How a Mobile First Strategy Can Increase Employee Engagement

February 2014
In this white paper imgZine analyzed two of its internal enterprise apps to determine the engagement level of employees. It shows that engaging internal enterprise apps can help enterprises achieve their desired business outcomes. Today, engaged employees are more important than ever. They understand what it takes for a company to be successful and want to be involved in the organization’s everyday affairs. While internal enterprise apps offer a great opportunity to promote productivity and engagement, only a small number of companies have started to leverage their benefits.

imgZine’s data shows that employees are very loyal to their company, with 32% of employees visiting the app over 11 times. Furthermore, employees are engaged throughout the workday and want to stay up-to-date and connected even outside of working hours. While 39% of application visits occur during working hours, 61% of users visit their enterprise app before or after their workday. The visiting frequency is high (within 2.5 days), articles are read carefully (48.5% of viewed articles are read) and readership levels remain stable (the average session length is 18 minutes).

Data discussed in this paper also shows that relevant content recommendations have a positive impact on readership levels. While recommended articles are read by 75% of users, non-recommended articles are only read by 42% of users. Finally, results show that consumption patterns on tablets and smartphones are now more or less similar, suggesting that mobile device consumption patterns are no longer as clear-cut as they once were. Smartphones have become just as important as tablets to engage employees outside working hours, while tablets have become just as important as smartphones to engage employees during working hours.
1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders often say employee engagement is fully integrated into their organization’s lexicon. This is actually quite different in practice. Only 13% of employees across 142 countries have expressed that they feel engaged in their jobs (Gallup 2013).

While mobile enterprise applications offer a great opportunity to promote productivity and engagement, only a few companies are taking full advantage of the capabilities that mobile enterprise applications offer. This is interesting, because mobile browsing is projected to overtake desktop usage in 2014 (Richmond 2011) and the purchase of tablets by businesses will more than triple in four years, going from 13 million units in 2012 to 53 million units in 2016 (Gartner 2012).

The benefits of mobile adoption for businesses are plentiful when companies succeed in engaging their employees. ImgZine delved into employee engagement on mobile devices to identify these key benefits.

Figure 1: Mobile browsing is set to overtake desktop internet usage by 2014 (Richmond 2011), is your business ready to go mobile?
2. WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Employees can be happy, motivated, or engaged, but an optimal worker meets all three, says HR pro turned consultant Sharlyn Lauby (2012). Happiness is about satisfaction: are employees happy at work? Motivation relates to their expectations: are they getting what they expect in return for their efforts? Employee engagement, however, is different. Unlike happiness or motivation, engaged employees understand what it takes for the company to be successful. They want to be involved in the organization’s success and are willing to do what it takes to help their business get there.

Figure 2: The employee engagement concept.

From a physiological perspective, engaged employees work longer and have a better focus on organizational priorities than less engaged workers (MacCormick, J., Dery, K., Kolb, G. 2012). Engaged employees are also more productive - that is, if their organization provides the support, tools and technologies that they need.

While new technologies and devices enable us to be connected anywhere and anytime, organizations still keep a distance between the workspace and the outside world (Boeyink 2013). As a result, employees may not be able to tap into their full potential. They may feel less motivated and may lack the means to participate and communicate more openly with their colleagues. In other words, they may feel the need to be more connected.

3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

An organization’s greatest asset is its people, but in reality, this is only true when employees are fully engaged with their jobs (Gallup 2013). Moreover, success does not only depend on employees that deal directly with customers. Every worker is responsible for the customer experience. Research (Gallup 2013; Chui, M. et al. 2012) shows that employee engagement is strongly linked to business results that are essential to a company’s financial success. Work units in the top 25% of Gallup’s research database (2013) differ significantly from those in the bottom 25%.

Figure 3: Engagement’s effect on key performance indicators: median differences between top- and bottom-quartile teams (Gallup 2013).

As these results show, companies with a critical number of engaged employees surpassed their competition, compared with those that did not maximize their employees’ potential (Gallup 2013). Low engagement levels saw no competitive advantages, and disengagement levels are even worse: For the U.S. alone, it is estimated that active disengagement costs $450 billion to $550 billion per year. To sum up, engaged workers are most likely to drive the innovation, expansion and revenue that their organizations desperately need.
An Aberdeen Group study (2013) found significantly improved business performance outcomes for all respondents with a mobile software initiative (MSI). For instance, companies with a mobile app got over 50% higher numbers in employee satisfaction, workload completed on mobile, operational efficiency and employee productivity.

