

The Use of Instant Messaging Software in the Workplace

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the study of instant messaging technology. It mainly discusses the major benefits and defects of this technology and how it can be changed. In addition, this paper focuses on the use of instant messaging technology in working conditions. Contrasting with other types of messaging software, this paper displays the benefits and shortage of messaging software. The research is done only on employed workers. Throughout this research, the problems and defects of instant messaging software are discovered, such as its overlap with daily life and its restriction in about how to improve software like WeCom, DingTalk, and then leads to an increase in overall working efficiency among different companies. Furthermore, this study focuses on the interaction between instant messaging technology and workers, instead of on either side. Thus, results are given, and suggestions among instant messaging software such as the application of administrator and its combination with other systems are also pointed out.

Keywords: Instant messaging software, Chinese market, workplace.

1. Introduction

Instant messaging is a technology that enables people to communicate online. It generally helps people to entertain themselves, make new friends and share information without meeting each other. In China, WeChat has taken the dominance of the Instant messaging software market with over 1.26 billion active users. Nowadays, message delivering speed has become significantly important these days to a company, no matter in which industry. The birth of instant messaging software like WeChat has solved a great number of problems and give companies better lives.

If using the invention of WeChat to affirm that this technology has gone to a new stage, then instant messaging software has been progressively developing for roughly over 13 years. Through these years, several works and research have been done in this field. Literature done on this topic can mainly be divided into three parts: the discussion of its benefit or efficiency in different fields, the concern of its lack of standards and legal issues and the analysis of its use on a single industry.

It has also discussed the use of instant messaging software, while also claiming its concern with this software. Some articles have discussed the fact that instant messaging software has increased working efficiency, while also discussed the fact that it might lead to other legal issues by its speed of spreading news and messages [1,2]. Further, based on its benefits, it has also been discussed how it can be applied to different fields, such as classes. It has been pointed out that by the application of instant messaging software, more tools can be used in online classes and teaching efficiency can be achieved to a higher level [3-5]. In addition, research has also been done on how instant messaging systems were applied in the workplace, and certain problems between the interactions of the teams and individual has been stated [6]. Most importantly, researchers have put a great amount of work into discovering the limitations and restrictions of the technological progress of Instant Messaging Software [7-10]. Overall, A great number of discussions has been done with instant messaging software. These written works have discussed and solved a great number of problems of instant messaging software. However, it is believed that the research can go further since there is a difference between the use of instant messaging technology in the same company.

Although there are many discussions done on this field, there still lacks study on how exactly a single worker has implemented instant messaging software into their work. Thus, this study has been proposed to explore deeper the use of instant messaging software. Different from other work and research in this field, this study will focus more on how instant messaging software is used in working situations and how it should be enhanced. In addition, this research paper only discusses customer's

experiences and feedback about the mainstream instant messaging software. This research question will mainly be solved through data analysis within a company. The company is basically divided into two parts, which are the operational level and the management level which represents different work content and operations. The expected distinction between the answers by operational level and management level will present the answer to the research question.

2. Questionnaire Design

The data is collected through a questionnaire posted toward different employed workers. It has been sent to two industrial companies and 16 workers have answered them. The questionnaire will contain a clear division between the class of the interviewee, and other questions asking for the use of different types of messaging software. Statistically, to reduce the standard deviation, workers at different types of companies will be asked to take the questionnaire. In addition, to get more accurate information about the result, interviewees are asked to choose the best adjective to describe their answer instead of using numbers.

The questionnaire contains essential information about the respondents, with a clear division of exactly which part of the model that specific worker is in. In addition, a comparison between the past and present will be shown on the questionnaire to explore the development of the instant messaging software industry. It is true that nobody can tell the exact number or percentage of how they use instant messaging software. The choices of response will mainly be adjectives instead of numbers. In addition, only estimation of certain answers can be achieved. Some of the important questions are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Example Questions in Questionnaire

Contents	
Q3	Frequency of workers using instant information technology
Q4	Frequency of workers using classical information technology
Q5	Types of messages are delivered using instant messaging software
Q6	Types of messages are delivered using classical messaging software
Q8	Preference of either type of software
Q9	Whether there is an overlap between daily life and work due to the use of instant messaging software

The survey has been designed to solve problems in different fields. It divided workers into different levels, which was the priority of the research objective. Then, the questions were asked from different perspectives. Question 3 to 6 discusses the contrast of how people use different types of messaging technology, and their preferences. Question 7 and 8 focused on instant messaging technology, which is the topic. These two questions focus on the possibilities of pros and cons of instant messaging technology.

All in all, survey is mainly the research method of this research topic. The survey is designed to contrast different messaging technologies, also asking for the pros and cons of instant messaging technology. This survey is open to only employed workers, which also helps specify the group, and thus specify the results. Through posting the survey, instant messaging software would be analyzed in different perspectives, and more of its ways of development will be explored.

