

SMARTPHONES IN THE WORKPLACE

Benefits of Web-accessible Smart Phones



Source: Home Depot, 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides analysis of the benefits of smartphones in association to Home Depot employees. After reviewing our findings, we concluded the best phone for your salespeople is the Android LG G4.

Research

We used primary research to target the most popular smartphones, as well as problems with the current devices and requests of characteristics in the proposed smartphone. Secondary research was used to determine the benefits of smartphones in the workplace, judge the accuracy of our primary research, and to find solutions for risks mentioned in primary research.

Findings

Once all data and information was compiled, we found that the current devices could be improved in many ways. The devices are in desperate need of improvement due to the high use by employees and with customers. Employees value certain specifications including: large screen size, long battery life, quality audio, and a sturdy phone overall. We also understand that employees would like a simple device, and we believe Android offers this and everything requested.

Individuals surveyed expressed negative associations with phone use during a conversation. In order to address this concern, the larger Android screen and high resolution will increase customer relations and involvement.

Recommendation

We recommend that you introduce Android LG G4 to your sales associates. The Android is the best fit for your employees and will allow Home Depot to stay up-to-date with its competitors by using advanced technology. We believe customer relations will improve and lead to an increase in sales and revenue.

Budget

Your total budget will be approximately \$28,300 per store for the integration of Android LG G4. We believe this investment will be successful and worthwhile. Implementing advanced devices will increase employee efficiency, communication, and knowledge; all of which will lead to happier customers and increased sales.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

As you know, Home Depot prides itself on providing hands-on customer service. However, current devices used by Home Depot do not fully meet these standards.

According to our research, current devices cause the following problems:

- High cost in training employees
- Limited accessibility to important information
- Slow response times between coworkers
- Bulky and inconvenient to carry
- Security concerns

Purpose

This report was requested to investigate the benefits of smartphones and their relevance to modern business practices.

The purpose of research is to:

- Identify the benefits of web-accessible cell phones
- Determine if smartphones are an ideal sales tool
- Compare the top three smartphones
- Select the best smartphone for Home Depot's salespeople
- Address the risks of smartphone use
- Establish a smartphone policy

In completing our investigation, we will suggest a recommendation to justify smartphones' benefits to associates and use as an ideal sales tool.

Home Depot Background

As you may know, Home Depot began operations in 1978 and currently serves all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, 10 provinces in Canada, and Mexico. It is one of the world's largest home improvement specialty retailers. Home Depot strives to, "offer the best customer service in the industry, guiding customers through projects such as laying tiles, changing a fill valve, or handling a power tool. Not only did store associates undergo rigorous product knowledge training, but they also began offering clinics so customers could learn how to do it themselves. The Home Depot revolutionized the home improvement industry by bringing the know-how and the tools to the consumer and by saving them money" (Home Depot). In order to fulfill Home Depot's model of "whatever it takes," which means cultivating a relationship with

the customers rather than merely completing a transaction, associates on the floor need web accessible mobile devices to stay connected to fellow co-workers and answer challenging questions customers might pose.

The benefits of having associates with web-accessible mobile devices outweigh the negative associations of phone use. With 40,000 building products and 250,000 special order products available at Home Depot stores, floor associates need web-accessible cell phones to improve customer relations. As seen in Figure 1, store sizes average 105,000 square feet, and 23,000 additional square feet for outdoor garden area. Home Depot’s large floor plan will give smartphones an additional use: a time saver for employees. With this background information and understanding of Home Depot’s values, we formed a recommendation taking into consideration all relevant factors.

Figure 1: Home Depot Floorplan



Source: Built From Scratch, 2015

RESEARCH METHODS USED

Research for this report, was conducted using primary and secondary sources.

Survey and Interview Description

The purpose of primary research is to get a first-hand account of smartphones benefits in the workplace, as well as Home Depot employees' experiences with the current device.

The survey was used to interview 23 individuals and question their phone use and habits. In the questionnaire we examined many factors including: phone types, likes and dislikes about their current device, time spent on the phone, opinions of phones interrupting conversations, and possible problems at work caused by phones. We plan to use our survey results as a comparison to secondary research and determine if smartphones are an ideal sales tool, and which phone is the best fit for associates.