Despite these advantages, many companies still do not have a solid internal communications plan that incorporates mobile. In fact, companies often fail to promote internal communications altogether. According to Prescient Digital Media's social intranet study (2013), only 13% of employees participate in the social intranet on a daily basis, and 31% rarely or never do. Such results indicate that there must be a shift away from static, one-way communications towards a real-time and mobile dialogue. Two key digital developments strengthen this assumption: The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) movement and social media.

Today, leaders cannot avoid to bring enterprise communications to mobile. Employees will often bring their own smartphone and tablet with them, or companies will simply provide one or subsidize their purchase and use (Udell 2013). Moreover, as employees spend more time with their own mobile device in and outside the office, it becomes more important for companies to ensure that they are able to work effectively and securely without putting customers or business data at risk (Forrester 2013). By bringing enterprise communications to mobile, leaders can encourage all employees to use their own device while using a secure platform. This is important, because mobile devices will likely become the world’s primary Internet browsing tool by 2020.

Mobile devices are becoming a popular device for a diversity of work purposes for two main reasons. First, employees usually prefer to use their own device because they are often better than the devices provided by the company and they are able to use features that can improve their efficiency (Holtz 2013). Second, most people have an emotional attachment to their phones, and the feeling of being connected with others when they are on. When providing enterprise communications on mobile devices, employees might feel this emotional connectivity with their company as well.

According to Gallup (2013) “Mobile devices can be used to build a community where news, plans and other information can be shared among colleagues and is always available on everyone’s mobile device”. In addition, mobile devices offer multiple chances to grab the attention of workers while they are on the move to a customer, having a break or are waiting for someone at the office (DronaMobile 2012). Companies that positively engage their workers through a mobile application are able to reap a number of competitive advantages. The key to that advantage, however, is to ensure that employees are engaged users of the technology (MacCormick et al. 2012).
As told before, successful companies need to involve employees in their success. They need to provide the tools and knowledge for them to be successful, and start sharing information openly within their organization. This need for open communications is caused by digital developments such as social media. Customers expect brands to share everything and build a sense of community. Employees struggle with the same expectations with regards to their companies. However, social innovation is often not given enough attention within organizations, restricting employees’ sense of engagement and trust (Boeyink 2013).

Employees feel more connected to their colleagues when they are able to share company news - whether it is good or bad news. This is because when employees are properly engaged in company processes such as decision making and goal setting, they feel they are an important part of the organization (Boeyink 2013). They want to know what is going on and feel connected with their company. In other words, they need social innovation. There are two crucial factors to achieve this.

The first factor is transparency. What are managers doing? What do they think about a situation? Organizations using social software report that their company’s activity stream is popular among employees. Some people even compare this intranet activity stream with Facebook’s news feed. With employees constantly able to see what their colleagues are doing, they feel more connected, and as a result, get more engaged (Holtz 2013). Secondly, dialogues need to be encouraged for a longer period. After all, employee engagement is not a short-term initiative. Organizations cannot start to engage employees and then drop the initiative, because efforts will backfire and create employee estrangement (Drona Mobile 2012). This means companies should be actively involved, making the engagement of employees a priority.

While it is difficult to know everything that is going on within a company, mobile devices can help your organization achieve these two crucial engagement factors. With a mobile platform, employees can be invited for events, join discussions, give feedback, and more (Drona Mobile 2012).

6. THE BENEFITS OF AN ENTERPRISE NEWS APPLICATION

In sum, a mobile enterprise app enables companies to:

- Let employees work effectively and securely on their own device (BYOD); they work more effectively using the technology they feel more comfortable with (Gartner 2013).
- Maximize the potential of engaged workers and give employees the knowledge and tools they need to be effective (Gallup 2013).
- Create and facilitate a dialogue to achieve greater performance, increased revenue and higher productivity (Gallup 2013).
- Involve employees in their company’s success, because they feel the need to stay connected and share news with colleagues and customers before, during and after work (Boeyink 2013).
Mobile apps can significantly increase the engagement level of employees, but to make this happen, workers need to be engaged with technology. Several companies have emerged in recent years to help enterprises embrace new technologies in their communications mix.

