

**Mobile Telephone Etiquette: Is it an Issue for Business Employers?**

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## **Abstract**

### **An Exploratory Survey of Employer Perceptions of the Technology Etiquette Displayed by New Hires: Implications for Post-Secondary Policy and Curriculum Content**

Mobile telephone technology is pervasive. The literature details increasing concerns about poor technology etiquette in both the college classroom and the business environment. However, there is limited research to determine what constitutes appropriate etiquette in either environment. While use within the classroom could serve to educate students in appropriate etiquette, adherence to policy guidelines for student use of mobile technology in college varies by instructor and program. This research study examines the views of employers on whether technology etiquette in business is an issue and investigates their expectations for appropriate behaviors in the workplace. A sample of six local Edmonton business representatives were interviewed using a semi-structured, in-person interview methodology. Findings are examined within the context of social learning theory to provide guidance for application within classroom policy and course curriculum. The study finds that the ways new employees use their mobile telephones in the workplace impacts how they are perceived professionally. Mobile telephone etiquette is in flux: while the benefits of enhanced speed of communication and connectivity, and opportunities afforded by new methods of communication are acknowledged, potential for distraction and invasiveness, and increasing informality in communication style concern employers. The research uncovers a singular theme: contradiction. Mobile telephone etiquette is defined and experienced differently by employers, employees, educators, and students. Recommendations are provided for students and for colleges to better meet the expectations of industry.

## I. Introduction

Castells (2009) stated that “Mobile telephones are the fastest diffusing communication technology in history” (p.62). Alberta households lead the country in the penetration of cell phones at 87% (Statistics Canada, 2011). Smartphones became the mobile device of choice in Canada in 2012 as penetration jumped rapidly to 62% by December (comScore, 2013). You need not be an academic to notice these devices are turning up increasingly in places where usage has previously been low, such as restaurants, movie theatres, the gym or classroom. Walk through the halls of college campuses and you will see young adults together or alone, punching away at their mobile devices, often seemingly oblivious to those around them. Business people at lunch tables or meetings are often tapping away at their devices as well. The rapid diffusion of technology and its use in our daily lives to augment our personal communication have impacted our behaviors and the etiquette of communication. The research examined the views of business employers on whether technology etiquette in business is an issue with employers and investigated their views regarding how mobile technology, specifically smartphones and cell phones, are being used in the workplace. This research project was conducted at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT); a polytechnic post-secondary college located in Edmonton, Alberta. The author interviewed one representative from each of the six JR Shaw School of Business Advisory Committees that regularly meet to inform management and faculty on current and/or emerging industry requirements and/or trends.

Significant research indicates that the mobile telephone is seen as an invasive influence in public spaces (Klamer et al., as cited in Ling 2004; Ling, 1997; Ling, 2004; Mante-Meijer et al. as cited in Ling 2004; Mark, 1994; & Srivastava, 2006). Ling (2004) states, “data from interviews and focus groups indicate an almost visceral reaction to the inappropriate use of

mobile telephones ...the respondents were able to offer clearly formulated and well-rehearsed tirades against those who used mobile telephones in public (p. 124)”. Ling says that this is an indicator that we are in the process of sorting out our collective sense of how to deal with norms of use. As new digital technologies become increasingly assimilated into every aspect of our lives, protocols for appropriate usage is in its infancy.

The research investigates whether mobile technology etiquette is an issue for business employers today. The report begins with a literature review that explores the social expectations and etiquette for the use of mobile telephones and focuses on the specific environments that influence behaviors, including the home, the college classroom and the business workplace. The report explores the idea that mobile telephone use behavior in the post-secondary classroom may influence or inform subsequent use in future business employment. The theoretical framework for this research is Albert Bandura’s (1977, 1986) Social Learning Theory which asserts that we learn appropriate behaviors from watching others who model them as they interact with their environments and experience the consequences. Additionally, the research was informed by the theories of sociologist Erving Goffman (1963), social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974) and media theorist Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) regarding how appropriate behaviours are acquired in society.