We interviewed Home Depot employees with a series of questions. Their answers provided insight to what characteristics are necessary in the next mobile device Home Depot should use.

Current Devices Used by Home Depot

In 2011, Home Depot introduced the "First Phone Junior." Home Depot's goal was to have 12 devices per store with the sole purpose of improving customer relations. The devices provided inventory updates to allow sales associates to have an accurate inventory status. The device also sped up checkout time by allowing employees to scan items while customers waited in line. In 2011, "First Phone Junior" was credited with increasing inventory turnover and sales associates were able to spend 53% of their time assisting customers. Although Home Depot embraces new technology, it is falling behind industry standards. In regards to web-accessible smartphones, Lowe's, Home Depot's leading competitor, began giving iPhones to their sales associates in 2010 (Schectman, 2012).

Home Depot currently uses a device called FIRST Phone by Zebra Technologies, a manufacturer of handheld computers. The device was specifically designed for The Home Depot to improve customer service and employee efficiency. It allows associates to have walkie-talkie conversations, inventory management, product look-up, and business analytics all in one device (Built, 2015).

This device is bulky and does not include benefits that advanced technology could offer. The image on the right below it an idea of what the new Home Depot application could look like on a smartphone.

Figure 2: FIRST Phone by Zebra Technologies



Source: Built From Scratch, 2015

Current Devices Used by Other Firms

Home Depot's biggest competitor is Lowe's. In 2011, their company went through one of the "largest single year investment in IT in-store systems infrastructure" (Claburn, 2012). They bought over 42,000 iPhones for their sales associates and employed over one thousand IT staff. Each iPhone is custom tailored to have the Lowe's app so they can check inventory, share how-to videos, and check competitor prices. There are two types of internal Lowe's apps, one for staffers and one for managers. The employee app is suited to help the customers by having information about prices, availability, and sales. The manager app provides access to sales reports, order statuses, and employee scheduling.

Secondary Research

The purpose of secondary research is to support our primary resource findings and provide in-depth insight into smartphones. We plan to use secondary research to determine the benefits of smartphones in general and compared to Home Depot's current device. This research will also allow us to target ideal characteristics of different smartphones and decide which would be the best fit for Home Depot sales associates. Secondary research will help us identify relevant risks to smartphone use, as well as how to address them in our suggested policies and etiquette.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Methods used in researching the benefits are:

1. Surveys
2. Interviews
3. Secondary Sources

The variety of primary and secondary sources gives us a diverse range of responses in determining the benefits of smartphones in the workplace. The survey consists of nine questions distributed among smartphone users. Secondary research was used to give a wider response, and support our survey. Interviews were conducted with several Home Depot employees.

Survey and Interview Results

Our primary research has further supported our secondary research findings. The three most popular phones are the iPhone, Galaxy, and Android. As the pie chart below shows, the iPhone was the most popular among the individuals we surveyed. Although the iPhone is the most common and well-liked phone, we believe further research is necessary to determine the smartphone we should recommend. From the data we collected below, the iPhone also received many more cons than the other two options.