imgZine, for instance, started a mobile platform for enterprises which produces smart and real-time news apps based on existing content. The platform is inspired by the success of social magazines like Flipboard, Pulse and Zite, as well as traditional print magazines. For example, readers can personalize their application and add or remove channels and sources. imgZine’s apps also recommend relevant and popular articles to users according to their preferences and reading behavior. This combination of social and personalized features translates into a more engaging experience for employees. But can we explain engagement in numbers?

imgZine analyzed two of its enterprise news apps (used for a company’s internal communications purposes) and compared these to imgZine’s external apps for enterprises and publishers. These external apps include imgZine’s insights apps, which are used by large enterprises to publish interesting market insights and content, and digital magazines and newspapers released by publishers.

This chapter will try to answer seven questions:

1) App loyalty: do users visit the app multiple times?
2) Are users engaged throughout the workday?
3) What is the frequency of app visits?
4) Do users merely browse or read content?
5) What is the average session length?
6) Do personalized features affect user engagement?
7) Do consumption patterns differ on tablets and smartphones?

Figure 6 shows app loyalty data for internal enterprise news apps, external enterprise news apps and publisher apps. While the last two categories appear to have similar percentages, these results are different for internal enterprise applications. Only a small percentage of users (20%) open the application only once and the retention rate is far higher than that of other applications. In fact, 32% of employees who start using the app seem to be loyal to their company app, visiting the app over 11 times.

The assumption is that employees want to stay up-to-date with their company before, during and after work when they are engaged with their company. But can this assumption be confirmed by imgZine’s internal news application? Figure 7 indicates that 39% of application visits take place during working hours. This percentage is actually higher for external enterprise applications and applications for publishers (47% and 49%, respectively). This means that users of internal enterprise applications spend more time outside working hours compared to external enterprise applications and applications for publishers (61% vs. 53% and 51%, respectively).
The data suggests two things. First, employees want to stay up-to-date and connected. Real-time communications are perfect to keep them informed and involved, regardless of their location or the time of the day. Second, employees are engaged throughout the workday. 61% of employee application visits occur outside working hours, implying that workers are engaged even after work.

### 7.3 WHAT IS THE FREQUENCY OF APP VISITS?

Employees feel the need to stay up-to-date with company news throughout the day. Therefore, it is not unusual to see that the average time between application visits will be lower for external enterprise applications and applications for publishers when compared to internal enterprise apps. This expectation is partly confirmed by imgZine’s data: internal enterprise applications are opened every 3.3 days, while external enterprise applications and applications for publishers are reopened every 14.9 days and 3.2 days respectively.

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<th>Internal enterprise apps</th>
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<td>Time</td>
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**Figure 8:** Average time between application visits for imgZine’s internal enterprise apps, external enterprise apps and apps for publishers.

### 7.4 DO USERS MERELY BROWSE OR READ CONTENT?

Articles on internal enterprise applications are read carefully. The average number of read articles per article view is 48.5%, which means almost half of a company’s articles are read by their employees. When looking at external enterprise applications and publisher apps, it can be seen that there are more users browsing through articles than actually reading them (48.9% and 73% vs. 41.1% and 27%, respectively). Applications for publishers show the lowest percentage of read articles. This should not come as a surprise, because internal and external enterprise applications have a certain “need to know” factor, while a digital magazine publishes “nice to know” content. Users might therefore be less motivated to read every article carefully. Instead, they will merely browse through the app and screen the articles.

**Figure 9:** Reading vs. browsing on imgZine’s internal enterprise apps, external enterprise apps and apps for publishers.

These reading behavior results taken from imgZine’s internal enterprise news apps are also confirmed by other data. For instance, the average amount of read articles and reading time does not decrease or increase over time. In fact, readership levels for these apps tend to remain stable. Applications for publishers show different results, because the amount of read articles will decrease if there is no marketing. Employees, on the other hand, will always feel the need to access key resources and participate in company dialogues. Enterprise news apps are simply essential for today’s fast-paced, ‘bring your own device’ era.
7.5 WHAT IS THE AVERAGE SESSION LENGTH?

