A Connected World: Motivating mobility

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In 2007 Netflix enjoyed immense success. In the first quarter alone revenues increased by 36% and it delivered its billionth DVD. During this period, the CEO, Reed Hastings, was a pivotal character, shaping the direction and driving the expansion. What’s particularly interesting is that Hastings led his Californian-based business from a house in Italy where he was living with his family, rather than from an office.

Ever since mankind emerged from the Hunter-Gather period, work has had a time and a place. We go to the farm, the factory or the office. We work during certain hours; then we leave. For the last decade at least, the Internet and the devices that connect to it (such as our laptop and our phone) have allowed us to work wherever and whenever we want. Yet stories like those of Reed Hastings still surprise us a little, despite the capabilities we have at our fingertips. Many studies have found that increasing employee flexibility and mobility can increase performance and satisfaction; yet in many organisations, fundamental working habits remain relatively unchanged. Even though we answer email in the evening, we still, on the whole, go to work. There are few technological barriers to more imaginative working patterns, so it suggests that the barriers to our greater mobility are attitudinal and behavioural.
What is mobility?

A starting point to this might be to think more carefully about why people might want to be mobile, or not. More specifically, what are the relevant motivations that drive their behaviour? In 1969 Clayton Alderfer redefined Abraham Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of needs’ based on empirical research. His studies showed you could more accurately understand human motivation under three headings: Existence (basic physical and physiological needs); Relatedness (a sense of connection and relationships); and Growth (needs to achieve and develop). It is likely that our physical, connection and achievement needs affect the way we think about using technology to enable work mobility.

Physical Needs

One way of thinking about our physical needs is in terms of protection. Boundaries of space and time that kept work and life separate before the advent of mobile technology didn’t just limit our options, they also protected us. Who hasn’t felt the invasion of the inbox into our most private locations and moments? One study, for example, showed that 83% of people had no time in their day at all for ‘thinking or relaxing’. To quell the intrusion of technologically enabled work, it seems natural that some people would want to create boundaries to protect their private lives. Boundary theory suggests that people will vary on the degree they want to separate work from life. At one extreme, people will be motivated to segment their time into discrete chunks of work or life. Others will aim to integrate their work across their whole life; completely blurring any boundaries, seeking a harmonisation of work and life instead of separation. Wherever people are on the integration – segregation continuum will affect how they engage with mobility.

Connection

The need for connectedness can be expressed through our devices, such as our smartphone. Through voice, email, text, social media and web we can connect more easily, with more people and more stimulation. The attraction of our phones is appealing, and some would even say addictive. One study found people would prefer to give themselves electric shocks rather than be left, unconnected and unstimulated without their phones or other entertainment devices. The tools for mobility are not dry productivity devices; they are the height of cool. Dr. Esther Swiller has suggested the feelings we have about our phone are more like the fun and the pride we feel with a new pet. She described our attachment to our phones as ‘mobile affinity’. Other studies have shown the degree of attachment we feel to our phones is related to the degree to which we use them. It is likely that our attachment to our devices will affect our mobility behaviour.

Achievement

In our hyper-connected world, the limits have not just been removed on time and place; they have also been removed on quantity. More people are connected than ever before, and
they can all produce more stuff, more easily and share it with more people. For example, it has been estimated that in 1986, a knowledge worker would produce about 2.5 newspaper pages of content a day. By 2007, that amount had increased by 200 times: we each produce more than 6 whole newspapers a day, creating more work for everyone else! In the face of this information and demand tsunami, people search for ways to achieve more. Perhaps the behaviour that is most associated with a modern, mobile workforce is that of multitasking. A lot of research has shown that multitasking decreases performance. In addition, unlike most skills, practice does not make perfect: those who multitask a lot are less effective multitaskers! However, despite the evidence, people still seem to feel multitasking is the most appropriate strategy to respond, real-time to the demands of their frenetic organisations. Recent studies have shown that some people can multitask effectively. Recent research has identified a small subset of people who can effectively perform multiple tasks simultaneously without a loss in performance: these people have come to be called supertaskers. It is natural that people who want to achieve would aspire to be supertaskers, and this would affect how they use mobile technology.

Understanding mobility through personas

It is our suggestion that in addition to thinking of mobility in terms of technology or organisational culture, we also think of it with the help of personas. The way different people engage with mobility technology will be driven by their motivational drives; and of course people are complex and have combinations of needs. Rather than analysing singular aspects of motivation, we suggest bringing alive different combinations of mobility motivations into understandable, usable personas, which can then be used for organisational decision making. This study is an exploratory attempt to begin this discussion.

This study

This study used data from the Cisco ‘2014 Connected World Technology Survey’. Based on the thinking above, we proposed that people’s motivation might vary when it comes to mobility in three ways.

