# The Rise of the Responsive Employee Experience

How the savvy use of responsive design supports an engaged workforce

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern workers expect the same flexibility and convenience in their professional lives as they have in their personal lives. Sadly, business technologies have historically failed to deliver on this expectation. Organizations then turn to HR professionals and managers to fill the gap, but they can only be in so many places at once. The end result is a lackluster employee experience that causes challenges across the employee lifecycle, from recruitment to retention to performance and more. Technology is a major component of the employee experience and being able to deliver well-designed solutions where and when the workforce needs them is essential to engaging your company's most important resource.

When organizations began implementing HCM solutions, the main objective was to automate manual tasks and improve efficiency. Less emphasis was put on using HCM technology to improve employee productivity or work toward organizational goals. But as the business environment has become more complex and the capabilities of technology have evolved dramatically, priorities have also shifted.

In a mere 10 years, we've gone from a world with no apps to BlackBerries and PDAs to smartphones, tablets, and wearables. And just as static websites have evolved into dynamic sites, traditional mobile apps have grown into progressive web apps. As software has migrated to the cloud, users' expectations for what now constitutes a positive technology experience are nearly unrecognizable from the early days of accessing a company's site on a mobile phone.

## LEARNING FROM THE SUCCESS OF COMMERCIAL APPS

Employees now expect the same delightful, engaging experiences they have with personal apps from the technology they need to use in their professional lives. Prioritizing ease of access, usability, and flexibility, today's workers are demanding intuitive, responsive solutions that contribute to a more productive, engaged work experience.

**48 percent of surveyed employees** wish that their workplace technology performed the same way as their personal technology.[1]

> *"The problem is that your employees have grown accustomed to having information. They can get answers to anything. If they need to fix something, they can watch a tutorial on YouTube. If they want to know how many kilometers are in a mile, they can Google it (the answer is 1.6, FYI). But what happens when they show up to work each day? Chances are they find themselves in the dark, with little access to the relevant information necessary to enable success."*
>
> **John Frehse,**
> **Senior Managing Director, Ankura**
> **Workforce Institute Advisory Board**

[1] Coleman Parkes Research (November 2017), 49, sponsored by Kronos.

Delivering a consumer-grade, responsive HR experience to your employees is a must-have in today's competitive employment environment. With a diverse workforce that includes remote employees, contractors, gig workers, and more, responsive HCM solutions let you reach and engage workers — whether they're in a traditional office, coffee shop, vehicle, or working on site. When all employees have access to modern, flexible solutions to common HR questions and problems, organizations can realize demonstrable increases in productivity and engagement. For example:

- Deskless workers, like those on a manufacturing floor or in retail locations, can seamlessly access pay, benefits, time, performance, and other types of key information right from their personal devices, helping them feel connected to their jobs no matter where they are.

- Hourly employees feel empowered to influence their own schedules through shift swaps, coverage requests, and open shift requests — allowing them to claim options in ways that don't require managers or HR professionals to be middlemen, resulting in fast, smooth approvals of changes.

Giving employees convenient access anytime, anywhere to key processes like benefits enrollment, direct deposit, timesheet submission, and vacation requests allows them the flexibility to make requests and submit important information as it becomes relevant, rather than having to wait for access at the office. This is especially valuable when employees don't have computer access at work.

Managers can quickly get actionable, visual displays of key workforce metrics, letting them catch and address changes quickly and predict workforce trends before they occur. And HR can focus on strategic rather than administrative tasks, aligning with business goals and pushing forward innovative employee programs rather than becoming mired in approvals and paperwork.

