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## Mobile Platform in the Workplace: The Next Generation Practice in Human Resource

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### Abstract

This research paper uncovers the practice and challenges of implementing mobile platform in the workplace. The key contribution of this research study will enlighten business community to be open to the use of this platform in order to transmit data and information that is vital for the organization. These transform both business and education in the next level which serve as a challenge for organizational development. This platform will continue to shape our business and education system as the next generation of tools for learning and development. In fact using this platform will provide foundation for efficient and effective organization.

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### 1. Introduction

The impact of mobile platform started to change how business and education works in the past 5 years. We've seen the evolution of the apps and mobile computing that powers business and educational technologies in the process. These changes trigger many businesses to shift from traditional to computerized work-in process. The use of ICT (information, communications and technology) plays vital role in the workplace as it helps the daily work to be

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effective and efficient in timely manner. Many corporate and industry practitioners are able to realize the use of mobile platform as a tool for their business and communication needs. Perhaps these trends and updates in the practical side of human resource and business in general will continue over the years. Mobile platform is a very good tool in communication and of course in the workplace. This gives business certain degree of flexibility and mobility in performing their work assignment and tasks. Many businesses started to shift in the application of mobile technology in their workplace due to many known advantages like improving workplace communication, real time information and more. The power of information, communications and technology now a days is really powerful that we human are more dependent on it rather than we are controlling its usage.

## 2. Review of Related Literature and Studies

Globalization, technology and competition are some of the known factors affecting the work place including human resource practices. Diversity is now one of the most challenging aspect in the workplace as many company organizations started to implement diversity management in terms of job opportunities. Mobile platform is becoming a global trend in its few years since its introduction. Many organizations started to use this platform in order to take advantage of its mobility and awareness. The role of information, communications and technology in the workplace started to change and affect our daily lives. We became more technology oriented rather than system oriented in solving key issues in the organization.

Approximately 27% of the world population now have access to smartphones and 40% have phones with internet data according to study conducted by phonecount.com (2014). The figure started to increase every minute and seconds because of many mobile devices offered in the market place. As a result many organizations started to venture in these technological trends and incorporate such platform in the workplace. Ninety-four percent (94%) of adults have a mobile phone and 51% have smart phones in a report conducted by the Communications Market (2013). By year 2016, it is predicted that 90 % of adults in the United Kingdom will have smart phones. While in the United States over 91% of the population already have 3G/3.5G/4G LTE subscription. In the case of United Arab Emirates there are approximately 73% of the population using smartphones/mobile devices based on a survey conducted by e-marketer, February 2015 survey. UAE tops the list in the Middle East and North African region in the Mobile Phone user penetration(%of population) with 69.9%.

Table No. 1: Mobile Users in MENA Region

Mobile Phone users Millions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nigeria	82.3	87.8	93.5	98.9	103.4	107.9
Egypt	58.1	59.7	61.2	62.7	64.0	65.3
South Africa	31.7	32.3	32.9	33.4	33.8	34.2
<b>UAE</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Other	341.3	374.9	409.9	489.1	489.1	528.0
Middle East & Africa	534.5	577.0	620.7	668.5	715.4	761.3
<b>Mobile Phone users penetration (% of population)</b>						
Country/Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UAE	69.9	71.4	72.7	73.7	74.1	74.5
Egypt	68.2	68.7	69.2	69.6	69.9	70.1
South Africa	65.2	66.8	68.1	69.0	69.8	70.6
Saudi Arabia	64.4	66.5	68.6	70.5	72.1	73.6
Nigeria	47.6	49.6	51.5	53.2	54.3	55.2
Other	34.0	36.5	39.0	41.8	44.5	47.0
<b>Middle East &amp; Africa</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>46.6</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>50.9</b>
Note: Individuals of any age who at least one mobile phone and use the phone(s) at least once per month, numbers may not add up to total due to rounding.						
Source: eMarketer, December 2014						

Its closest neighbour Saudi Arabia, has 64.4% and Egypt being one of the biggest countries in the North African region has 68.2% (2<sup>nd</sup> in the survey). United Arab Emirates has a population of approximately 9.1 Million (2013) and more than 60% are expatriates.