- **Work-life integration**: the desire to integrate or segregate work and life
- **Device attachment**: whether or not the person has a high level of attachment to their smartphone
- **Supertasking**: whether or not the person perceives themselves to be, or strives to be, a supertasker

Using existing items from the extensive survey, we identified questions which seemed to capture the above three aspects of mobility motivation (see Appendix for items used).

Once we had done this, we recognised that different people would have different combinations of motivational drives. They would be either an integrator or a segregator; highly attached or with low attachment to their smartphone; and be a supertasker or not. When all three drives are combined, they create mobility personas. Through something of a
trial and error process, we identified the best clusters of questions. Ultimately, out of eight possible combinations of motivational drives, we identified the four most frequent mobility personas. Then, with some creative license, these personas have been elaborated to add their character preferences.

The final step of the analysis was to compare the different personas on a variety of demographic items, including age, gender and organisational size.
Findings: The personas

This person uses mobility and flexibility to maximise their ability to produce. They work on the road, at home and in the office, wherever they can get the most done. And when they choose to work from home, it is likely to be driven primarily because they believe it will help them work better, with fewer distractions.

They work on the road, at home and in the office, wherever they can get the most done

The Producer is likely to be highly focused on their career, fitting their lives around the demands of the job. Always on, they are available for email and calls 24/7, checking their inbox regularly. They don’t do this out of any particular affection for their devices, which are seen as work tools, but because work is important.

As a result of their commitment and flexibility, they expect flexibility in return. They earn the right to take care of personal stuff in work time, or to have a lot of freedom to choose when and where they work. They are unlikely to do much playing on their devices, the tools they use on their phones are those they need for core productivity, adding work or personal apps only when they feel this will improve their efficiency.
The player loves their mobility devices, living their life and building their identity through them. Devices are much more than work tools, they are entertainment devices, social connectors and, quite frankly, they are just cool. The first thing they do every day is check their phone, to see what messages they are getting through social media or other channels.

The player loves their mobility devices, living their life and building their identity through them

They enjoy the buzz of the hyper-stimulated, always connected life. They aspire to be, or consider themselves to be, supertaskers, though this is driven as much by the fun of it as the desire to produce. They bounce from task to task, constantly switching their attention between devices, apps and screens.

The Player has a strong sense of lifestyle, and is eager to ensure they have a life outside of work. Since they get both energised and distracted by mobile technology, they find the relative calm of the office and the discipline of the environment helpful in allowing them to work and focus. Once they finish work, they have no problems in resisting the inbox; email is much less interesting than social media to The Player anyway.
Life and work are one big juggling act for this person. Racing from task to task, they use mobility tools to balance the demands of their role with the demands of their personal life. They multitask to be efficient and get it all done, using their devices to help them stay on top of their to-do lists. They don’t want to be available 24/7 because their lives outside of work are too full of commitments.

**Racing from task to task, they use mobility tools to balance the demands of their role with the demands of their personal life**

Their supercharged activity allows them to switch off from work at a reasonable time; minimising the intrusion of work into their personal life. They recognise work will permeate into their lives at times, but prefer their work to stay at work; and their lives to be at home. Their efficiency helps them to manage their work-life boundary.

Their devices aren’t a primary source of entertainment, instead symbolising access and communication. They’re powerful tools in their dynamic juggling act, allowing them to streamline and organise their rich, busy lives.
This person likes to do one thing at a time, they like to work, or they like to play; they like to focus properly on the task at hand or switch off completely. They use their mobility tools to support their focus and control their availability, ensuring 100% focus on the task at hand. They have a clear sense of boundaries, balancing work responsibilities with their right to have a life outside.

They have a clear sense of boundaries, balancing work responsibilities with their right to have a life outside too

They like to work in the office because it helps to maintain the separation between work and home. The working environment in the office is where they work best and most happily. They are able to concentrate properly, seeing multitaskers as people who get too easily distracted, or who are not coping well.

To do their job they need to have mobile devices. They serve a purpose to allow them to do what is needed. In truth, they would prefer not to be so accessible, but the devices have off switches, which they use, liberally, to disconnect from work.
In detail: Personas in our population

Once we’d characterised our personas, we wanted to apply these to our population, to see how they compare against the demographic information we collected. Here’s what we found.

Age and mobility

The first thing we found is that 67% of all Players are under 30 years old. This didn’t surprise us, as people under 30 tend to be much more socially connected via apps and devices; and therefore more emotionally connected to them too. Persistent research also shows the importance Generation Y employees place on lifestyle.