3. Data Analysis

According to the results of the survey, the hypothesis would be proved as valid. In Figure 1, he answers to Question 3 has been shown. None of the respondents has never used any one of the messaging software. On the contrary, over 93% of the respondents have reflected that they “usually” or “always” use instant messaging software like WeChat, WeCom or DingTalk while they also use classical messaging software with an equal amount. This piece of information proves that although instant messaging is developing and progressing, messaging software like e-mail and other types of

classical messaging platform is still essential to people at work. Throughout this data, it can be summarized the fact that the progress of instant messaging software is moving on the right track.

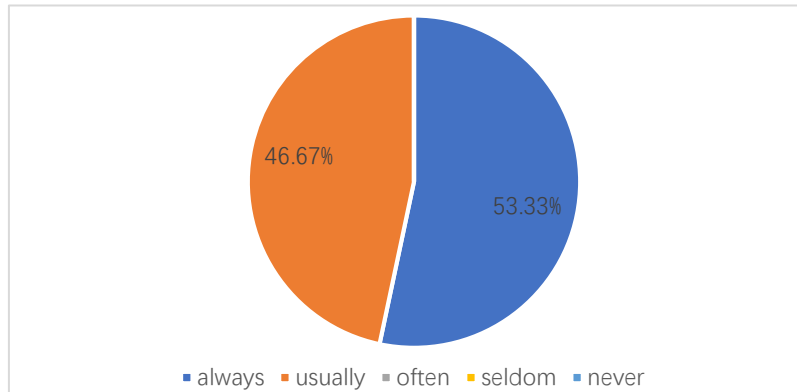


Figure1. Frequency of using instant messaging software

Although both technologies are essential to people’s life, it also should be admitted the fact that the role of instant messaging software to people is significant. All the respondents, no matter which level they are in the company, have reflected that the existence of instant messaging software has increased their working efficiency, and thus makes their work easier. All these results lead to the fact that instant messaging software is taking dominance of the work environment.

The difference of how different levels using instant messaging software has also been shown in Figure 2 and 3. Out of 35.71% of managemental levels in the survey, only 40% percent of them has answered “always” to the question “How often do you use instant messaging software (like WeChat)?”, while all the respondents in operational level have answered “always” to this question.

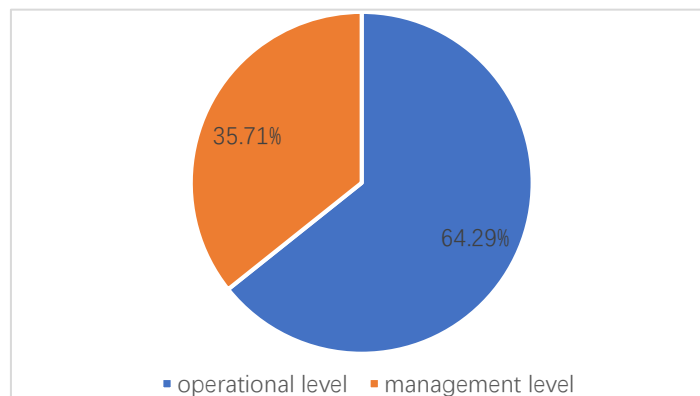


Figure 2. Types of messages do people delivered while using instant messaging software

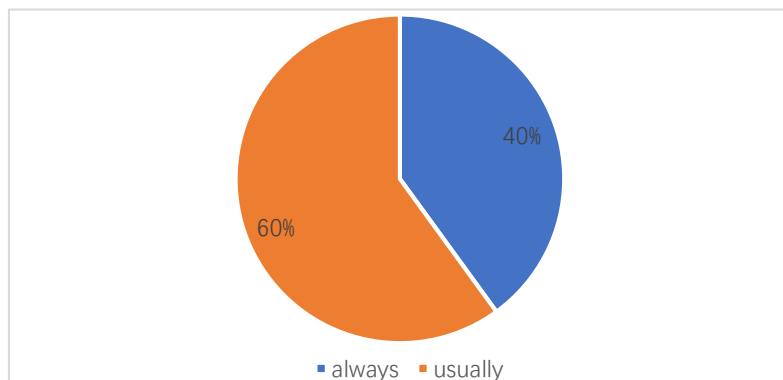


Figure 3. Frequency of using instant messaging software among the management level

Although instant messaging software brought people a great number of working efficiency and quality, it still brings people problems. As shown in Figure 4, in the last question asking whether the respondent feels an overlap between work and life, 53.33% of them answered “yes”. It shows that

instant messaging software has not only been a significant part of people's work, but also a part of people's daily life. The use of the same software in different situations has caused people not able to make a distinction between daily life and work, further decrease efficiency on both sides. Software like WeCom has been specially designed only for working situations, the overlap problem still exists in people's lives.