Figure 3: Phone Type Pie Chart

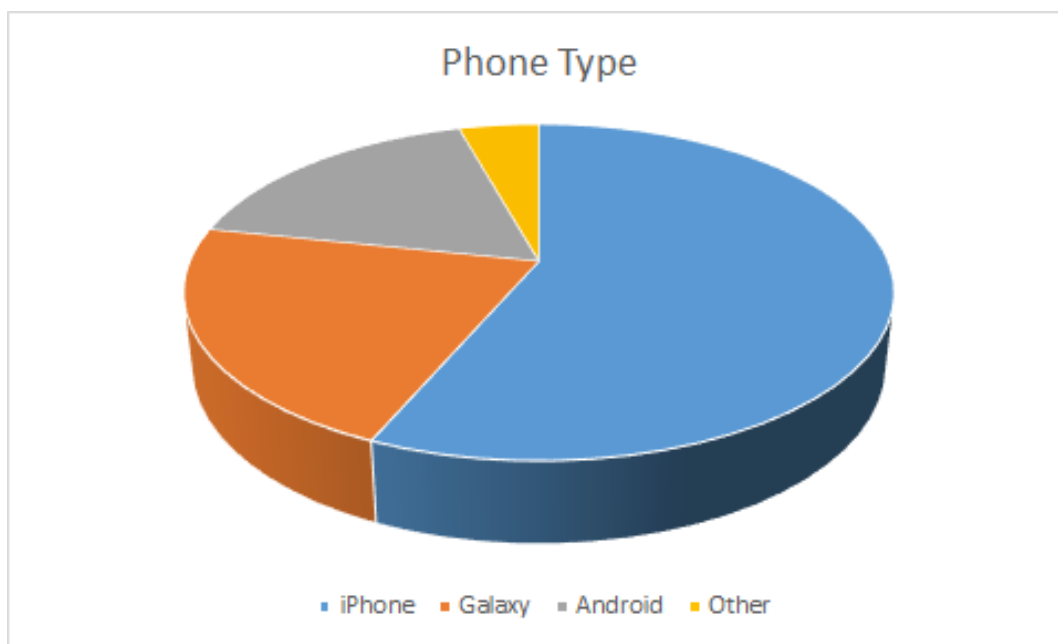
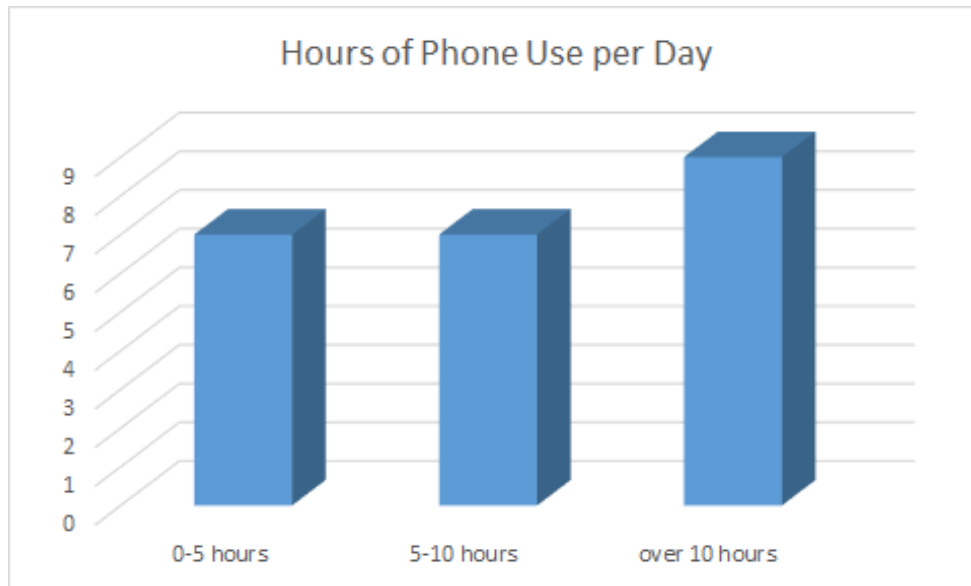


Figure 4: Pros and Cons of Smartphones - Primary Research

	Apple's iPhone	Samsung's Galaxy	Google's Android
Pros	Internet/email accessible, ability to multitask, apps, Facetime	Internet/email accessible, large screen	Sturdy, large screen, decent battery life
Cons	Breaks easily, charger is not universal, expensive, software bugs, poor battery life	None mentioned in primary research	None mentioned in primary research

Our survey results, shown in the bar graph below, show most people use their phones over ten hours per day. This indicates that individuals are somewhat addicted to their phones and rely on them throughout their day.

Figure 5: Phone Use per Day Bar Graph



When asked, “Does your phone ever cause problems at work, for example distraction,” 12 out of 23 said they found their phones distracting. We have also discovered that all but three people who took the survey felt disrespected when someone used their phone while having a face-to-face conversation.

