INTERACTIVE SESSION   MANAGEMENT

Can You Run the Company with Your iPhone?

Can you run the company just by using your iPhone? Perhaps not entirely, but there are many business functions today that can be performed using an iPhone, iPad, or Android mobile device. Smartphones and tablets have become all-in-one tools that help managers and employees work more efficiently, packing a powerful, networked computer into a pocket-size device. With a tap or flick of a finger, these mobile devices can access the Internet or serve as a telephone, camera, music or video player, an e-mail and messaging machine, and, increasingly, a gateway into corporate systems. New software applications for document sharing, collaboration, sales, order processing, inventory management, scheduling, and production monitoring make these devices even more versatile business tools.

Network Rail runs, maintains, and develops the rail tracks, signaling, bridges, tunnels, level crossings, and many key stations for most of the rail network in England, Scotland, and Wales. Keeping trains running on time is one of its top priorities. To maintain 20,000 miles of track safely and efficiently, skilled workers must be equipped with appropriate tools and work across thousands of sites throughout the rail network, 24 hours a day. Network Rail uses a group of custom apps for its 22,000 iPhone and iPad devices to streamline maintenance operations, quickly capture incident data, and immediately share critical information.

Several apps help Network Rail improve railway performance and safety. The Close Call app helps employees report hazards as they are found so problems can be addressed quickly. The MyWork app gives maintenance teams all the information they need to start and complete repair tasks. The Sentinel app allows field managers to electronically scan ID cards to verify that workers are qualified to perform specific tasks.

The iPhone and iPad apps provide maintenance technicians with current technical data, GPS locations, and streamlined reports, replacing cumbersome reference books and rain-soaked paperwork that slowed the repair process. Many service calls start with hazardous conditions reported by Network Rail employees themselves. Rather than waiting hours to fill out a report at the depot, workers can take pictures of dangerous situations right away,

using the Close Call app to describe situations and upload photos to the call center. Once provided with the hazard's GPS coordinates, the call center will usually schedule repairs within 24 hours.

MyWork gives maintenance workers a simple overview of all of the jobs each team needs to complete during a specific shift. This mobile app clusters jobs by location, skills required, and opening and closing times. Using precise map coordinates, workers can find sites easily and finish jobs more quickly. By electronically delivering daily job schedules to over 14,000 maintenance staff members, MyWork has enabled them to complete over a half a million work orders to date while minimizing interruptions.

British Airways is the largest airline in the United Kingdom, with operations in more than 200 airports worldwide. The airline has found many ways to use the iPad to improve customer service and operational efficiency. The airline has created more than 40 custom apps for over 17,000 iPads for its workforce that have transformed the way it does business.

Unforeseen disruptions can create long lines of passengers seeking flight information and rebooking. The FlightReact app used by British Airways mobilizes agents to scan a boarding pass, review the customer's booking, look up alternate flight options, and rebook and reticket passengers—all within four minutes. iBanner allows agents to identify passengers transferring onto a specific flight, while iTranslate enables staff to communicate easily with travelers speaking any language.

Inside the airport, iPads and iPhones communicate with low-energy wireless Bluetooth signals from iBeacon, notifying customers of Wi-Fi access, gate locations, and flight updates. Beyond the terminal, mobile apps are helping British Airways to improve the aircraft turnaround process. British Airways has more than 70 planes at London Heathrow Terminal, five turning around at once, and each requiring a team of around 30 people. To shorten and streamline this process can generate huge business benefits.

Loading luggage and cargo onto an aircraft is one of the most complex parts of the turnaround process, requiring detailed communications between the turnaround manager (TRM), who coordinates and manages the services around the aircraft during

departure and arrival, the offsite Centralized Load Control (CLC) team, and the pilot. With iPads running the iLoad Direct app, turnaround managers are able to monitor the aircraft loading process and share data with pilots and back-office staff in real time. TRMs can receive and input real-time data about the aircraft load's contents, weight, and distribution. These data are essential to help the pilot calculate the right amount of fuel and position the plane for take-off. By streamlining communications between the ground crew, the CLC team, and the pilot, iLoad Direct and iPad speed up the pace at which aircraft become airborne. These mobile tools have helped British Airways achieve an industry-leading benchmark for aircraft turnaround.

In addition to facilitating managerial work, mobile devices are helping rank-and-file employees manage their work lives more effectively. Shyft is one of several smartphone apps that allow workers to share information, make schedule changes, and report labor violations. Thousands of employees at chains like Starbucks and Old Navy are using these apps to view their schedules and swap shifts when they've got a scheduling conflict or need extra work.

Sources: "British Airways: Transforming the Travel Experience from Start to Finish," *Apple at Work*, www.apple.com, accessed February 7, 2018; www.networkrail.co.uk, accessed September 2, 2018; "Network Rail," *iPhone in Business*, www.apple.com, accessed January 4, 2017; and Lauren Weber, "Apps Empower Employees, Ease Scheduling," *Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 2017.

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of applications are described here? What business functions do they support? How do they improve operational efficiency and decision making?

2. Identify the problems that the business in this case study solved by using mobile digital devices.

3. What kinds of businesses are most likely to benefit from equipping their employees with mobile digital devices such as iPhones and iPads?

4. One company deploying iPhones has stated, "The iPhone is not a game changer, it's an industry changer. It changes the way that you can interact with your customers" and "with your suppliers." Discuss the implications of this statement.