> *"Most employees now use mobile devices to access HR-related information including benefits, time tracking, performance data, training programs, and company news. Instead of insisting employees come to you, you must go to them — offering 100 percent of your content on all types of mobile devices and a variety of HR services via custom company apps. Recruiting websites and your application submission process should be mobile-optimized, offering all necessary functionality and support."*
>
> **Alexandra Levit, Business/Workplace Author,**
> **Speaker, Consultant, and Futurist**
> **Workforce Institute Advisory Board**

## WHAT IS RESPONSIVE DESIGN?

Before we go further, let's define responsive design. Simply put, it's a way of building web pages and browser-based applications that automatically detect screen size and resolution and transform to provide the optimum viewing experience. The idea is to make these sites as easy as possible to navigate, no matter which device the user is using — smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop. On mobile devices, information has to fit in smaller boxes without losing any meaning. And developers need to consider the nuances of what users want on their mobile devices versus what they want when browsing on their laptops.

Just how important is a responsive employee experience? The numbers might surprise you.

*People take action when you put* **information in formats they want to access.**

- Workers at technology laggard organizations are 450 percent more likely to want to leave than workers at tech leaders.[2]
- 57 percent of users won't recommend a business with a poorly designed website on mobile.[3]
- 64 percent of global consumers claim that their mobile devices make them more productive at work.[4]
- 88 percent of consumers who search for a type of business on a mobile device call or go to that business within 24 hours,[5] while 8 in 10 stop engaging with content that doesn't display well on their device.[6] What does that mean for HR software? People take action when you put information in formats they want to access.
- Manufacturing plants with higher levels of engagement have 75 percent fewer quality defects and 26 percent fewer safety-related workers' comp claims.[7] Responsive design boosts engagement by giving deskless workers easy access to HR solutions.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RESPONSIVE HCM SOLUTION

Having a responsive employee experience is one of the most effective steps you can take to provide the level of flexibility and consumer-grade usability that your employees expect, boosting their engagement while also paving the way for future enhancements. Three key priorities to consider when implementing a responsive employee experience are simplifying and streamlining tasks, empowering employees, and keeping your employee experience unified.

[2] HRDive, *Outdated workplace tech can hurt retention* (July 2018), found at
https://www.hrdive.com/news/outdated-workplace-tech-can-hurt-retention/526724/.

[3] Sweor, *13-Mind-Blowing Statistics About Responsive Web Design in 2018* (December 2017), found at
https://www.sweor.com/responsivewebdesign.

[4] Aruba Networks, *Are You Ready for #GenMobile?*, 7, found at
https://www.arubanetworks.com/pdf/solutions/GenMobile_Report.pdf.

[5] Sweor.

[6] Ibid.

[7] SearchHRSoftware, *Why mobile apps are key to engaging deskless workers*, found at
https://searchhrsoftware.techtarget.com/feature/Why-mobile-HR-apps-are-key-to-engaging-deskless-workers.

By accounting for the varying needs and priorities of the subsets of your employee population you can **improve the employee experience and the bottom line.**

> *"Student workers are 80 percent of our workforce. They change addresses frequently, causing significant problems getting paychecks processed and delivered efficiently, accurately, and on time. Paychecks were sent to incorrect addresses, employees got paid late, and payroll was forced to issue checks "on-demand." After implementing employee self-service, address changes are easy and immediate, paychecks are delivered on time, and payroll and HR spend virtually no time on rework."*
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> **Dennis Miller, Chief Employment Officer**
> **Cal Poly Pomona Foundation**
> **Workforce Institute Advisory Board**

## SIMPLIFY AND STREAMLINE TASKS

Simplifying and streamlining tasks is central to creating a responsive employee experience. Whichever device is being used, it should be easy for employees to find the specific, day-to-day actions they need to complete, and there shouldn't be any confusion about which area of the app does what or how to get there. By intuitively separating tasks, designing clear areas to go to when completing a specific item, and building links between related tasks, you can ensure that users move easily through solutions.

Remember too that different groups need different things. Contractors and gig workers have different needs than traditional employees, as do salaried vs. hourly employees, managers vs. staff, or even part-time vs. full-time workers. A configurable home screen that highlights relevant tasks for users when they log in can increase productivity and make employees feel valued and recognized. By accounting for the varying needs and priorities of the subsets of your employee population you can improve the employee experience and the bottom line.