## **II. Purpose of the Research**

The expectations and perceptions of industry regarding technology use behaviors in a business setting are not well understood and are, therefore, not available to inform classroom policy, curriculum or instructional practices. The research explores the expectations of business employers regarding the appropriate use of mobile telephone technology in the workplace and how new employees are performing against them. Employer considerations for whether more

education is required and how that could take place are also be explored to determine whether mobile technology etiquette should be included in business college curricula.

Research questions:

- Is mobile telephone etiquette in the business workplace an issue with employers today?
- What specific behaviors regarding mobile technology use most concern business employers?
- Does industry think post secondary schools are doing a good job of preparing students to align their mobile technology use with industry expectations?
- What can business schools do to support industry expectations in this area?



### **III. Literature Review**

#### **A. Overview**

This research explores the mobile telephone etiquette of new employees in a business setting. Therefore, the literature review examines the key social, behavioral influences on mobile telephone etiquette that inform behavior in the business workplace. The literature review begins by confirming the definition of etiquette. Next, perspectives from etiquette authors/experts on the subject matter are explored. Theories on how etiquette is acquired follow. The review then turns to an analysis of the literature within the three major social environments that influence how mobile telephones are used; including the home, the college classroom and the business workplace. The literature review examines the influence of parents as role models. Next, college classroom behaviors from the separate perspectives of faculty and students are reviewed. Then, the review turns to the business environment that employs the college student by examining both the industry and academic initiated research. The section concludes by examining the literature that closely connects the classroom and workplace by focusing on newly employed college graduates' mobile technology etiquette.

#### **B. Etiquette Defined**

Etiquette is defined as the customary code of polite behavior and set of practices which are followed among members of a group and a means of conveying respect for others (Etiquette, n.d.; Santamaria & Rosenbaum, 2011). The rules of etiquette govern how people behave in a particular setting, usually to support shared understandings and group cohesiveness.

With the recent, rapid diffusion of mobile telephones, including smartphones and cell phones, the literature indicates there is growing concern over the social rules of etiquette governing mobile telephone usage behavior in the presence of others.

### C. What the Etiquette Experts Are Saying

Etiquette books are a source of data that inform us on the current social norms of society. Arditi (1999) notes that the use of etiquette books for sociological analysis is certainly not new. He points out that the most popular etiquette manuals of a period successfully articulate the terms of social life and convey the principles of how social relations among the dominant classes of society develop (p. 27). Etiquette books work on the assumption that people generally want to behave appropriately; the books help the members of social groups to rearrange conceptually a changed order of social relations and to develop behavioural proficiencies that support those social relations: “[f]or the people who aspire to belong to the dominant classes, indeed the most important thing is not simply to learn the manners of the elite but to master the logic instructing their manners . . . to be able to reproduce them in their own behavior” (p. 28).

As of the writing of this paper, over 800 books on the subject of business etiquette exist in the *Amazon* catalogue alone. Entire chapters in some etiquette books are devoted to the subject on how to use mobile telephones in the workplace: for example, *The etiquette edge: The unspoken rules for business success* includes a chapter titled “Convenience or Curse: Is it Time for a Cell Phone Reality Check?” (Lanford, 2005, pp. 52-55). Etiquette experts agree that mobile telephones should enhance rather than interfere with communication. This is emphasized in all the subject matter reference guides explored for this research project. There is no shortage of content on the matter of business etiquette. The literature review will focus on several noteworthy, long-standing authors on the topic, discussed below.