Figure 6: Problems at Work Pie Chart

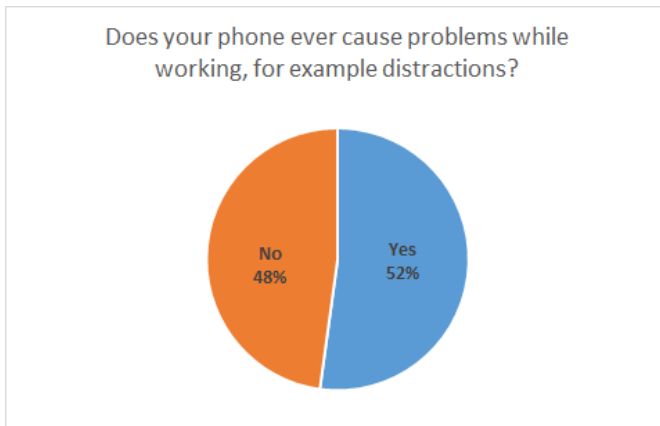
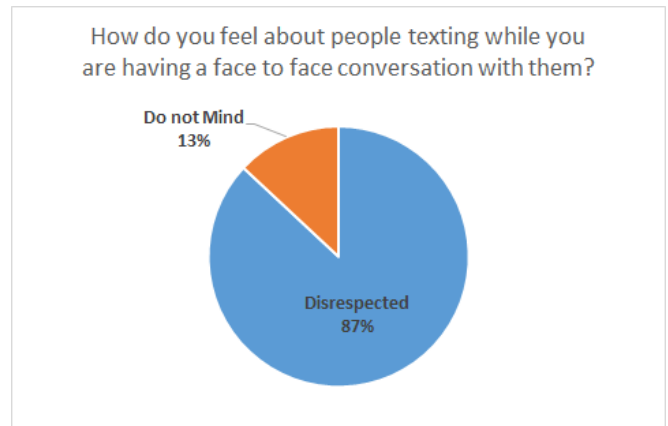


Figure 7: Negative Association Pie Chart



We believe due to the average person’s addiction to their smartphones, and the feeling of disrespect associated with phones, introducing smartphones to Home Depot will be a challenge. Possible solutions addressing this problem are presented later in the report.

Through our interviews with Home Depot employees, we discovered key areas to improve the device. Employees’ opinions will also help us decide which phone will be the best fit. We were informed that employees spend at least half of their day assisting customers, and 20% of their time with customers, the device has been useful.

Complaints of current devices include:

- Small keyboard and screen
- Bulky technology fits oddly in apron and causes back strain
- Audio is poor, especially in loud department store
- Difficulty scanning barcodes
- Screen alignment issues

Requests for new devices:

- Larger screen
- Something sturdy – be able to set it down without worry
- Speaker quality – difficult to hear
- Strong battery life – needs to last all day

We believe addressing these requests can increase time spent helping customers and the customer can be more involved throughout the process.

All questions used in our primary research are in the appendix.

Benefits of Smartphones

We propose the introduction of smartphones to Home Depot for numerous reasons. Home Depot sales associates currently use FIRST Phone throughout their day. FIRST Phone was created to allow employees to access information they would normally need a computer for. Although their personalized handheld computer is useful in many ways, and may give employees flexibility and increased efficiency, we believe smartphones will be more beneficial. Smartphones do not have the same learning curve handheld computers do because smartphones are more common in employees' everyday life. Handheld computers are also bulky and have small screens and keyboards. Smartphones would address both of these problems as well.

We believe that through smartphone use and a specialized application, employee efficiency will increase, along with ease of accessibility to important information necessary to make sales. We also hope the application will give each employee a database of information that will increase their individual knowledge and be able to better help customers. The application will also offer conversions to further help employees. All of this combined will allow customer relations to improve, and employees to be able to give each customer more time and more specific information. The application will also include the ability to determine inventory levels not only at their location, but also at locations nearby to guide the customer to the nearest store if a product is not in stock.

Flavia Cavazotte, Ana Lemos, and Kaspar Villadsen conducted a survey to understand how corporate smartphone use affects professionals in their work, attention to critical issues, and networking and communication. It was determined that smartphones allow communication and task solving to take place during times usually devoted to private activities (Cavazotte, 2014). Workers are now always "on-call" and fast responses are expected, even during time off. Smart phones allow flexible working arrangements, which were not possible prior. Professionals whose activities required continuous coordination with colleagues, clients, and associates welcomed new communication technologies with a positive attitude (Cavazotte, 2014). In 2007, it was found that BlackBerry users viewed their devices as empowering and gave them more control over their environments (Cavazotte, 2014). The flexibility smartphones give allowed users to feel more in control of their day and how they communicate. Professionals evaluated their increased technology use and engagement in work related communications as voluntary (Cavazotte, 2014).

