of these papers discuss the organizational implications of individual mobility as well as the implications for the IT department. A common theme in the papers is that there is no one-size-fits-all mobility strategy. Instead, companies must allow for not only different devices, but also different approaches to mobility. Sarker et al. suggest that companies have the option of compensating employees for work-life encroachment, negotiating with them to reach a common expectation, integrating life opportunities into the work environment, and/or protecting employees from situations in which they must work with others who do not share their perspective of WLB. These

authors also suggest which strategies best match different individual WLB perspectives. Dery and McCormick likewise emphasize that mobile connectivity must be managed at the individual level--including individualized training, to customizable tools, to managing connectivity requirements according to work priorities rather than security concerns.

The third and fourth papers in our special issue focus on the organizational issues surrounding mobile technology and, specifically, the use of mobile technology to improve organizational performance. Just as individuals are learning to avail themselves of the opportunities of mobile technology and to cope with the side effects, organizations are learning to use mobility to create high performance workplaces and to enable green initiatives, all the while dealing with an array of important decisions such as which devices to support, how much security to require, how many devices per employee to allow, how to protect privileged information, which applications to whitelist or blacklist, and which enterprise applications to make accessible to mobile devices. These issues become even more pertinent with the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) trend. In 2011, Gartner predicts that by 2014, 90 percent of organizations will support corporate applications on personal devices.

In the third article, "Achieving High Performance in a Mobile and Green Workplace: Lessons from Microsoft Netherlands," co-authors Eric van Heck, Peter van Baalen, Nick van der Meulen, and Marcel van Oosterhout provide an in-depth case description of how Microsoft NL developed new ways of working using mobile technologies. The article describes how Microsoft-Netherlands overcame five challenges to transform itself into a mobile and green high performance workplace. The authors of this study also derive practical guidelines for CIOs who seek to implement new ways of working with mobile work technologies to meet high performance goals.

In the fourth and final article entitled "Increasing Organizational Performance by Transforming into a Mobile Enterprise," authors Stefan Stieglitz and Tobias Brockmann address the topic of how CIOs can successfully manage the transformation process to becoming a mobile enterprise with the goal of increasing organizational performance. Based on an online survey study from 192 CIOs and IT managers in German companies, the paper identifies how IT organizational performance can be enhanced through specific management activities within three processes: the mobile IT conversion, the mobile-use and competitive processes. The authors also provide specific recommendations for CIOs with a mobile enterprise transformation goal of increasing competitive organizational performance.

As a group, the four research articles in this issue reflect our editorial goal of working with authors to develop know-how through research into the best practices of how *individuals* and *enterprises* manage mobility for business value. It is our hope that the research findings and recommendations for IT executives offered in this special issue have the potential to be useful to IT and other business managers who face the challenging task of managing mobility in the workplace.

Dorothy Leidner (Dorothy_Leidner@baylor.edu)
Shan Pan (pansl@nus.edu.sg)
Juliana Sutanto (jsutanto@ethz.ch)
Guest Editors

My thanks to the *MISQE* Senior Editor Dorothy Leidner and other guest editors, Shan Pan and Juliana Sutanto, for serving as the pre-ICIS SIM Academic Workshop chairs one year ago, and then managing the peer review process for full papers by the workshop participants and other authors that led to the selection of the four research articles published in this December 2012 issue. For the "call for papers" for the 2013 special issue on the theme "How to Succeed in a World of Big Data," please see the announcement on our *MISQE* website.

As this issue goes to press, we also are very pleased to announce that the most recent ***MISQE* Impact Factor is 1.743.** This places us among the very top IS journals, and well above the median for all information science and library science journals that are indexed by Thomson Reuters.

Please join me in thanking all authors, reviewers, and editors who have made these achievements possible!

Carol V. Brown (carol.brown@stevens.edu)
Editor-in-Chief