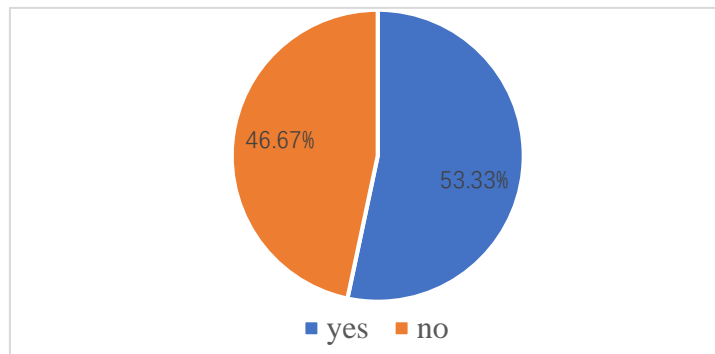


Figure 4. Overlapping problem between life and work while using instant messaging technology

Overall, the data represented the fact that instant messaging technology is a big auxiliary to people at work. They benefited from their working efficiency in different ways and different fields, while remain certain problems of overlapping with people's daily life.

4. Discussion and Suggestion

As how it has been discussed in the data analysis part, further discussion and suggestion can be made to push this technology into a higher level.

Firstly, the progress and development of instant messaging software still should be acknowledged. Nowadays this software has taken dominance of people's way of transferring messaging. Furthermore, it continuously brings people satisfaction in work and lives. The combination of instant messaging technology and other technology in the same software has also provided people convenience. For example, DingTalk has applied the combination between attendance system and instant messaging together, which enables workers can also check and supervise their attendance through an instant messaging software. For another example, WeCom has enabled online editing office apps with multiple workers. The growth of this technology is significant in the working environment nowadays.

However, it does not mean that there are not any problems with this technology currently. As mentioned, instant messaging software usually leads to an overlap between work and life. A classic scenario of such case would be constantly receiving messages during free time. Software like WeCom and DingTalk do not require people to constantly check their messages. They simply omit this process. That causes workers inevitably receiving messages when they are not at work. It leads to a worse rest, and a feeling that they are working every single minute. These effects will influence people's working efficiency and passion. While companies can actively change this situation by having policies and limits, it can also be improved by the software. For example, to better split work and life, instant messaging software can apply a function which shut down the messaging function as soon as workers clock out and leave, and the message sent will be received only after workers clock in and get to work. For emergency messages that require workers to receive immediately, people can choose to use an "emergency call" or "emergency message" that must be approved by superior. In that case, workers do not have to be focus on work every minute and receive multiple messages.

Furthermore, there are also differences between the range of use of instant messaging software by different levels in a company. For example, in a big company, the management level usually holds big meetings and communicates with other co-operators. On the other hand, the operational levels usually must share and work on the same Excel or PowerPoint and report. To address this difference to allocate the resources evenly, instant messaging software like DingTalk, WeCom can provide functions to set administrators in the company structure, and the administrators can have privilege

when using the software, such as start lives in the company, check the attendance, backgrounds and have a more detailed e-name card in their profile. It is true that currently DingTalk and WeCom have “administrator” function, but the administrator should also be given more authority and power in the company structure. To address the problem with the workers, instant messaging software should work on the online editing function. Currently, the “Online editing” office software can hold only a few people, and it is much slower and delayed than normal office software. It significantly decreases workers’ working efficiency while they are cooperating. If the “online editing” function can be improved by holding more people and less delay, more and more workers would choose to use this function while they are working on the same document, and thus work faster and more accurately. Through these changes, workers will be more satisfied with instant messaging software.

Overall, instant messaging software has been developing at a high rate and quickly taking dominance of messaging technology in work. It still leaves certain problems currently, but it can be covered and improved in the coming future. Throughout the analysis, major problems of this software are discovered, and it leaves the software companies with questions about how to apply the new functions in the future.

5. Conclusion

All in all, this paper mainly discusses the use of instant messaging software in working conditions. It focuses on how it is currently used, why it benefits working conditions and how it can be improved further. This paper did researches on currently employed workers and ask for their reaction when using instant messaging software at work, and then analyses their preferences and problems to elicit what are people currently satisfied with and what people think can be improved. After the analysis of currently benefits and problems, this paper focuses on the possible ways to address the problems mentioned on the software company side since that leads to a unified development among people who currently use working instant messaging software. This paper mainly provided two suggestions which can possibly solve the problem of overlap between work and life, and the difference between the use of instant messaging software by different levels. Through these changes, instant messaging technology can better be applied to life and better help people while they are at work. Furthermore, according to other economic and technical support, instant messaging software is believed to be more dominant in how people convey their messages these days, and overall leads to better working efficiency.

This research paper can have limitations in its research range and its research scale, and the data and results can be different from the reality. It still does not mean that the paper does not show the real situation of Chinese workplace these days. To build better working conditions and workplace in the future, suggestions should be taken, and it makes the world a better place.

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