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Mobilize to realize: Job seeker insights for mobile recruitment success

Dr. Haiyan Zhang, IBM Smarter Workforce Institute

Mobile devices are becoming ubiquitous; in fact there are now more mobile devices than there are people in the world (7.2 billion).[1] Smartphones and tablets are becoming something people seemingly cannot live without. A Times magazine survey revealed that 84 percent of users could not go a single day without their mobile devices and one in five people checks their mobile devices every 10 minutes.[2] And it is about much more than making phone calls; it is also about web access, messaging, social networking, and even job hunting.

In light of such popularity, many organizations are turning their attention to mobile recruiting. So, how do job seekers use mobile devices in their job searches? Using data from the global IBM WorkTrends™ survey, the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute (SWI) analyzed why and how potential job seekers[3] use mobile in their job searches and what concerns and expectations they have. The results provide organizations with clear insights into how they can attract talent via mobile technologies.

About the analyses

Analyses presented in this white paper are based on a sample of over 16,000 workers from the WorkTrends™ survey, administered by the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute in 2015 to workers in 23 countries, in a cross-section of industries, thousands of different organizations and all major job families.

Key findings

Overall, more than half of job seekers have used mobile devices in past or current job searches. Of those who have used mobile to search for jobs:

- About three quarters use mobile to search for job postings, half get job-related information and job alerts, one-third express job interest, one in four apply for jobs, while one in five have taken assessments on a mobile device.

- Almost three in five say organizations that offer mobile recruitment are more attractive to them. Seven in ten intend to use mobile in their future job searches.

- The top concerns among mobile users are: job applications are not easy to complete on a mobile device, lack of availability of mobile career sites, and resumes are not saved on mobile devices. Job seekers are also concerned about data security and making errors when applying for a job via mobile.

- Looking to the future, the majority of respondents (seven in ten) expect job search apps to be easy to use. Over half expect apps to be personalized, about half expect job application processes to be simple, almost half expect all organizations to have career websites, and almost one in three expect the job application process will not take much time.

How prevalent is the use of mobile devices in job search?

Our analyses reveal that over half of job seekers (53 percent) have used mobile devices in their past or current job searches (Figure 1).

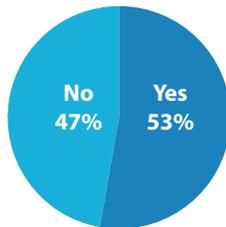**Have you used mobile devices in your past or current job search?**

No 47% Yes 53%

Figure 1: Prevalence of the use of mobile devices in job searches
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 Global (N=16,212).

Job seekers in some industries use mobile for job searches more extensively than those in other industries. Holding companies and information technology firms are at the top of the industry list. For employers in these industries, mobile recruiting is a smart way to attract talent. Figure 2 shows the percentages of employees who have used mobile in job searches across industries.

Percentages of job seekers who have used mobile in job searches by industry

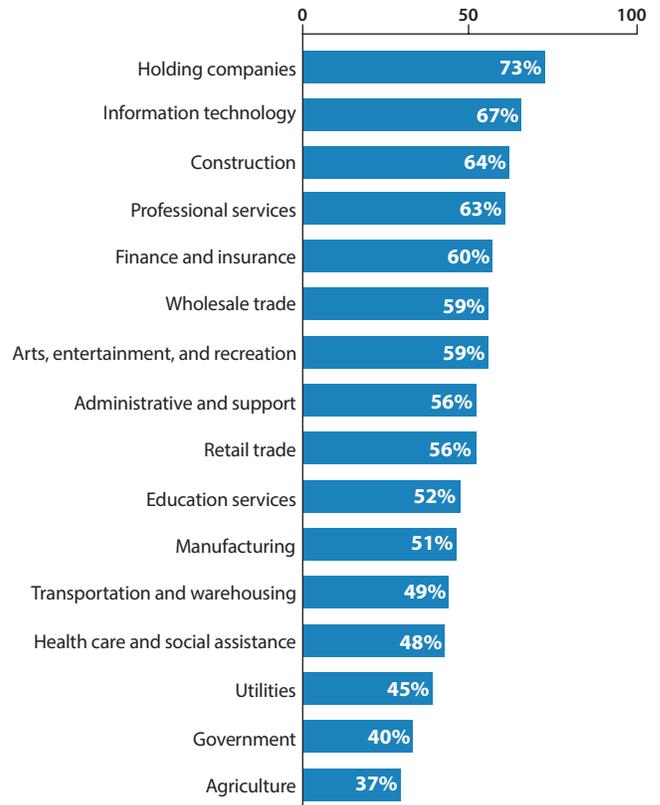| Industry	Percentage
Holding companies	73%
Information technology	67%
Construction	64%
Professional services	63%
Finance and insurance	60%
Wholesale trade	59%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	59%
Administrative and support	56%
Retail trade	56%
Education services	52%
Manufacturing	51%
Transportation and warehousing	49%
Health care and social assistance	48%
Utilities	45%
Government	40%
Agriculture	37%

