onlyPulpandPaperJobs.com

Tech changes affecting your career now, part 2 of 3

By Paperitalo Staff

We talked last week about the softer side of tech changes affecting your career now--matters such as public relations. Let's get into a little more of the "meat and potatoes" this week.

First, we will start with applications, or "apps" for smart phones which are growing by leaps and bounds. This is happening primarily in the retail sector, but we are starting to see some valuable ones in industry as well. Unfortunately, there is not a widespread standard for these just yet (those written for iPhones have to be converted to Java Script in order to be used on Android phones), but they are proliferating.

Already you can have the entire periodic table of the elements on your phone, as well as pump calculation algorithms, scientific calculators and more.

So what is right around the corner? Anything your data collection system collects now should be available in easy to use form on your smart phones. Ask your suppliers of equipment and services to include these in your quotations the next time you buy software.

As far as security is concerned, with the GPS in smart phones, you should be able to set the transmission of data only to approved phones within a certain perimeter of the machine, or other places of your choosing. I have an app, for instance, that automatically puts my phone in silent mode within 200 feet of the church I attend. If I can get that for free, the reverse should certainly be available for you.

Simply, any data you can receive on your computer, you should be able to receive on your phone. Again, ask your custom software providers to include this in their next quote.

Of course, the next step after that is to be able to use your phone to control processes. This may be a bit more ticklish and needs to be thought through, but it may actually reverse the trend of the last couple of decades of putting operators in a control room. After all, the control room came into being in order to find a place with a forgiving environment to put all the computers that run your processes (or, before that, all the gauges and so forth). If their controls are in their hands, the operators can be up close and personal with the process if necessary. Control rooms may come to look more like conference rooms with the participants coming and going as necessary.

Next, let's think about customer service. If you are manufacturing printing grades or board grades, your product goes to a printing plant or some sort of box plant. Offer to install appropriate sensors on your customer's lines to monitor the performance of your product. Equip your tech service people with smart phones that can see this data and receive set point alarms. With everyone giving appropriate permissions, your tech service people can immediately text message the operators on the customers' production lines with real time problem solutions. All this data can be recorded to be reconciled in returns and allowances (R & As). This should result in better performance for your customers and fewer R & As for you.

Smart phones also can be used, if you so desire, to be "big brother." Equip all employees with smart phones and your hourly employees no longer need to "punch in." The phone will tell you exactly when they arrive on site and where they spend their entire shift. This capability will be particularly useful in analyzing maintenance activities (how much time did the mechanics spend at the job site, how many trips did they have to make back and forth to stores, etc.).

Of course, also of use to maintenance would be using the GPS and barcode reader (my phone does both right now) to allow a maintenance worker at a piece of equipment to immediately pull up drawings, instruction manuals and every other imaginable piece of data on that equipment right on the spot, automatically. And, again, with the right software, a push of the button should allow this person to talk directly to the equipment manufacturer's support people, wherever they may be.

Some of these ideas are available right now. I would be surprised if anything in this column takes as long as five years to become commonplace. Your entire employee base is about to be freed from a location-specific computer.

For safety this week, consider this. With the accelerometer and GPS built into a smart phone, the phone could call for EMTs if a person suddenly fell down and at the same time tell the EMTs where the person is. That would save a few lives, I am sure.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##