

Communication Trends Across Deskless Workforces in the U.S.

Research study by Zogby Analytics,
sponsored by Zinc, Fall 2017



Understanding Today's Deskless Workforce

Deskless workers are those who rarely work at a computer or in an office, and instead spend most of their day on their feet or traveling between work sites. This includes industries like communications, construction, hospitality, manufacturing, and transportation — indeed, the vast majority of the U.S. workforce is deskless today, and that number continues to rise.

By 2020, IDC expects mobile workers will account for nearly three quarters (72.3%) of the total U.S. workforce.

This deskless workforce may not be in an office, but they have clear communication and collaboration needs all the same. Whether it's assigning tasks across teams, relaying a question back to the main office, or coordinating with other deskless colleagues (sometimes hundreds of miles away), communication is essential in order to operate smoothly and efficiently.



39% of deskless workers surveyed communicate with 20+ coworkers every day.

Deskless workers don't communicate in the same way their cubicle-bound counterparts do, but the ability to share information in a timely and reliable manner is just as critical to their success, if not more so.

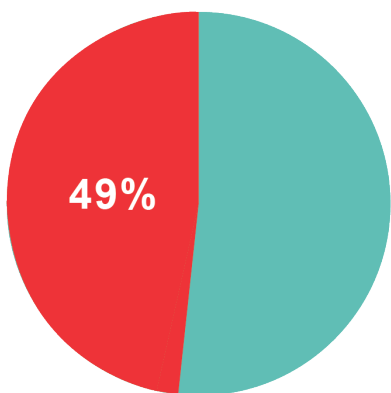
Yet the current technology methods don't effectively meet the needs of those without a computer, or the same ability to walk over to a coworker to troubleshoot an idea face-to-face.

Lack of information from management (38%) and timeliness of information (39%) are the most commonly reported obstacles to job efficiency for deskless workers.

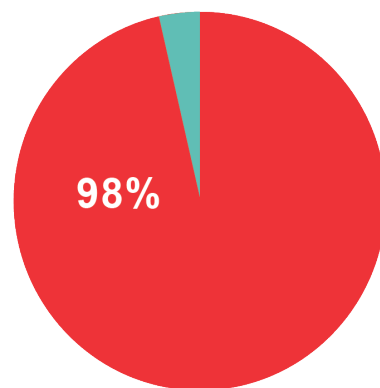
Tools Of The Trade: How Deskless Workers Communicate

Everyone agrees the transfer of knowledge and information is the backbone of any functioning organization. How exactly that information is shared is another matter entirely.

In our everyday lives texting is king, and quick, mobile interactions have become a staple across every aspect of our consumer experience—from banking and ride hailing to air-travel and dining. Enterprises have been slow to adopt mobile-first applications, but mobile communication is now starting to work its way into the everyday work experience.