Participants in the study gave emphasis to the possibilities created by smart phones; email management was a key benefit mentioned (Cavazotte, 2014). Although email was the main application used, portability and ease of operation/elimination of restrictions of place and time were also appreciated. Some negatives mentioned included: an increased workload, blurring of work/life boundaries, interfering with leisure time, and spousal resentment/family conflicts (Cavazotte, 2014). With smartphones come an increasing expectancy for availability and fast responses by superiors. The devices make employees feel obliged to respond immediately, even on their time off. Participants in the study identified their technology use as crazy, compulsive, and unhealthy, yet many felt powerless in their dependencies (Cavazotte, 2014). Although the study addressed many

concerns connected with phone use, we do not believe these problems will be relevant, as our proposal requires employees to keep the smartphones in each store at all times. These and additional risks will be mentioned later in Risks of Smartphones.

Comparison of Top Three Smartphones

Figure 8: Phone Comparison Table

			
	iPhone 6	Galaxy S6	Android LG G4
Finish	Silver, Gold, Space Gray	White Pearl, Gold Platinum, Black Sapphire	Leather: Brown and Black Craft: Metallic and Ceramic
Capacity/Price	16GB - \$199 64GB - \$299 128GB - \$399	32GB--\$199 64GB and 128GB prices not found	32GB - \$199
Weight/Dimensions	4.55 oz. 5.44 x 2.64 x .27 (inches)	4.87 oz. 5.65 x 2.78 x .27 (inches)	5.47 oz. 5.5 x 3.0 x .39 (inches)
Screen Size	14.36 square inches	15.70 square inches	16.50 square inches
Display	4.7" Retina HD	5.1"	5.5" Quad HD
Platform	iOS 8	AndroidOS	Android 5.1 Lollipop
Battery	14 hours talk-time	17 hours talk-time Wireless charging	19 hours talk-time Removable 3,000 mAh battery
Extra	Many video recording features, Airdrop, Control Center, iCloud, Notification Center, Siri	Up to 2160p HD recording, S-Voice commands, 115GB Cloud storage, noise cancellation	Video capabilities, voice dialing and commands, voice recording

Sources: Apple, 2015; GSMarena, 2015; Engadget, 2015; Wired, 2015

Risk of Smartphones

In terms of risks, there are many that Home Depot will have to navigate in order to achieve overall success in integrating the workplace with smartphones. We have found many risks, including:

- Blurring of work/social boundaries
- Distractions caused by usage
- Security concerns
- Increased responsibilities for staff members

These risks need to be understood and controlled. As identified in primary research, individuals feel disrespected when phones interrupt a conversation. Nearly 90% of people surveyed answered that they feel disrespected when another person is using their phone during face-to-face conversations. In order to eliminate this stigma while integrating smartphones, we believe that employees should allow customers to view the screen while searching for information in order to keep them interested and feeling respected.

In today's society it is difficult to find a boundary between work and social life, so when implementing smartphones at Home Depot there will be strict guidelines to ensure the two do not mix. To give a better understanding of how distracting smartphones can be, the app maker Locket did a study on unlocking phones. Locket found that the average person unlocks his or her own phone 110 times a day (Aamoath, 2013).

To add to the idea of blurred boundaries and distractions, there are many security concerns associated with smartphones. Some security concerns include platform-oriented issues, battery life issues, vulnerability to theft and loss, and other concerns such as problems with updating and saving information and safety of corporate data (Wang, 2012).

These risks are important to consider when trying to integrate smartphones due to the possibility of damaging Home Depot's reputation and leaking corporate data in the event of a breach. Although some risks are unlikely, it is essential to understand and assess all possible risks.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Ideal Sales Tool

Smartphones are an ideal tool for Home Depot's salespeople and they will allow profits to rise. The amount of knowledge employees have at their fingertips, whether through the application or other sources, will give employees the confidence they need to make sales. Customers will also feel more engaged in the purchasing process. Rather than employees listing numbers and facts they can show customers comparisons on their phones and walk them through the process visually, even if the product is no longer in stock. Cell phones were introduced for a simple purpose: to connect employees on the floor. We propose to keep the original idea in mind while incorporating innovative technology that will benefit Home Depot as a whole.