Figure 2: Use of mobile job search across industries
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 Global (N=16,212).

Why do job seekers use mobile?

Perhaps not surprisingly, job seekers use mobile devices in their searches because it is fast and convenient. Among those who have used mobile in past or current job searches, the majority say they get job information quickly via mobile (69 percent), almost two thirds say mobile devices are convenient to use (65 percent), and half report they can respond to job postings quickly (50 percent). In addition, some job seekers value the private nature of mobile devices, with one in eight (13 percent) searching for jobs via mobile because they do not want to use their company's computers. See Figure 3.

**Why do you use mobile devices
in your job search?**
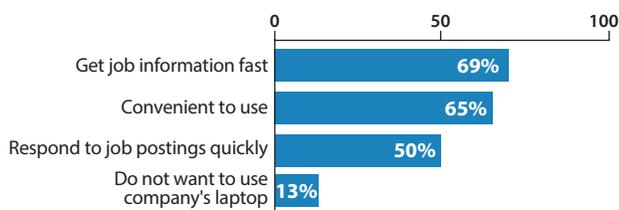
Figure 3: Major reasons to use mobile devices in job searches
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches
(n=8,644)

Previous studies have found that job applicants are more likely to accept job offers if organizations are attractive to them.[4] Interestingly, our analyses reveal that organizations that use mobile technologies to hire are more attractive to job seekers. Among those who have used mobile devices in job searches, nearly 60 percent say organizations offering mobile recruiting are more attractive (Figure 4). The result suggests organizations that have not adopted mobile technologies in recruitment should consider doing so if they want to attract the most talent.

**Organizations that use mobile technologies
to hire are more attractive to me**
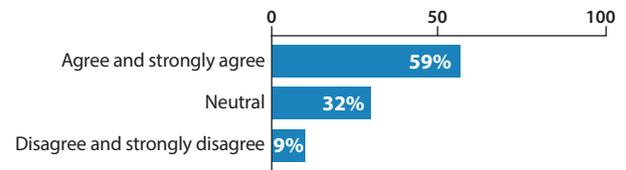
Figure 4: Attractiveness of organizations that use mobile to hire
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches
(n=8,644)

How do job seekers typically use mobile devices?

Our analyses show that job seekers are most frequently using mobile devices to search for and get job-related information (Figure 5). Among those who have used mobile in job searches, the most popular activities are searching for job postings (74 percent), looking for information about potential jobs such as company details (55 percent) and receiving job alerts (54 percent). Many job seekers take further steps. Over one third express job interest via their mobile (35 percent), one in four apply for jobs on mobiles (25 percent), and almost one in five take mobile assessments (18 percent).