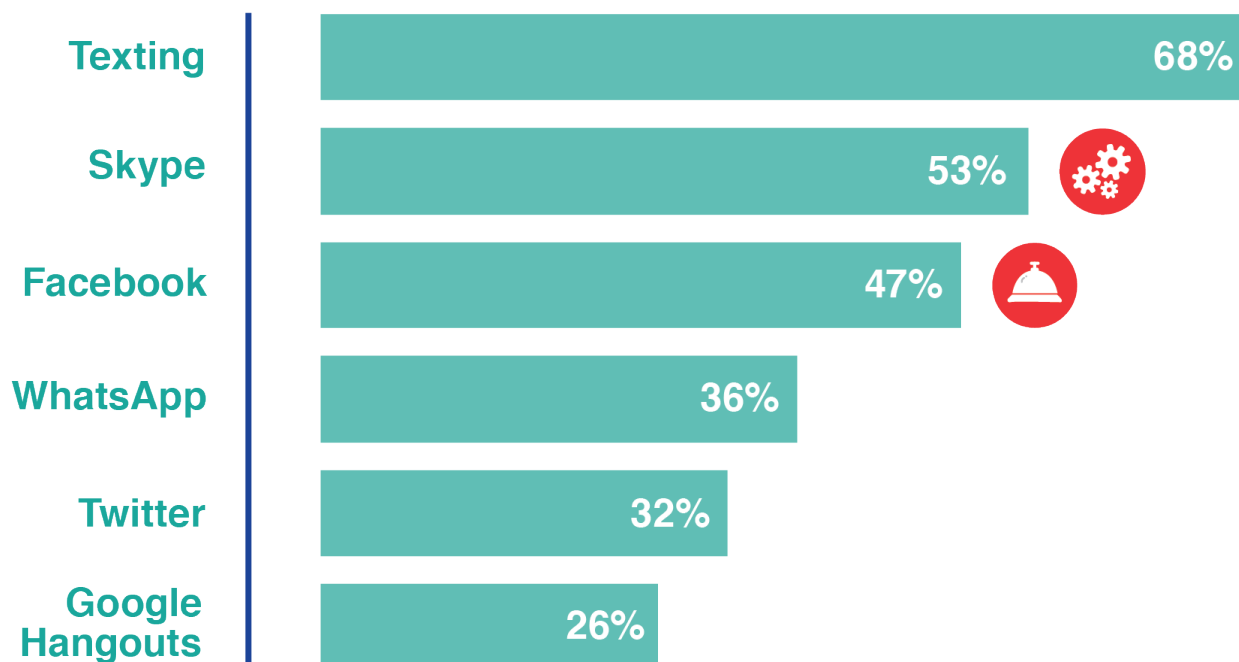


49% of workers use a messaging or communication app every day for their work (including 64% of those in customer-facing roles).



98% of those said messaging + communication apps were important to their work (74% considered them very important).

Of the apps that deskless workers have been quick to embrace in their workplace, the most commonly used today include text messages, Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Google Hangouts.



While the hospitality industry prefers Facebook, manufacturing industries prefer to use Skype.

Unsurprisingly, texting – just like in our personal lives – is far and away the most highly ranked communication method for deskless workforces.

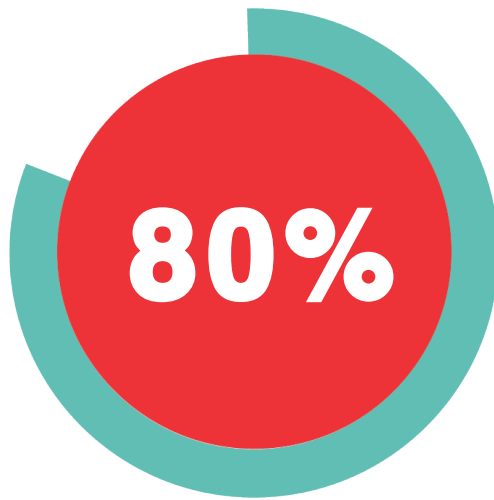
Texting is natural. We know how to do it, and it's a quick and reliable way to get the answers we need.

Messaging is an especially preferred format among younger workers, with 70% of millennials regularly using messaging apps at work.

Texting (68%) is the most preferred communication tool for deskless workers.

70% of millennials (age 18-29) said they use messaging as a form of communication at work on a regular basis, compared to 55% on average.

Knowing that messaging works so easily in our everyday personal lives makes it a natural way for workers to communicate while on the job. What's more surprising is the recency of this trend:



80% of the deskless workforce started relying on these communication apps for their work within the past *three years*.

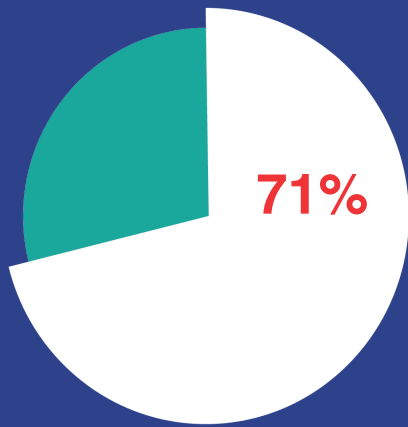
Looking at the data, a pattern emerges: staff-level employees bring in the communication technologies they need in order to get their work done; once these tools are well-embedded in an organization, managers follow suit.

Managers do not represent early adopters, with 39% picking up their communication technology apps of choice within the past year.