> *"Connected, engaging HCM technology empowers HR to orchestrate rich employee experiences and share data and analytics that measure the impact on business objectives as well as identify needed action for continual improvement."*
>
> **Alexandra Levit, Business/Workplace Author,**
> **Speaker, Consultant, and Futurist**
> **Workforce Institute Advisory Board**

## EMPOWER EMPLOYEES

Responsive experiences aren't just about submitting requests or punching in and out from remote locations. Employees should be able to carry out all tasks on any device, giving them autonomy and making them feel engaged in their work — no matter where they are. This focus on empowering employees should start with the talent acquisition process, allowing applicants the same level of flexibility and convenience to set the stage for how they'll be treated as employees. Here are just a few ways you can create empowerment with a responsive HCM solution:

- **Go beyond tactical.** Mobile functionality shouldn't be limited to just punching or viewing timesheets and schedules. Instead, think about what information your employees want and expect access to anytime, anywhere — things like benefits details, pay stubs, and tax information.
- **Make it flexible.** For shift swaps, coverage requests, benefits enrollment, direct deposit management, and more, give employees the ability to manage their work life and make changes when and where the need arises.
- **Empower responsive managers.** Simplified dashboards and reports that provide drilldowns into specific employees and workflows, notifications for quick reaction to requests, and access to see reports, assign workflows, and leverage checklists all make it easier for managers to respond in a timely fashion. What's more, a responsive framework allows managers to start building a visualization or dashboard on the go from a mobile device and then pick up right where they left off from their desk in the office, streamlining access to key metrics.
- **Set applicants up for success.** Integrate a responsive applicant portal into your company website, automate alert workflows and tracking for timely response, provide resume and social media upload options, and tightly integrate with onboarding for quick data transfer upon hire.

## HOW TECHNOLOGY CORRELATES WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

85 percent of employees who feel **their company's technology is ahead of the curve** say they love their jobs[8]

70 percent of employees believe that **technology improves work/life balance**[9]

42 percent of millennials **would leave a company due to substandard technology**[10]

[8] Adobe, *Work in Progress* (May 2016), 11, found at http://fow.adobethinktank.com/Future-of-Work-2016-FINAL.pdf.
[9] Ibid at 13.
[10] Forbes, *Meeting Millennial Expectations in These Four Areas of Technology* (June 2018), found at https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/06/28/meeting-millennial-expectations-in-these-four-areas-of-technology/#1aaaf10f4ffc.

## KEEP IT UNIFIED

Having a bunch of separate apps and separate systems is confusing for you and your employees. You need a unified platform for all your HR activities that can translate seamlessly to any device. Using micro apps to deliver HCM solutions doesn't mean using different apps — you should have one unified location for employees and managers to access information.

And keep in mind that the platform matters. Seamless responsive experiences require the platform that powers them to be a single source for all data across HR, payroll, and time and attendance, whereas point solutions require multiple apps and multiple systems of record on the back end, which results in unreliable data that employees and managers won't trust.

In fact, that's what's best of all: A unified platform builds trust. When you don't have to reconcile data across multiple databases, you'll know for a fact that the information you're working with is your single source of truth — regardless of which part of the HCM cycle you're working in. This certainty means employees and managers will accept what they see in their mobile experience, rather than second-guessing which parts of the data can be relied on. This is especially true for remote workers who don't come to a central office location every day.

## CONCLUSION

The responsive employee experience is an essential part of the technologies that fuel the future of work. Having an HCM platform that's built based on responsive design principles ensures that you can meet the expectations of the modern workforce around ease of use, availability, and transparency.

## WORKFORCE INSTITUTE AT KRONOS

The Workforce Institute at Kronos is a think tank that helps organizations drive performance by addressing workforce management issues that affect both hourly and salaried employees. Through education and research, the Institute empowers organizations with practical ideas for optimizing the 21st century workplace. Institute board members and key stakeholders publish articles and insights through the Workforce Institute Blog at www.workforceinstitute.org.

> Seamless responsive experiences require **the platform that powers them to be a single source** for all data across HR, payroll, and time and attendance.