**How do you typically use mobile devices
in your job search?**
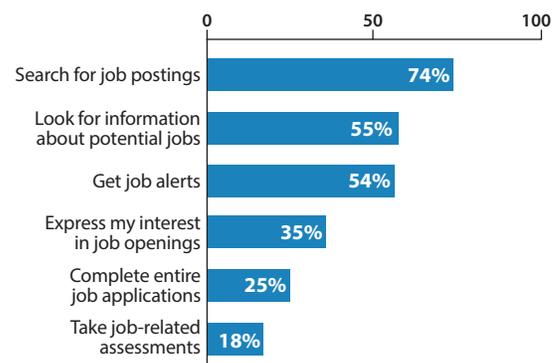
Figure 5: Typical mobile job search activities
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches
(n=8,644)

What concerns do job seekers have?

Despite the popularity of mobile devices for job searches, job seekers have expressed some concerns (Figure 6). The top concerns are: job applications are not easy to complete (47 percent), lack of availability of mobile career websites (43 percent), and resumes are not saved in mobile devices (37 percent). Some job seekers are also concerned about data security (31 percent) and making errors in job applications (26 percent).
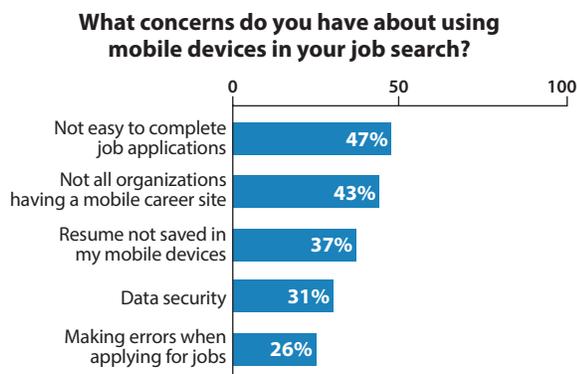
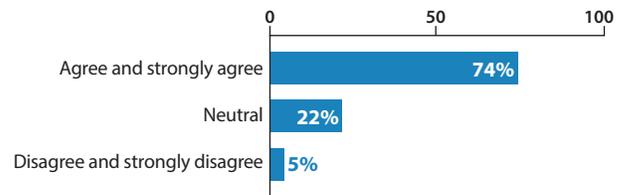**I intend to continue using mobile devices
in my job search in the future**

Figure 7: Intended future use of mobile in job search
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches (n=8,644)

**What concerns do you have about using
mobile devices in your job search?**

Figure 6: Major concerns about using mobile devices in job searches
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches (n=8,644)

Looking in more detail at job seeker expectations of the actual mobile job search process, our analyses reveal that the majority expect job search apps to be easy to use (71 percent), over half expect apps to be personalized (52%), about half expect the application processes to be simple to go through (49%), slightly fewer than half hope all organizations have mobile websites available (46 percent), and about one third expect it won't take much time to answer job application questions (29 percent). These findings provide some useful direction for organizations looking to meet job seeker needs in their mobile recruitment offerings. See Figure 8.

What are job seekers' expectations?

In general, job seekers who have used mobile in job searches expect to continue doing so. Almost three quarters (74) percent want to continue to use mobile devices in future job searches (Figure 7). Even more striking, just 5 percent of respondents do not intend to search for jobs via their mobile devices. With so many potential job seekers using their mobile devices in current and future job searches, it is important for organizations to consider mobile recruitment technologies if they want to reach as broad a candidate pool as possible.

**What are your expectations of mobile
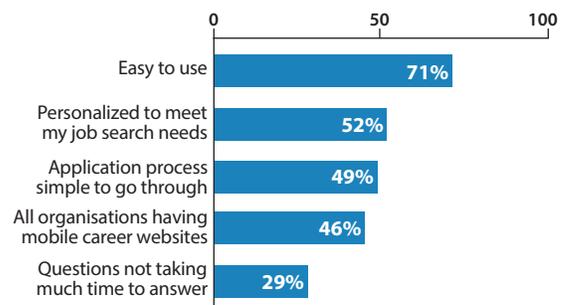job search applications in the future?**

Figure 8: Expectations of mobile job search apps in the future
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches (n=8,644)

A job search process is not just about job seekers' activities. In fact, many organizations are proactively reaching out to potential candidates in different ways. These organizations may want to understand how job seekers prefer to receive job information on their mobile devices. Not surprisingly, the vast majority (92 percent) of job seekers using mobile devices prefer to receive job-related information by email, but a large number are embracing other channels as well, including text messages (32 percent) and social media such as LinkedIn (29 percent) (Figure 9). The results suggest organizations should take advantage of multiple channels to reach talent.