Evidently, people have become reliant on technology as evidenced by the increasing pattern of the use of mobiles over the years. This pattern can also be seen how the workplace have transformed considerably. Mobile platform can be defined as a tool or gadget that will help management professional in their workplace due to its mobility and convenient to use. The use of tablets, digital dashboards, QR (quick response) apps are among the practices in many organizations today. Mobile platform revolutionized existing practices in HR because of its nature that is effective and efficient. Many organizations started to use mobile platform as part of tracking and monitoring HR activities like performance and compensation of employees. In some cases, mobile devices is given as part of the welcome gift for new employees during their job orientation and induction.

Results of a study to find out the state of workforce technology adoption involving 2,000 US information workers or *iworkers* of companies having 100 or more employees (Forrester, 2009) revealed the following trends: (a) the top three productivity tools used wereV emails (57%), word processing (16%), and spreadsheets (14%); (b) 1 in 10 use mobiles for work, but 1 in 3 agreed that they use their personal mobiles for work purposes; (c) 1 in 4 use Web conferencing and 1 in 5 use team sites, but emailing remained as the de facto collaboration tool; in terms of their use of intranet or employee portals; 70% visit, where 43% do it on a daily basis and the search resource was most commonly used, followed by information about performance reviews and personal goals and; 14% of Gen X professionals use social technologies in the workplace and 59% use social technologies at home whereas the Gen Y used mobile texting as their method of communication and 51% use their personal mobiles for texting at work.

In an increasing mobile workplace, the knowledge and skills using various applications and complex functionalities have become essential. Using a survey of smartphone users in South Korea (having one of the highest smartphone penetration rates) revealed that gender, age, personal innovativeness, and consumption skills were significant predictors of the frequency of use of various applications and functionalities of the mobile devices (Jung, J., Chan-Olmsted, S., & Kim, Y., 2013). In terms of the usage of mobile devices for business or personal use, research indicated that 44% across 16 countries use both for business and personal use, and only 4% strictly for business use only (Dobson, 2010).

A survey conducted to 160 mid-market organizations in the UK to find out the employees' interest in using mobile technologies in the workplace, indicated the following trends (M2 Presswire [Coventry], 13 Oct 2014): (a) sixty-two percent wanted to see greater investment in mobile technology in order to access and manage information related to HR, finance and other critical business systems; (b) fifty percent prefer to submit holiday requests vis smartphones whereas only 20% are able to do so; (c) fifty percent would like to report absences using their mobile devices, whereas only 21% are currently using this option; and while traveling, forty four per cent of respondents preferred an option where they can have approval of expenses; (d) the demand to via mobile devices in a professional capacity is just partially met where only 7% of finance staff can access customer and supplier data; 9% are able to retrieve key business data and metrics; and one in 5 HR staff can access their organization's core HR systems.

As studies indicate, use of mobile devices have exponentially increased as work environments have become technology-driven. Trends highlight the adoption of various applications and functionalities for HR practice. HR should take the lead role when it comes to policies and procedures related to the use of mobile devices in the workplace, as stressed "don't start with technology, start with HR and let that drive IT policies."

### 3. Research Methodology

The research study focuses on the usage of Emails and SMS (text messages) with respect to their work place practice. It is now a common practice in most organization not only in the Middle East but in other parts of the world the use of mobile platform as a next generation practice in human resource and business in general. Based from our studies it is only the beginning as mobile platform started to evolve more than the usual usage of ICT in the workplace. The nature and scope of the work is becoming more demanding and this require new methodologies and platforms.

The study is descriptive in nature. A survey questionnaire was designed to achieve the purpose of the study. The employees' personal information such as age, job category, and number of years of service were asked and respondents were assured of anonymity. The survey are translated in the language of the respondents to make-sure that questions are clearly understood and, pretested to see that instructions as well as items were clear for the target respondents. In the pre-testing, sample respondents were required to comment on the readability and clarity of the items in the questionnaires. Quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires had been tallied using the weighted means. This is to determine which values are rated as unimportant, of little importance, moderately important, important and very important. To determine the difference of the usage of emails and SMS (text messages) across the different variables namely age, job category, number of years of work experiences, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) had been utilized. The study had a total of 184 respondents.