Recommended Smartphone

We have contacted all three providers. After sending RFPs and receiving bids, our choices were narrowed down. Apple notified us that because they had an exclusive deal with Lowe's - Apple could not provide to competitors - they could not place a bid at the time. Samsung (Galaxy) and Google (Android) both offered competitive pricing on the product price and data plan, however Google bid lower and offered better customization options. We recommend Android LG G4 due to the better deal as well as many other factors. As mentioned, Android has the largest screen without making the phone difficult or uncomfortable to hold. It also has the longest battery life, and even if the battery runs out, the removable pack can be replaced by an extra charged battery pack. The display on Android has a higher resolution than Galaxy which allows employees and customers interact with the phone more simply. Android is known for producing sturdy phones and we believe the product will be an excellent fit for the environment.

Overall, based on our primary and secondary research, we recommend you choose the Android to introduce to your sales associates. We feel it is the best fit because it addresses your employees' requests and customers' needs. We also recommend you hire at least one IT staff member per store to help with the integration and handle any additional issues. The anticipated salary and wages increase is included in the budget.

PROPOSED SMARTPHONE POLICY/ ETIQUETTE

Throughout our research, we have discovered possible risks of smartphone use, as well as negative associations with phone use in general. To assure the success of smartphones in the hands of your employees, we suggest the following policies and etiquette to include in the introduction of new devices.

Smartphone Policy:

- All smartphones must remain inside the store at all times
- Smartphones can be picked up and left at a designated location to charge while off the clock
- Texting capabilities are meant to contact only coworkers who are also on the clock
- All smartphone use must be related to work
- Phone use is not permitted during meetings
- Personal phone use of any kind is not permitted unless on break
- Do not share usernames or passwords with anyone
- Passwords must be changed on a monthly basis
- Do not use the phone while on ladders or while operating motorized vehicles

Advise your employees to engage customers if using their smartphones to address a question or issue the customer has asked about. Smartphone Etiquette below offers guidelines on how to avoid negative opinions from forming on smartphone use.

Smartphone Etiquette:

- Focus 100% on the person in front of you: if engaged in a conversation with an employee or customer, do not use the smartphone unless looking up relevant information
- Keep the customer involved: when looking up relevant information during a conversation, inform the second party what you are doing and show them the screen if possible
- Be considerate: make sure you are not disturbing anyone with a phone conversation
- Keep it professional: all texts and emails should use proper grammar and spelling, remember it is a company phone and should only be used in a respectable manner
 - Harassment or discriminatory content of any kind will not be tolerated

TIMELINE

Because smartphones are common in everyday use, Home Depot employees should have little difficulty understanding the new technology being proposed. We estimate an hour-long training session should be adequate to introduce employees to the Home Depot application and any other uses of the phone. We propose that we give store implements this new mobile device in a six-month period. The proposed time line is below. If our proposed timeline is completed by January 1, 2016, all Home Depot employees will have the necessary technology to improve customer relations.