How do you prefer to receive job related information?
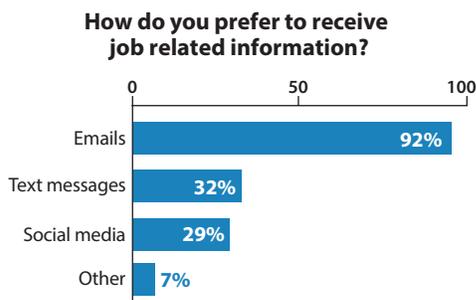
Figure 9: Preference for receiving job-related information
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global employees who have used mobile in job searches (n=8,644)

Implications

The popular use of mobile devices has provided organizations with opportunities to reach a larger pool of talent, but they need to do it in the right way because recruitment activities by organizations may affect applicants' reactions (e.g. applicant attention) and recruitment outcomes (e.g. the number of applications generated).[5]

The findings of this paper have important implications for organizations that are seeking talent:

- **First, mobile career sites are expected.** Given the large number of job seekers who have 'gone mobile', organizations that have not yet adopted mobile technologies in their hiring processes should plan to do so. CareerBuilder's Candidate Behavior Study found that 65 percent of those who search for jobs via mobile devices will leave a web site if it is not mobile-optimized.[6] Therefore, it is critical for organizations to create mobile-optimized career sites to attract potential job applicants.

- **Second, job search apps should be easy to use and personalized.** Simply allowing job seekers to search for jobs via mobile is no longer enough. Organizations should also consider making the job search apps mobile-friendly and personalized to meet individual job search needs. For example, job search apps should allow job seekers to search by various criteria (e.g. job categories, locations) very easily and track their job search activities.

- **Third, application processes need to be simple and time efficient.** Our results reveal that job seekers search or apply for jobs via mobile mainly due to its convenience and ease of use. A complicated and lengthy process will only keep candidates away from completing the application. Instead, simplified processes will facilitate the application experience for candidates. For example, job search apps may allow applicants to link to their social media profiles such as LinkedIn to create their resume.[7]

- **Fourth, data security needs more attention.** Almost one third of job seekers in our survey report concerns about data security when using mobile in job search. Applicants may be inclined to drop out of the job application process if they perceive their information is not stored or delivered securely. To avoid losing potential talent, organizations should emphasize data security in mobile recruiting.

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About the Author

Dr. Haiyan Zhang is an Industrial/Organizational Psychologist with the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute. Her areas of expertise include qualitative and quantitative methods, recruitment and selection, performance management, employee motivation, and cross-cultural research. She is particularly interested in how research evidence can be used to inform HR practices. Her current research focuses on the impacts of technology-enabled HR transformation on employee attraction, engagement and performance. She has presented and published research findings at various conferences and peer-reviewed journals nationally and internationally. She has also served as a reviewer for a number of conferences and journals. Haiyan is a member of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Haiyan received her Ph.D. in Human Resource Management from the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University, Canada. Prior to her doctoral study, Haiyan had extensive research and management consulting experience in China.

Contributors

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References

[1] Retrieved from http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/2014/10/06/NY30877

[2] Retrieved from http://techland.time.com/2012/08/16/your-life-is-fully-mobile/.

[3] The potential jobs seekers are those employees who have job search experiences, but they may or may not currently look for jobs

[4] Carless, S. A. (2005). Person–job fit versus person–organization fit as predictors of organizational attraction and job acceptance intentions: A longitudinal study. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 78(3), 411-429.

[5] Breaugh, J. A., & Starke, M. (2000). Research on employee recruitment: So many studies, so many remaining questions. Journal of management, 26(3), 405-434.

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[7] Retrieved from http://www.cio.com/article/2917316/job-search/10-apps-to-take-your-job-search-mobile.html#slide2

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