Figure 10 shows the average session length for imgZine’s internal enterprise news applications and external applications for enterprises and publishers. External enterprise applications show the highest average session length, while internal enterprise news apps show the lowest average session length. The average session length of publisher apps is in between these two session lengths.

There appear to be two main reasons for the lower average session length on internal enterprise apps. First, many employees open their enterprise application during working hours to check news throughout the day, so they might spend less time in the application than users of the apps for external enterprises and publishers. Second, employees visit the app more frequently but since new articles are published less often, they tend to spend less time in the app.

7.6 DO PERSONALIZED FEATURES AFFECT USER ENGAGEMENT?

Employees will only be fully engaged when they are satisfied with the content that is being delivered. They won’t read articles that are not relevant, even if they feel the need to stay up-to-date with company news. But to what extent does relevant content affect user engagement? Does providing relevant content really lead to more read articles? imgZine analyzed the reading behavior of employees on tablets and smartphones to understand what they value and prefer.

In order to increase user engagement in enterprise news applications, imgZine developed a recommender tool in its applications that is geared to:

- Target specific content to employees and ensure that they are engaged
- Recommend articles according to reading behavior

The results of this recommender tool indicate that user engagement increases when companies provide relevant content to employees. Moreover, apps that display content according to employee interests are used for longer periods of time. As a result, these apps increase employee engagement and motivation.

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<td>External enterprise apps</td>
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Recommended articles are read by 75% of users

Non-recommended articles are read by 42% of users
7.7 DO CONSUMPTION PATTERNS DIFFER ON TABLETS AND SMARTPHONES?

It is widely held in the industry that tablet users tend to consume content in the early morning and late evening. Tablet users are also thought to consume content for longer periods of time, given the print-like reading experience offered by a tablet device. For instance, users might spend a considerable amount of time reading the news, checking websites and flipping through their digital magazines during breakfast or while they are sitting on the couch. This is different for smartphones owners, who allegedly “snack” on content during the day and especially in the early evening hours. Presumably, they browse through the latest news, fun facts, social media feeds and instant messages as quickly as possible. Does imgZine’s data on internal enterprise apps confirm these content consumption trends?

Consumption patterns on tablets and smartphones are thus not as clear-cut as they were before. Phablets, a combination of the smartphone and the tablet, might be a strong driver for this shift.

These insights indicate that while enterprise applications for tablets have always been the primary device to engage with employees before and after working hours, smartphones have become just as important and tablet usage has increased during working hours as well.

Figure 11: Consumption patterns of enterprise news apps on tablets and smartphones.

Surprisingly, imgZine’s internal enterprise apps show a different pattern. While content consumption on tablets still peaks in the early morning hours, it does not peak during the late evening hours. On the contrary, our results show that tablet users are active during the day, with usage peaks that are higher than those of smartphones between 7am and 12pm, and 3pm and 4pm. Content consumption on smartphones shows a peak from the late evening hours until the wee hours (from 5pm up to 5am), which is comparable to the previously mentioned content consumption trends on tablets.
Leaders are often looking for ways to improve the productivity of their workforce. By engaging them emotionally, pragmatically and socially, employee efficiency and retention can be achieved. According to imgZine's report, enterprise news applications can be the helping hand. First of all, the retention rate of enterprise apps is far higher than for other applications, with 32% of employees feeling loyal to their company and opening the app over 11 times. Engagement rates are also higher. Sixty one percent of application visits takes place outside the workplace and 39% of the visits occur during working hours, suggesting that employees are engaged throughout the workday and want to stay up-to-date and connected even after the workday is over.

With 2.5 days being the average time between application visits for enterprise news apps, their visiting frequency is also much higher than that of publisher apps and external enterprise apps. Furthermore, the contents of internal enterprise news applications are read most carefully. The average number of read articles per article view is 48.5%, so almost half of the articles are read by employees. Looking at the average session length, it shows that this length is shorter than that of external enterprise applications, but longer than that of publisher apps.

imgZine also found that personalized features in an enterprise news application lead to increased engagement levels. While non-recommended articles are read by 42% of users, recommended articles are read by 75% of users. It is thus important to target specific content to employees and recommend articles according to their reading behavior. Finally, results show that consumption patterns on tablets and smartphones are now more or less similar, suggesting that mobile device consumption patterns are no longer as clear-cut as they once were. Smartphones have become just as important as tablets to engage employees outside working hours, while tablets have become just as important as smartphones to engage employees during working hours.