Figure 9: Milestone Timeline

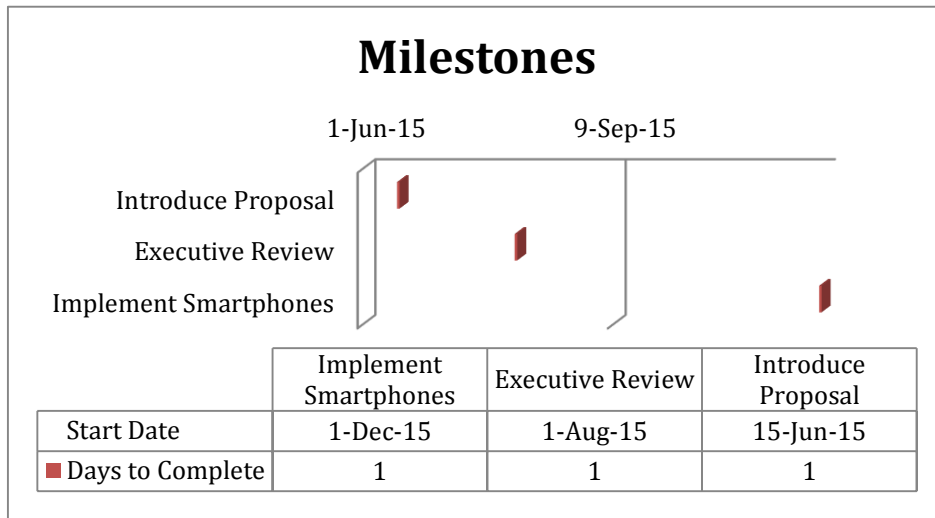
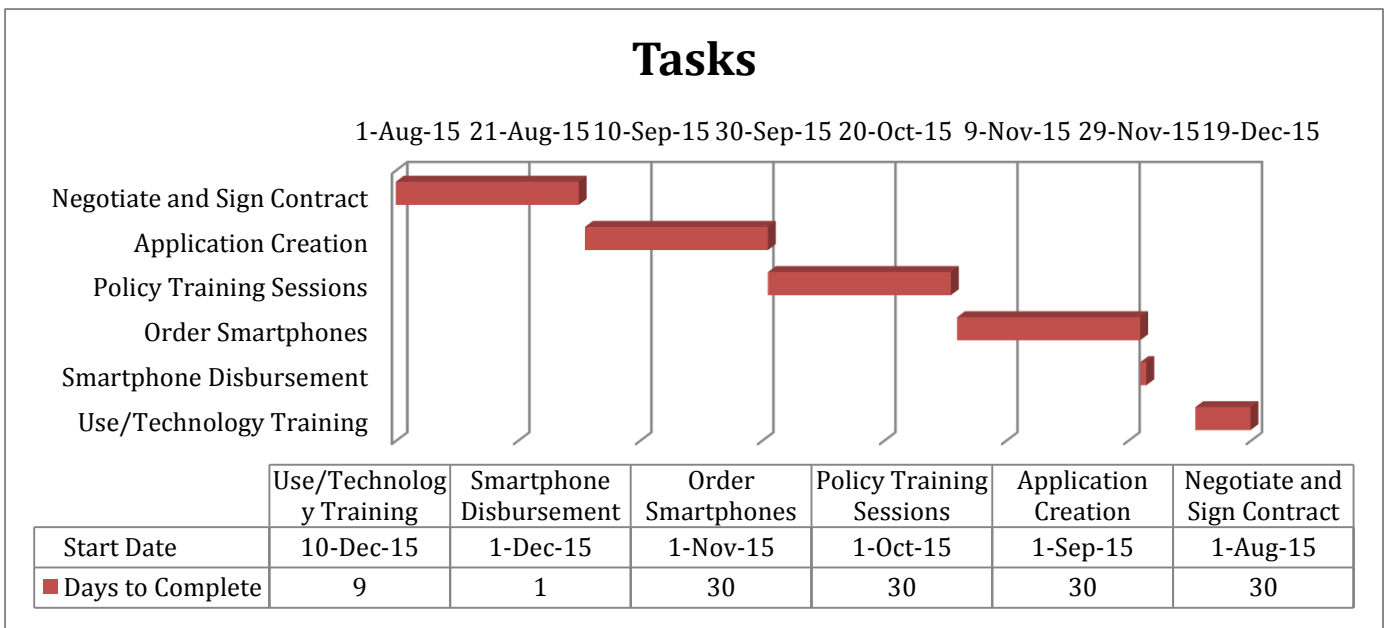


Figure 10: Task Timeline



BUDGET

Below is an estimated budget per store. We believe each training session can be completed in an hour and will allow employees to become comfortable with the new technology; this will be a small one-time cost. The actual cost of the phones will be about \$300 each including any customization requested. The current IT staff in charge of FIRST Phones should be kept on staff, and we suggest adding an additional staff member, costing \$25,000 a year. A resale of the FIRST Phones will bring in an estimated \$1,500 per store, lowering the overall cost.

