

COLUMNS

App agility: Why marketers need to empower employees with intelligent mobile apps

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **David Spear**



Speed and agility are vital to winning. Certainly, we see this in the world of competitive sports.

For example, a baseball player with the gift of speed can drag a bunt and earn himself a spot at first base. Likewise, when we open a publication – newspaper or online article – we see several headlines that highlight the importance of speed to market with respect to the launch of new products and services.

Yet, when it comes to developing empowering employee apps, companies still seem to struggle. Why is this?

It thing

As a consultant who works with some of the most respected Fortune 500 companies on the planet, I would like to share a few points of view from my travels and interactions with

companies:

First – and this should not surprise any of you – organizations are inherently still territorial with respect to functional silos of work such as sales, marketing and IT.

Yes, some companies have done yeoman's work to be more collaborative within functions. Many companies have torn apart their interiors to create open and collaborative environments.

These companies have spent considerable dollars to renovate their traditional offices to open environments.

Just last week, I was consulting with two companies who have created workspace that is eye-popping cool. Some companies have shoehorned small coffee shops in old offices or closet spaces. And others are displacing the mass-scale cafeteria in favor of a multi-retail village format – in various spots in their offices.

I like to think of this as a means of marketing personalization for the internal employee.

The bottom line is that these new digs around corporate campuses are a reflection of changing consumer behavior, and they do foster an atmosphere worthy of collaboration on corporate campuses.

Second – and this is really unfortunate in many businesses I see – the IT function still has not infiltrated into the lines of business as fast as it should.

The business side is spending digital dollars at a geometric rate compared with IT, but IT still operates in its traditional manner. This is a hotly debated issue in many companies today and rightfully so.

In my view, the traditional structure is a breeding ground for stagnation and inherently slows the agile, collaborative process.

In this environment, a company struggles with its digital innovation, especially, app development for its own employees.

Yes, you may see a few cool apps from a company on the consumer facing side, but if you were to look inward at engaging, empowering employee apps – more often than not – the cupboard would be bare.

Businesses need to pick up the pace.

Wired up

Think about this for a second. Most companies I consult with either issue their employees a smartphone or they allow employees to bring their own device (BYOD policy).

In either case, employees are using the latest device technology with the latest consumer-facing apps. Their personal use has created a high benchmark with respect to user experience. This does not go away when they walk in the company front doors. It stays with them.

Indeed, their last consumer-facing app experience becomes their next employee app expectation. And yet, when the employee starts to use official company-sponsored Web and mobile apps, the user experience is quite different.

Actually, there is a stark difference and it becomes a tale of two apps.

It should not be this way.

We need to flip this around and fast.

Fortunately, marketers are responding. Several have rewired the reporting relationships of chief information officers to chief marketing officers or created new chief digital officers to bridge the traditional divide between IT and marketing or inserted chief marketing technologist roles.

Where you see this happening, you see significant and speedy progress, and you will see a whole new era of enterprise apps that will bind traditional silos together, deliver incredible intelligence to employees and open new opportunities for revenue growth, cost-saving, and eco-partner sharing. The time is now. Is your organization app-agile?

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