

20 tips for exploiting ICT for your company



By [Alan Knott-Craig](#)

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Whether you're in the enterprise or consumer space, you need to know how people (customers and staff) want to use the mobile web. Here are some tips:



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1. BYOD or go home

If your CIO tells you that all staff must use a company phone, fire her. The debate is over. Bring Your Own Device or go home. Keep your policy simple: you are responsible for making sure you can access email anywhere. Use any device you like. Make sure all your company resources are available online, that's it.

2. Design for mobile phones

If your marketing manager is still designing websites for desktops/laptops, fire her. People need to be able to read your website in mobile format, i.e. on a smartphone. Newsflash: WordPress has thousands of templates, takes care of all formatting issues, and is virtually free.

3. Video is the killer media

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth a million pictures. If you want to get your message to staff or customers, use video. Do not invest in your own streaming or video hosting platform. Don't be clever and try reinvent the wheel. Create a private channel on Vimeo or YouTube, and start getting videos out there.

4. Android and Apple have won

The smartphone wars are over. Android and Apple have won. Nokia, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Symbian, whatever, they're all gone. If you want the majority of people to access your content, develop for Android. If you want rich people to access your content, develop for iOS. For the vast majority of cases, your app must be free.

5. There are no more secrets

The internet is here. Facebook is here. WikiLeaks is here. All phones have cameras. There are no more secrets. The Snowden and #PanamaPapers scandals are not anomalies. They are the new norm. Don't do anything that you don't want your staff or customers (or family) to find out about, because they will. 'No more secrets' means no more getting away with lying. Don't lie.

6. Online security

Online security is a big problem, but it's not your problem. Don't let your CIO convince you to spend millions on security. This challenge is being tackled by the big guys: Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Slack, Salesforce, Microsoft. It's being tackled in the cloud. It's being tackled by encryption. Even WhatsApp is encrypted at the ends, so it doesn't matter if your mobile operator is hacked, the content of your conversations can't be accessed.

No more VPNs! Stop it, you're just making it harder for your employees to work. Leave security to the big guys. They'll do a better job, and they won't charge you.

7. Don't forget the human touch

The more digitised the world gets, the more people want a human touch. Never, ever, install voice recognition software in your call centre. Send handwritten letters of thanks to staff. Use humour in adverts. Insert warmth wherever you can, customers and staff need it.

8. Move quickly

If your internal IT project or new product launch takes longer than three months, you're doomed. Either fire the managers or hire the liquidators. Nothing should take longer than three months.

9. Outsource innovation

Very few corporations can innovate. Just because you win an innovation award doesn't make you a great innovator. When you take a step back you'll see you're moving at 5km/hr, whilst your local competition is moving at 1km/hr. Woo-hoo! The problem is the rest of the world is moving at 100km/hr. Moving at 5km/hr still ends in you losing the race. The age of the mobile web means you no longer only face local competition; you face global competition. If you don't move as fast as the world, you're dead.

Standard Bank has recently had enormous success with the mobile payments service, SnapScan. The secret to its success is that it is developed and operated by a small tech startup that benefits from the Standard Bank scale, but doesn't have to battle with internal bureaucracy and politics. If you really want to innovate, find a small group of ambitious youngsters, give them some cash and a vague direction. Unleash them.

10. Throw away legacy and start again

Sometimes you just can't fix what you've got. You have to throw it away and start again. When TenCent (the Chinese social media giant) was considering how to tackle the onslaught of WhatsApp, it had to choose between converting QQ (at the time the leading feature phone IM platform in China) into a smartphone app, or starting from scratch. They went with the latter, creating WeChat, which is now the largest smartphone IM platform in the world (other than WhatsApp). If its broken, don't fix it. Throw it away, start again.

11. Trademarks are worthless, URLs are everything

If you ask the lawyers, they'll tell you trademarks are very important. If you ask your customers they'll tell you they don't care. People only care about your URL. Be sure to own the exact .com and the .co.za of your company name. If you can't get the domains, change your company name.

12. Research should be done online

Anyone still relying on traditional market research methods of manual interviews with pen and paper and 60-day turnaround times, is living in the dark ages. Use the mobile web. Give virtual rewards like airtime. You'll get enormous sample sizes in real-time; and it's cheap.

13. People love being anonymous

The only people who like true identity all the time are those without dreams or without fear, i.e. the rich. When you don't have money, you spend a lot of time dreaming. When you're dreaming you want to be anyone in the world, not who you really are in the world. You want the freedom to be anonymous. Let people be anonymous and they'll engage. In any case, no one is anonymous anymore. Everyone can be tracked. Anonymity is an illusion, it costs you nothing to give it away.

14. Instant messaging is the social platform of the future

People want to chat via text. It's the killer app. Be sure to include chat in your apps and online tools. Do not try create your own social graph. Plug into the WhatsApp API and instantly access the world largest IM platform. Go WhatsApp or go home.

15. Big data is big

But don't do it yourself. Give it to the pros like SAS, then sit back. See point 20.

16. Location is bigger

The most important information on anyone is their location. Location tells you age, income, relevance, race, and almost any other piece of demographic information. Location makes your services more relevant. Location makes everything so much easier. Enable your products and services for location.

17. Mobile phones are the ultimate sensors

Forget about having to deploy special devices. Mobile phones are the measuring tools of the Internet of Things. An example of choosing to deploy special devices is Navteq, a company bought by Nokia in 2008 for \$8bn. Navteq had sensors on roads all over Europe to provide traffic data. Nokia sensibly felt it was an effective defensive move to lock up all traffic data, thereby making its maps more useful than those used by Apple and Google.

Then in 2012, along came an Israeli startup called Waze. Waze surfed the wave of GPS-enabled smartphones, allowing users to report traffic problems directly to the app. Not only does Waze not have to install sensors, but its sensors are upgraded every year as people upgrade their phones. Waze surpassed Navteq in gross amount of traffic information in 2013. Google bought Waze in 2014 for \$1bn. Nokia was sold in May 2016 for \$340m.

18. Usernames and passwords

Stop forcing your customers to have a unique username/password. Your customers want convenience. They don't want to be dictated to by your genius ideas for online authentication.

Facebook has already solved the problem. It doesn't matter whether it's a company intranet or private bank account, let people login using their Facebook ID.

19. Use the web to name and shame

If you want justice, you have two choices: use the courts, spend millions of rands and wait many months/years, or use the mobile web to name and shame. If you force people to authenticate for your products using Facebook ID, you

automatically know who all their family and friends are. If they default on paying you, just let their family and friends know. You'll be paid and you won't have to go to court.

20. Use the web for everything

The next time your CIO insists you need your own internal file sharing service, fire her. Use Box or DropBox. Internal communications? Use WhatsApp or Slack. Server hosting? Use AWS. CRM systems? Use Salesforce. Email? Gmail for business rather than Citrix Worx (which never works). There's no need for proprietary or local applications anymore. Everything is available on the web (in the cloud).

If you don't change your company to accommodate the mobile web, the mobile web will eat you. Welcome to the 'Age of the Mobile Web'.

Read the original article on [The Big Almanack](#).

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Alan Knott-Craig is a South African entrepreneur and author. He is the founder of Project Isizwe as well as executive chairman of Hero Telecoms, Ever Africa, and Happim NPC.

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