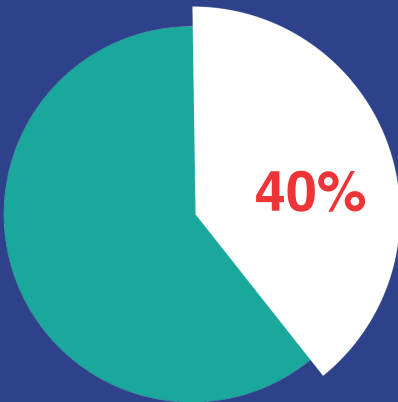
The Manager Bottleneck: Vertical vs. Horizontal Communication

Workers are quicker to adapt to their own communication needs than managers, and they are quite comfortable communicating among their peers.

Most workers (53%) find it very easy to communicate job-related information to their peers at work.



71% of managers consider themselves very informed on relevant company-wide news.



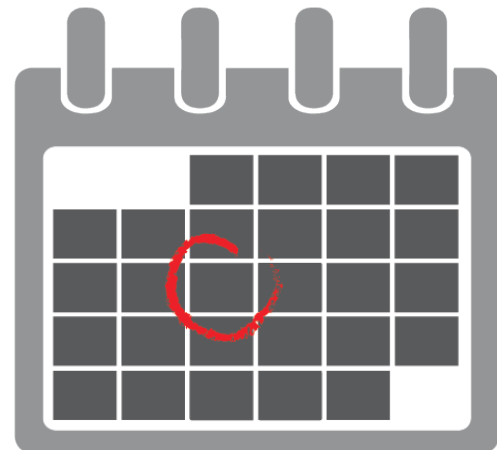
Only 40% of staff claim the same.

Mobile communication solutions adopted by deskless workers translate well to peer-to-peer communication, but prove inadequate when it comes to spreading information from management or executive level teams.

Within deskless organizations, communication standards are especially vital, due to geographically dispersed teams, constantly shifting schedules, and the range of different work routines and requirements.

However, the problems arise in communicating up the ladder. Of deskless workers surveyed, 38% identified lack of information from management as a significant barrier to doing their work effectively, especially among younger workers (50%) and at larger organizations (47%).

Vertical communication is every bit as important as horizontal communication, if not more so; managers and employees must connect in order for a business to succeed. Too often, however, deskless workers feel marginalized.



25%

of deskless workers say their executive or larger department team communicates with them *once a month or less.*

Getting the Word Out: Company-Wide Communication

Even though both workers and management teams acknowledge the importance of messaging and communication apps to their daily functions, many enterprises fail to provide structure around how these apps are used.

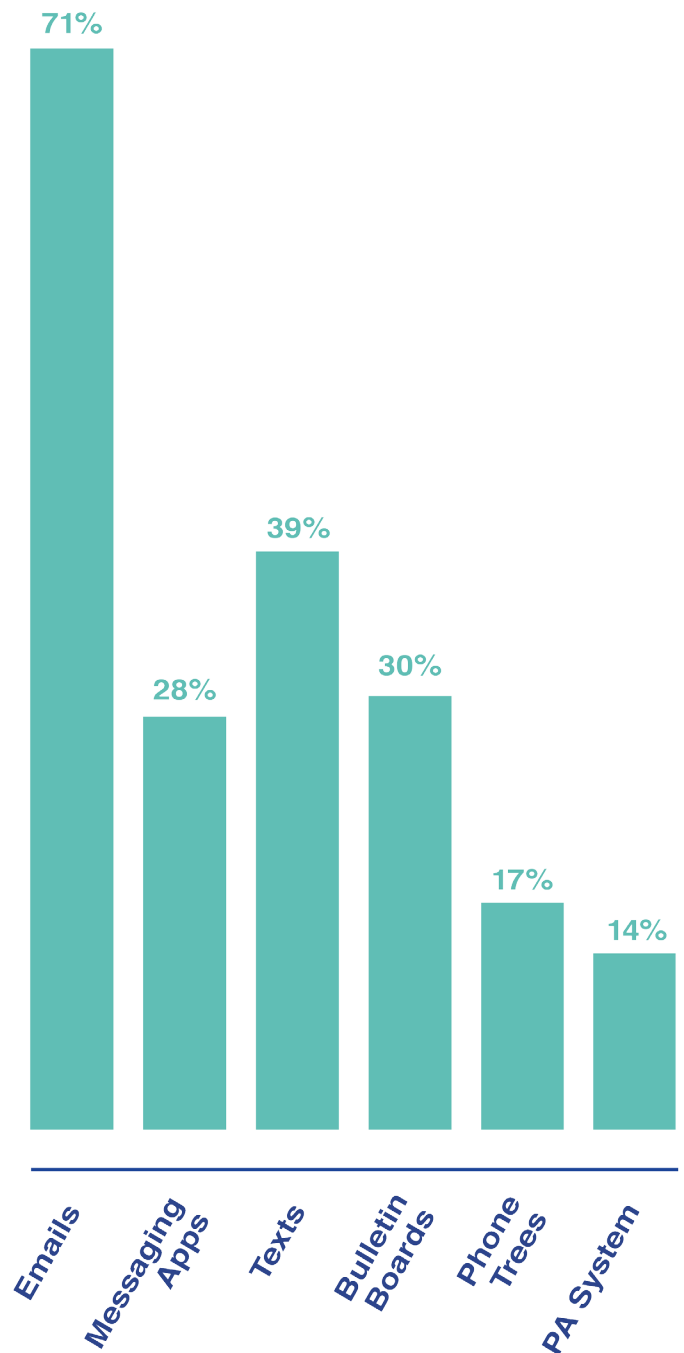
41% of workers surveyed say that their company doesn't have (or doesn't make known) a standard set of mobile communication tools for the organization.