As our population got above 40, the Player persona all but disappeared, and the percentage of Jugglers doubled to 44%

However, it should be stated that only 35% of this age group fell into this persona: 25% of them are Jugglers and 23% are Producers. All three personas have aspects of the typical Gen-Y stereotype, but their motivational drives mean they will engage differently with mobility.

A second observation on the relationship between age and personas is the increasing frequency of the Juggler as people get beyond 30 years old. As our population got above 40, the Player persona all but disappeared, and the percentage of Jugglers doubled to 44%. This might be due to increasing external commitment such as families, changing the way people work and are motivated.

Gender and mobility

Our population contained 107 men and 160 women. The only persona which contained a higher percentage of men than women was the Producer. 35% of all men were Producers, as compared to 21% of women. This could reflect two factors: a different approach to self-definition in women, and a different set of demands. Women may define themselves more broadly than men, because of the wider range of performance expectations they face. For example, many women feel they have to not only be successful at work, but also to run perfect homes, be perfect mothers and have perfect bodies\(^\text{13}\). It still appears to be less socially acceptable for a woman to be sloppy at home, absent as a parent or indifferent about their appearance than it is for a man. In addition, today’s women continue to shoulder the lion’s share of domestic responsibilities in society\(^\text{14}\). Both of these factors may lead women to define themselves in a less ‘pure-work’ manner; and to feel the need to manage boundaries more strongly than men.
Support for the idea that women define themselves more broadly than men may come from an analysis of the difference between Generation Y men and women in our study. Only 11% of Gen Y women are Producers, compared to 37% of Gen Y men. A lot of research shows that gender roles develop early through social learning\textsuperscript{15}. So it might be that, even early in careers, women may be less likely to think of themselves as always-available productivity machines, adopting broader self-definitions than a more traditional male total-work-identity. This would be an interesting aspect for further future research.

As women age, the major shift appears to be from Player to Juggler. 47% of Gen Y women would be described as Players, dropping to 20% in Generation X. Conversely, 37% of all Generation X women are Jugglers. It is likely that this shift is driven, to a large degree, on the growing domestic burdens many women experience when they begin families. The more carefree approach to work and technology are replaced with a more serious determination to succeed in multiple aspects of their lives; and this requires super-tasking and mobility.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{It appears that 63\% of the Generation X women in this survey are leaning in to mobility in order to lean into their careers.}
\end{quote}

It is worth noting, that as the burdens on women increase with age, the most likely mobility personas they adopt are the more performance-focused personas: Juggler (37%) and Producer (26%). If they are to succeed in work and life, Sheryl Sandberg suggests women will need to ‘lean in’ to their careers, with the confidence they can also manage their personal expectations\textsuperscript{16}. It appears that 63\% of the Generation X women in this survey are leaning in to mobility in order to lean into their careers.
Organisational size and mobility

When we compared personas with where people worked, we found little relationship with type of business (mainly due to sample size), we did however find a relationship with organisational size. Specifically, it seems the place you are most likely to find Players and Jugglers in big organisations. In our sample, 66% of the people working in organisations of over 10,000 people feed into either the Player or Juggler persona; this compares to only 40% in organisations under 750 people.

Career stage and mobility

We also found a marked difference in the motivational preferences of the manager population and those of employees. In our sample we had 94 managers and 152 employees. Of these, 41% of managers were Producers, as compared with only 20% of employees. In addition, twice the percentage of employees were Players, as compared to managers (28% versus 14%). Research suggests that when people identify with their role more, they are more focused on integrating their work into their whole life in order to succeed.

41% of managers were Producers, as compared with only 20% of employees

It is natural to suppose that many managers have high levels of role identification, and so accept that their work may permeate into their private lives. It is important to emphasise that work integration does not imply sacrificing quality of life for your career. It is true that studies show that a greater level of work-life integration can be associated with more work-life conflict; it is also the case that many people who seem to thrive in today’s fast-paced world, such as Reed Hastings and Sheryl Sandberg, are able to harmonise work and life demands in more creative ways than relying on traditional boundaries of time and space. Integrating work and life is harder than preserving strict boundaries; it takes more discipline to prevent work from taking over too much of your life; it takes more imagination to develop habits that allow an undiluted focus on your relationships and interests in the face of relentless work pressures. However, as the demands of 24/7 global organisations continue to increase, the question facing many career-minded managers who want a fulfilling life is changing. It is no longer one of work-life balance, where the demands of work are set against the demands in life. Rather, it is one of integration; where work and life are merged harmoniously with the aid of technology, leading to fulfilment and success.
Role and mobility

There were two findings with respect to peoples’ role and personas. The first one is the finding that while only one in four of our population worked in HR, 55% of all the Serialists in our findings worked in Human Resources. This potentially reflects the fact that in our work categorisation, this was possibly the most administrative role category.