Without hesitation, managers agree that retaining their best employees ensures customer happiness, high sales volumes and effective project planning. Then why wait to jump on the mobile bandwagon if there are engaging mobile applications that help you achieve your desired business outcomes?

ImgZine offers a platform for producing smart and real-time news apps on tablets and smartphones, based on existing content. The platform is inspired by the success of social magazines like Flipboard, Pulse and Zite, as well as traditional print magazines. For example, readers can personalize their enterprise news application and add or remove channels and sources. The app also recommends relevant and popular articles to employees according to their preferences and reading behavior. This combination of social and personalized features translates into a more engaging experience for employees.

Our Enterprise News app contains a variety of features, including:

- Security / Authentication
- Standardized API
- Connects existing intranets
- Connects internal social feeds
- Recommended articles
- Targeted content
- Offline reading
- Dashboard / Analytics

- Personalization
- Real time updates
- Multiple languages
- Feedback forms
- Polls / Questionnaires
- Notifications
- Push messages
- Beautiful design

The Enterprise News app allows to:

- Unlock corporate intranet news content
- Create a secure mobile platform
- Manage your app easily
- Connect your existing enterprise content systems
- Release your publication in multiple platforms: iOS, Android, Windows and (mobile) web
- Get a standardized solution
Unlock corporate intranet news content
imgZine's platform is equipped with a variety of content aggregation features, ranging from plugins for popular content management systems like Wordpress and Tumblr to RSS-feeds. An automatic content extraction feature for existing websites is also available.

Connect existing enterprise content systems
We integrate seamlessly with your intranet, so you can (re)use your existing data to deliver meaningful, real-time content experiences on mobile devices.

Release your publication in multiple platforms: iOS, Android, Windows, (mobile) web
We produce apps for all mobile platforms: iPad, iPhone, Android tablets and smartphones and mobile devices running on Windows 8. In addition, our enterprise news apps are available for the web. Our platform allows you to be visible anywhere and anytime.

Secure integration into the corporate ecosystem
Integration with your corporate ecosystem is available. This option is ideal for companies that want to optimize their intranet or other existing content sources for smartphones and tablets, and expose certain kinds of information to their employees - in either a general or role-based fashion. The imgZine platform uses several layers of security to protect your data. Our advanced authentication services ensure highly controlled access to your valuable content. Communication between our apps and platform draws on an SSL encryption to ensure that information does not get tampered with.

Great design and user experience
imgZine's branded mobile content apps are optimized for engagement and productivity, that's why we like to call them real time news apps. Our design specialists incorporate your existing house-style into the app, creating stunning visualizations that fit your corporate identity. But that's not all. We also study user reading behavior to understand your target audience's needs and further customize their reading experience.

Personalization, engagement and sharing
imgZine apps enable you to add or remove your own content sources and RSS-feeds, as well as create your own media channels. Our apps also offer several features for personalization, interaction and (social) sharing. Supported social features include comments, ratings, forms, polls and content sharing via email, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instapaper and Pocket. These features can be enabled or disabled according to your needs.

Insight and control
Delve into your users’ reading behavior and identify their content needs using our nifty analytics dashboard. We measure a wide range of metrics including:

- Unique visitors
- Number of app opened
- Usage patterns
- Engagement rates
- Reading times
- Trending topics
- Popular articles

We also enable you to control and prioritize the content in your app. You can highlight specific channels, articles or content sources and make use of push notifications.

Media Intelligence
Our real time social magazines are not only beautifully crafted, they are also geared for media intelligence. We developed state of the art algorithms that can help us deliver highly personalized content recommendations based on your end users’ reading behavior.

Full service - no fuzz
We take care of everything, from development to publishing in Apple’s App Store or Google Play. Our apps are always up-to-date. Our pricing model, based on an annual platform fee, includes all licenses, 2 yearly app updates and any necessary bug fixes.


ImgZine (2013). <www.imgzine.com>
Min, A. (2011). 26% of Mobile Application Users are Fickle – or Loyal [Internet].

Prescient Digital Media (2013). Social intranet study [Internet].


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