Instead, most companies still rely on old fashioned methods to get company-wide news to employees, including bulletin boards and phone trees.

When a third of modern companies, with large percentages of deskless workers, still rely on bulletin boards, you can begin to understand why there is an information gap.

Of companies surveyed, 1/3 still communicate timely corporate or department-wide messages via physical bulletin boards.

How Company-Wide News is Shared:



Conclusion: Fill the Communication Gap

Communication is essential to running a successful business, but there are huge gaps in how information flows through deskless companies, be it between peers or between managers and workers.

Smartphones are ubiquitous at every level in almost every industry. It is the primary tool for deskless workers. And yet, most companies don't have a unified strategy for mobile communications. This leads to information roadblocks where large numbers of employees feel inhibited in their daily work and claim to be out of touch with the larger company.

The need for fast and reliable communication is nothing new, but the growing deskless workforce creates a new imperative for company-wide standards and strategies. Adoption of mobile communication apps across these industries is only a few years old, and companies cannot afford to fall (further) behind the curve. Regardless of industry, organizations need a more unified approach to how their deskless teams collaborate.

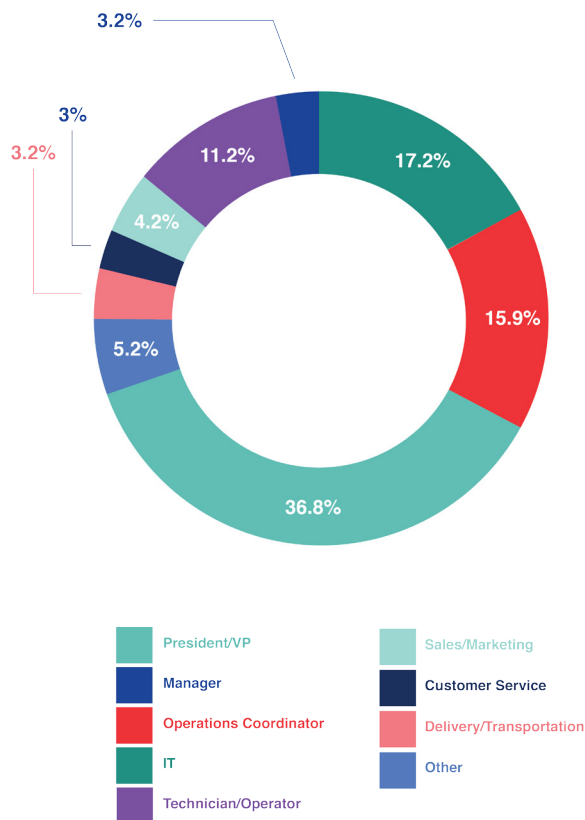


Methodology:

