Mobile devices in the workplace

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Overview

We researched the role of the mobile device in the workplace. We examined:

• The role of mobile devices in collaboration
• Creating texts mobile devices
• Communication modes and tools
• Contexts: The many worlds of the mobile device
Research

• **Who, what, and why**
  • What: social interaction, context, how devices are used, and designing interfaces, a few on texts for mobile devices
  • Who: CSC(HCI), Psychology, and Sociology
  • Why: Very few studies by technical communicators

• **Methods**
  • Ethnomethodology (field studies)
  • Surveys combined with case studies
  • Longitudinal study (changes over time) (1 study)
Collaboration and Mobile Devices

Overview of Bannon and Schmidt
Provided definitions and controversy with CSCW as well as core issues, and the future of CSCW as a field.

Core CSCW issues
• “articulating cooperative work”
• “sharing an information space”
• “adapting technology to the organization and vice versa”

CSCW as field, problems in defining
The ways in which mobility functions in “collaborative work have largely been overlooked in CSCW” (Luff and Heath)
Creating and Using Texts for Mobile Devices

- Chunking
- Non-linear organization
- Meta-texts
- Meta-mediational text

“Technical communicators need to think about the texts that they write not as texts but as assemblies of information units”
-- Swarts
Communication modes

• Communication modes effect how texts are created

• Two types of communication
  • Synchronous – frequently used when more urgent or complex matters need to be worked out.
  • Asynchronous – used for less urgent matters, in situations in which a permanent record is needed, and for information search and retrieval

• For each, choose
  + Audio   +Video   +Text   +Graphics
  Or a blend of any or all of these
Context

Mobile devices are situated in multiple contexts simultaneously

• Social

• Physical and task-driven

• Merging of mobile contexts

“fluid and unpredictable” contexts in which “people, objects and meanings are all mobile” - Galloway
Dryer et al.

Overview of article

Examines how mobile devices effect social relationships by evaluating

1. Social attributions and expectations of subjects looking at photos of users interacting with various mobile devices

2. Social attributions and interaction outcomes of subjects in collaborative activities using various mobile devices.

Issues

Social computing - “the interplay between persons’ social behaviors and their interactions with computing technologies”

Fundamental Attribution Error

“participants apparently failed to discount adequately for the influence of the device”
Social Effect of Technology on Organizations

Dryer et al

- “Although we would like pervasive computers to avoid being socially disruptive, what we really want is that they be a positive force in social interactions”
- we should “envision social computing.”

_Beijing interaction outcomes_

- device satisfaction
- productivity
- social attraction

Bannon and Schmidt

- A computerized system is an “organizational change agent”
- Technology must be adapted to the organization, and vice versa
- System designers/developers should "aim at supporting self-organization of cooperative ensembles as opposed to disrupting cooperative work by formalizing computerized procedures"
The technical communicator role

• The role of the technical communicator

• Job posting for in-device help writer

• Examples:
  • Writing texts for mobile devices
  • Using tests with mobile devices
Advice for Technical Communicators

• More research, especially using audience analysis, case studies, and studies of genres
  • Research on how collaboration on work texts and activities using mobile devices.

• Pay attention to the text’s intended context

• Keep in mind that this text could be used anywhere

• Accommodate all of the user’s contexts

• Design texts which enable rapid context switching
  • Clear visual cues, placeholder

• Write in small units

• Learn to use multimedia effectively on mobile devices

• Become familiar with the genres used on and with mobile devices

1. **Accessibility.** Do nonusers believe that they could use the device easily, and do they understand easily how it works?

2. **Familiarity.** Is the form of the device one that is familiar and appropriate for the context of its use?

3. **Input sharing.** Does the device allow nonusers to input information easily and naturally?

4. **Output sharing.** Does the device allow nonusers to perceive easily and understand output?

5. **Relevance.** Does the device appear to nonusers to be useful to the user and to the nonuser?

6. **Appeal.** Is the device something that the user is comfortable being seen using, and do nonusers find the device, and use of the device, attractive?

7. **Disruption.** Does the device disrupt individuals’ natural social behaviors, such as referring to shared information while interacting?

8. **Perceiver distraction.** Does using the device create noise or otherwise create a distraction for nonusers?

9. **Power.** To what extent does use of the device put one person more “in charge” than another person, and to what extent does using the device communicate a difference in status?

10. **User distraction.** Does the device place a high cognitive load on the user during use or otherwise create a distraction?

11. **Identification.** Does the device appear to include or exclude the user from certain communities, and do nonusers see themselves as persons who would use the device?

12. **Pervasiveness.** Is the device mobile or otherwise convenient to use in social settings?

13. **Communication.** Does the device make communication among persons easy, especially the sharing of important social information such as appointments and contact information?

14. **Social application.** Does the device support rich social interactions, such as through interest matching, meeting facilitation, or social networking?
"It's amazing—I can make quicker phone calls, send more e-mails, and surf the web faster than ever, without being tied down to the office," said the prick, who feels "disconnected from the world" if he does not have access to corporate communications for more than four minutes at any time throughout the day or night."

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