The respondents in the study are working professionals and at the same time studying in the university level. Those working professionals had fresh insights of practices in the HR and importance of mobile platforms in the work place. Mobile devices have changed how HR professionals are doing their usual work according to a few of the respondents. Because of ICT the work in HR had become easier, faster and convenient. Also the mobile platform should be given restrictions as employees may play games or updates status etc in their social media accounts which will eat most of his/her time in the work place. Establishment of policies and procedures is highly suggested in this scenario.

Respondents agreed that the use of mobile platform is just a tool in HR and not the primary medium of delivery as it possess many limitations and restrictions. Mobile platform helps HR professionals in the quick retrieval and access of information. Still the investment thru this platform lies in the top management and IT if they are willing to evolve to this trends and practice in the workplace.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

To carry out the objectives of the research study, the obtained data were subjected to a number of statistical analyses using various tools as presented.

Table No. 2Summary of Means of the Importance of E-mails at Workvia Mobile Devices (platform) across Age Groups

Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Interpretation
21-25	3.80	1.14	38.79	Very Important
26-30	3.98	1.31	26.22	Very Important
31-35	4.52	0.87	26.08	Extremely Important
36-40	3.56	1.55	9.23	Very Important
Total	4.02	1.20	100	Very Important

Table No. 2 explains the distribution and importance of email according to respondent's age range from 21 to 40. A total of 150 males and 34 females took part in this study with 81.52% and 18.47% respectively. Age range 31-35 answered Extremely Important in the usage of email.

The result of one way ANOVA indicates that there is a difference in the perceived importance of emails across age groups, ( $F(3, 183) = 4.60, p < .01$ ). A post hoc Tukey test showed that only the age groups 21-25 differed significantly with 31-35 at  $p < .01$ ; and 31-35 with 36-40 at  $p < .05$ . This difference across age range may be explained as: the 21-25 ages professionals are entry level positions while 31-35 occupies supervisory to managerial position respectively.

Table No. 3 Importance of Emails at Workvia Mobile Devices(platform) across Experiences

Experience	N	Mean	Interpretation	Std. Deviation
2 or less	17	3.35	Very Important	1.27
2-5	58	3.97	Very Important	1.35

6-10	51	4.35	Extremely Important	0.89
11-15	30	3.97	Very Important	1.35
15 or more	14	4.29	Extremely Important	0.83
Full time student	14	3.71	Very Important	1.14
Total	184	4.02	Very Important	1.20

In terms of importance of Emails in relation to their work experience, the 2 or less years of work experience accounts to 9.23% had a response of very important. While the 6-10 years of work experience answered extremely important and those with above 15 years work experience answered extremely important accordingly. The research study concludes that higher work experience had an extreme usage and knows the value of Email in their workplace.

Result of the one way ANOVA clearly shows and supports Table No. 3 indicating that there is significant differences in the perceived importance of Emails across work experiences,  $F(5, 184) p=.05$ . A Post Hoc Tukey Test showed that only young professionals with 2 or less years of work experiences differed significantly with 6-10 years of work experiences at  $p=.05$ .

Table No. 4: Importance of Texting via Mobile Devices (platform) across Positions (Summary of Means)

Position/Level	N	Mean	Interpretation	Std. Deviation
Top Management	23	4.39	Extremely Important	0.84
Middle	18	4.17	Very Important	1.10
Supervisor	24	3.83	Very Important	1.01
Administrative	68	3.49	Very Important	1.18
Technical	10	4.00	Very Important	0.94
Others	41	3.90	Very Important	1.04
Total	184	3.83	Very Important	1.10

The Top Management has the highest responses in terms of importance of Texting across positions with 4.39 Arithmetic mean. Result indicates a One Way ANOVA showing that there is difference in the perceived importance of texting (SMS) across positions,  $F(5, 184)= 3.12, p<.01$ . A Post Hoc Tukey Test showed that only Top Management differed significantly with administrative at  $p<.01$ .