55% of all the Serialists in our findings worked in Human Resources

It might also reflect the values people in HR have over work-life balance, the greater frequency of women in the HR population or even their understanding that multitasking reduces cognitive performance. For whatever the reason, it possibly raises the question that if HR departments are trying to motivate the general workforce around mobility, they need to be mindful that other departments may engage with mobility differently than their departmental colleagues.

Finally, a little over half of those working in customer services were Players (52%). This is likely to be the result of a greater percentage of that population being younger, but it is also possible that those who desire the buzz and energy of digital connection also like a more direct connection with the public in their role.
Further Research

This study should be seen as exploratory and illustrative. This study used data from the Cisco ‘2014 Connected World Technology Survey’. This survey involved nearly 4,000 white collar workers across 15 countries. However, given a particular interest in the UK, this study exclusively analysed the results from those respondents in Britain: a total of 267 people. This reduction in sample size means we have to be a little more tentative in our findings.

We would accept each of the three motivational areas should be considered a scale or dimension, for example from high attachment to low attachment. However, in the spirit of simplicity, and due to the quality of the data (which would not support factor analysis), we have taken a binary approach: each aspect will be considered as scoring either high or low. It would be useful, using the hypotheses in this document, to generate a new set of items, and then carry out a factor analysis to build robust motivational dimensions. With these, it would be possible to generate more accurate personas. Our persona descriptions here are derived through a combination of the items assessed, research in the field and a degree of imagination. Further work would be useful here.

Finally, it would be fascinating to explore the differences in Generation Y men and women when it comes to mobility motivation.
References

16. Sheryl Sandberg (2013) Lean in: Women, work and the will to lead. WH Allen
18. Ibid

Appendix

The questions listed below were those used to form the three aspects of mobility motivation: work-life integration, device attachment and supertasking. The question numbers refer to the items on the original Cisco Survey
### DIMENSION | Question | High | Low |
<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work / life integration:</strong> this is the focus of that person on keeping work and life separate, or having a desire to integrate them effectively in more flexible ways</td>
<td>Q40 / 95 / 146</td>
<td>A 9-5: there should be freedom to work and play Working from home: yes and both office and work Most focused and productive at home, or equally 24/7 accessibility – yes (all types)</td>
<td>B 9-5: there is a traditional time for work and life Prefer to work in office: only no answers Most focused and productive in office 24/7 accessibility – no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connectedness:</strong> this is the degree of attachment to and usage of mobility technology (devices and apps)</td>
<td>Q25 / Q80 / Q143 Q34 / Q89 Q39 / Q94 Q26 / 81 Q29 / 84 Q31 / 86</td>
<td>C Smart phone usage (less than 25%) Personal apps on phone and usage (more than 20) Mobile app reliance (once every 3 weeks or more often) Would not give up Smartphone Would not give up Smartphone Smartphone first thing looked at in the morning</td>
<td>D Smart phone usage (more than 25%) Personal apps on phone and usage (less than 20) Mobile app reliance (less than once a month) Would not give up TV Would not give up electricity Other (loved one, TV, other)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supertasking:</strong> this is the preference or aspiration to be a supertasker</td>
<td>Q65/128/180 Q69/132</td>
<td>E Are you a supertasker – yes Supertaskers more productive</td>
<td>F Are you a supertasker – no Supertaskers more mistakes</td>
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- For each attribute within the dimension, each answer was tallied when their response to the question they provided fell into a “high” category, which then contributed to their final score, which was labelled as high or low.

The following scores were labelled high or low for each motivational aspect.

- **Work / life integration:** 3-5 High(A), 0-2 Low(B) Note – ‘Freedom to work and play’ was considered central to this aspect, and so was double weighted.

- **Connectedness:** 4-6 High(C), 0-3 Low(D)

- **Supertasking:** 1-2 High (E) 0 Low (F)
The percentage of people falling into each of the eight personas is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row Labels</th>
<th>Count of Combination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>7.49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>5.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADE</td>
<td>11.24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADF</td>
<td>11.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>17.98%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCF</td>
<td>4.87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDE</td>
<td>24.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDF</td>
<td>16.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We combined ADE and ADF into a single persona ‘Producer’ to capture the highly mobile, flexible type of attitudes. It is possible that we unwittingly made the scoring overly stringent when it came to the aspect of work life integration. Most of our respondents, in the way we scored this test, were ‘segregators’. It is also not the case that respondents will categorise themselves as exclusively high or exclusively low and attributes are not mutually exclusive. For example, respondents who like working from home do not necessarily want 24/7 accessibility, and respondents who have loads of apps may still prefer to have electricity over their smart phone. Without a factor analysis it is impossible to say the degree of robustness of these motivational labels, and therefore the personas.