Figure 11: Budget

Budget Per Store			
Expense Descriptions	Unit Cost	Units	Total Cost
Training Sessions (Policy and Use)	\$7.5/hour	20 employees	\$ 300.00
Smartphones	\$300 per phone	15 phones	\$ 4,500.00
Additional IT Staff	\$25,000/year	1 staff member	\$ 25,000.00
FIRST Phone Resale			\$ (1,500.00)
Total Estimated Cost Per Store			\$ 28,300.00

At an estimated cost of \$28,300 per store, Home Depot will achieve its goal of providing hands-on relations with customers. Note that these are only estimates, and actual costs may vary.

GLOSSARY

Airdrop: Ad-hoc service in Apple Inc.'s operating systems that enables the transfer of documents among supported devices

Android OD: Operating system introduced by Google for mobile devices

Control Center: Gives access to commonly used settings and apps from anywhere in iOS

FIRST Phone: Device currently used by Home Depot, developed by Zebra

iCloud: Makes sure iOS devices are always up to date, allows the sharing of photos, purchases, and more with friends and family

iOS 8: Eighth generation operating system of Apple Inc. products

Notification Center: Feature in iOS that provides an overview of alerts from applications and displays the notification until the user completes an associated action

Siri: A part of Apple's iOS that acts as an intelligent personal assistant and knowledge navigator

S-Voice: Intelligent personal assistant and knowledge navigator only available for Samsung smartphones

Smartphone: Mobile devices that have the ability to access the web and applications

mAh: Milliampere hour is 1000th of an ampere hour (Ah) which measures energy charge that a battery can hold

Polyphonic ringtone: Type of ringtone that is more advanced and offers better quality than standard monophonic ringtones

RFPs: Request for Proposals

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APPENDIX

Survey

Instructions:

Answer each of the following questions by circling each letter. Reminder: be honest in your answers.

1. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
2. Type of phone, you have
 - a. Apple's iPhone
 - b. Samsung's Galaxy
 - c. Google's Android
 - d. Other : _____
3. How satisfied are you with your current mobile device?
 - a. Satisfied
 - b. Very Satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Unsatisfied
 - e. Very Unsatisfied
 1. if you could, tell us what you like/ dislike about your phone?
 2. _____
4. Do you ever text and drive?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
5. How many hours a day do you spend using your phone?
 - a. 0 - 5 hrs
 - b. 5 - 10 hrs
 - c. Over 10 hrs
6. How do you feel about people texting while you are having a face-to-face conversation with them?
 - a. Very respected
 - b. Respected
 - c. No Comment
 - d. Disrespected
 - e. Very disrespected
7. Do you have a work phone or use your personal phone for work?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

If yes:

1. What type of job you have?
2. Has your company ever had a security breach due to smartphone use?
3. How does your phone benefit you in the workplace?
8. Does your phone ever cause problems while working? For example, distractions.
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
9. Any additional comments you have on phone use (personal or professional) in their workplace.

Interview

Questions Used:

1. Can you explain the current devices used?
2. What do you like/dislike about these devices?
3. How much of your time would you say is spent helping customers?
4. Do you think you could be more productive with a smartphone instead of the FIRST Phone?

CREDITS

Letter of Transmittal: [REDACTED]

Executive Summary: [REDACTED]

Table of Contents: [REDACTED]

List of illustration: [REDACTED]

Introduction

Problem: [REDACTED]

Purpose: [REDACTED]

Background: [REDACTED]

Research Methods Used

Survey and Interview Description [REDACTED]

Current Devices Used by Home Depot: [REDACTED]

Current Devices Used by Other Firms: [REDACTED]

Secondary Research: [REDACTED]

Discussion of Findings

Survey and Interview Results: [REDACTED]

Benefit of smartphones: [REDACTED]

Comparison of top three cell phones: [REDACTED]

Risk of Smartphones: [REDACTED]

Conclusion and Recommendation

Ideal Sales Tool: [REDACTED]

Recommended Smartphone: [REDACTED]

Proposed Smartphone Policy / Etiquette: [REDACTED]

Timeline: [REDACTED]

Budget: [REDACTED]

Glossary: [REDACTED]

Work Cited: [REDACTED]

Bibliography: [REDACTED]

Appendix: [REDACTED]