Top Management sees texting as extremely important while administrative staff sees texting as very important. Texting (SMS) to the top management serves as an important internal communication channel that delivers relevant and timely information to all its employees such as company events, product launch, schedule of meetings, etc. In some very urgent cases, they try to use the VOIP (voice over internet protocol) as a device in calling their counterparts/colleagues. The use of PBX and other technologies available are common to companies with strong IT infrastructure. However they have to identify which platforms to use so that it will be compatible to existing system and future upgrades. Both middle management and technical staffs rank 2nd and 3rd as they use texting in their operational and technical duties and responsibilities.

The use of email and text messages (SMS) are still primarily used in HR and business in general. However, in a few years' time, this practice may change rapidly because of the nature of competition and job requirements. The use of QR (quick response) and other scanning devices are already incorporated in mobile platform as plug-ins or additional features. In HR it is very important that this mobile platform will provide them the accuracy and speed of information that is needed in their work. The shift from traditional to digital to mobile platform has been the trends and updated in HR practice. However, ICT (information, communications and technology) still needs human intervention and decision. Nevertheless mobile platform help ease HR practitioners in organizing to do list or priorities in a given day.

## Impact in the Workplace: For Human Resource Practice

Many companies across Dubai being the centre of business and trade of United Arab Emirates provide many useful tools in their information, communications and technology. They are still in the adolescent stage in terms of technology usage as mobile applications and mobile versions are new trends and updates in the human resource practice. Based from random interviews of respondents they are dependent in the usage of mobile platform in their work place. We have seen that technology surpasses the traditional way of recruitment and hiring. It should be system oriented and not technology dependent as the case maybe. The uses of ICT (information, communications and technology) like email and text messaging revolutionize previous HR practices that is more on documentation and hard copy of pertinent documents related to application etc. With the use of mobile platforms the activities involve such as Emails and Text (SMS) message can be just a click away. It needs IT infrastructure and modernization in order to make it operational because it needs budget.

Middle East is the home of many expatriates around the world and they are mixed with local citizens in the work place. The use of ICT (information, communications and technology) plays vital role in company operations. Managing human relations is still the most important factor in HR practice and mobile platform is just a tool/gadget that helps practitioner in their day to day work. This trend will continue for years to come unless another technology will be introduced but mobile platform will still the delivery medium to be use because of its convenience, portability and ease of use. The power is in “your hands” as many HR practitioners are saying.

## 5. Conclusion

Traditional methods of communication is a thing of the past- the use of emails and text messages (SMS) via mobile platform evidently offers advanced computing capability and connectivity. As the study indicate the use of mobile platform as communication medium is already in the workplace across All age groups, years of work experiences and positions at all levels in the workplace.

Keeping up to date on vital information in the workplace and anywhere appears to be the reason why respondents use their mobile devices to access and/ send emails and text messages. Across age groups, age range 31 to 35 consisting of supervisors or area managers consider emails as extremely important using their mobile devices. The rest of the age groups 21 to 25, 26 to 30 and 36 to 40 find using mobile devices to access and / send e-mails as veryimportant. Respondents who have been working for 6 to 10 years and 15 or more years find use of emails as extremely important via mobile devices, whereas other respondents across work experiences consider usage of emails as very important. With the changing nature of the workplace, top management perceived the use of text messaging (SMS) as the fastest route to relay messages or quickest knowledge sharing tool to its entire staff. Across positions, the usage of text messages via mobile devices as a platform used is perceived as very important.

This research study makes significant contributions in HR practices and ICT (information, communications and technology) areas as a good synergy across disciplines. Mobile platform serves as key drivers for innovation in HR practices that will improve operations, processes and most of all it empowers both short and long term development goals of the company. Mobile platform will change how business works in the 21 century and beyond.

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