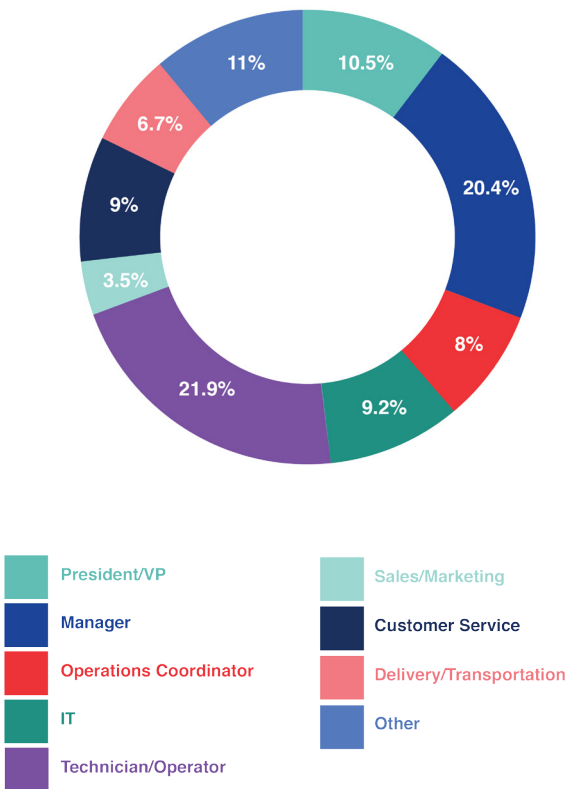
On behalf of Zinc, Zogby Analytics conducted a nationwide online survey of 402 deskless workers. The survey was fielded during August 2017, and included questions on workplace communication and technology use.

Respondents for this survey were invited to participate in this interactive survey at random. Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, complex weighting techniques were used to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Participants were screened based on their work environment, industry, and employment situation.

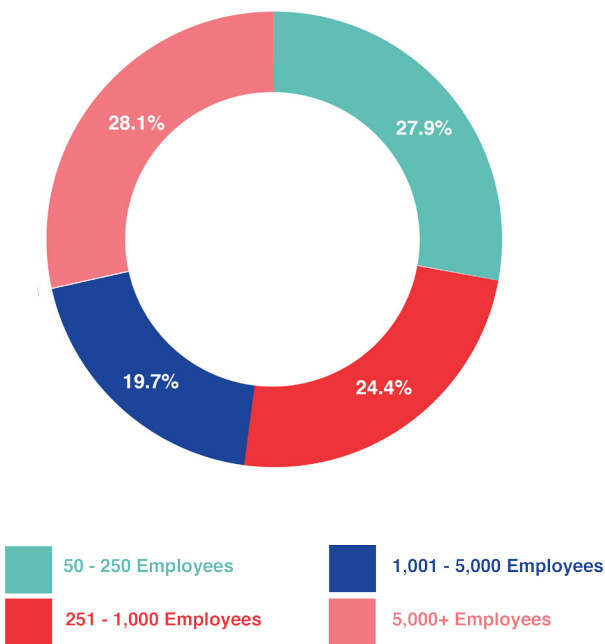
Breakdown by Industry:



Breakdown by Role:



Breakdown by Company Size:



About Zogby Analytics:

Zogby Analytics is respected nationally and internationally for its opinion research capabilities. Since 1984, Zogby has empowered clients with powerful information and knowledge critical for making informed strategic decisions.

The firm conducts multi-phased opinion research engagements for banking and financial services institutions, insurance companies, hospitals and medical centers, retailers and developers, religious institutions, cultural organizations, colleges and universities, IT companies and Federal agencies. Zogby's dedication and commitment to excellence and accuracy are reflected in its state-of-the-art opinion research capabilities and objective analysis and consultation.

About Zinc:

Founded on the belief that deskless workers need a better way to communicate, Zinc provides the only All Mode Communication Platform bent on driving business results. With access to real-time communication any time on any device, Zinc truly transforms the way businesses run. Loved by users and trusted by the enterprise, customers include GE, Hyatt, BlueLine Rentals, Vivint, and Gaylord Hotels. Visit www.zinc.it and follow @Zinc on Twitter.