Emily Post has a long, credible history on the subject matter of etiquette. Since her first book in 1922 versions have continued to be published (Claridge, 2008). The latest edition, *Emily Post's Etiquette 18<sup>th</sup> Edition: Manners for a new world* (2011), is authored by her third

generation descendants who, under the auspices of the Emily Post Institute (established in 1947), advise on how to “negotiate the unspoken rules and social conundrums of everyday life with generosity, graciousness and style” (Emily Post Institute, n.d.). Three chapters are devoted to etiquette around modern business tools, two specifically devoted to telephone manners, and personal communication devices. This includes the “Four Cell Phone Never Evers of ignoring those you’re with, making or taking calls when you’re in the middle of a conversation and leaving the ringer on when you are in quiet places” (Post, Post, Post, & Post Sennig, 2011, p. 237). Without exception, the device should be turned off in a house of worship, restaurant, theatre, or during a meeting or presentation: “Keep your focus on the business at hand and check your messages or schedule after the meeting or during a break” (p. 239). The fact that the organization will soon publish a separate book specifically on technology etiquette emphasizes the importance and growing interest in the topic (Palmer, 2012).

Debrett’s, a specialist publisher founded in 1769, has published a range of guides on traditional British etiquette dating from the mid 1900’s. The Debrett’s website declares itself as the modern authority on all matters of etiquette, taste and achievement, rooted in publishing on such for over two centuries (About Debrett’s, n.d.). Recent publications include *Debrett’s Etiquette and Modern Manners* and *Debretts A-Z of Modern Manners*. Also devoting specific chapters to appropriate use of mobile phones and phone conversation, Debrett’s also stresses that “people in the flesh deserve more attention than a gadget . . . turn off your phone in social situations” (Wyse, Jawitt, Bryant, Corney, & Massey, 2008, p. 160). Advice includes not putting your phone on the dining table or glancing at it longingly in mid-conversation.

With less history than the previous referenced publications, but certainly with wide recognition is the *For Dummies* publisher. With more than 250 million books in print and more

than 1,800 titles (About For Dummies, n.d.), *Business Etiquette for Dummies* devotes specific chapters to both electronic etiquette and improving your telephone manners, specifically with respect to cell phones: “Cell phones have a place in today’s business world. But that place is when you are alone—such as while you are walking or riding in a cab” (Fox, 2008, p. 101). Fox also states that cell phones have no place in restaurants, at the theatre, movies or symphonies; in churches, or in meetings: “You are in these places to do something other than talk on the phone. Whenever you go into one of these settings, have the courtesy to turn your wireless phone off” (p. 101).

In summary, there is abundant content on mobile telephone etiquette with consistent advice on how and when to appropriately use the device in a business setting.

#### **D. Etiquette Acquisition Theory**

Social norms are people’s beliefs about behaviors that are normal, acceptable, or even expected in a particular social context (Morton, 2003; Postmes, Spears & Lea, 2000 as cited in Preece, 2004, p. 2). Sociologist Erving Goffman’s numerous studies on the structure and dynamics of social interaction can help with understanding misbehaviour in situations involving cell phones and communications environments. His research explores new ways of mediating personal communication that alter our norms of group interaction. In *Behavior in Public Places* (1963), he examines the social organization of gatherings, focusing on the rules of interaction in face-to-face environments, where his focus is on the patterns of interaction rather than the individuals (Goffman, 1963). Central to his research is the study of rules of conduct. Goffman called these “situational proprieties” (p. 243). He explains that “[w]hen in the presence of others, the individual is guided by a special set of rules . . . situational proprieties” (pp. 2, 64). These rules of “proper conduct” are “the regulations of conduct characteristic in . . . gatherings” (pp.

20, 24). These social norms serve to regulate behavior because Goffman says we want to “fit in”; these rules are both implicit and covert (Sternberg, 2009. p. 436). Meyrowitz (1985) states “when we chastise someone for acting inappropriately we are implicitly paying homage to a set of unwritten rules of behavior matched to the situation that we are in” (p. 23). This social urge to conform to a situation is also noted by social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974) who published *Obedience to Authority*, his account of an experiment where people were commanded to give electric shocks to subjects who were aware of the real purpose of the experiment. Had the shocks been real, the amount of power in many cases would have killed the subjects, yet by being told to proceed by an authority figure the people carried on regardless.

Social occasions, the very elements out of which society is built, are held together, therefore, by the operation of a certain situational etiquette, whereby each person respects the definition of the situation presented by another and in this way avoids conflict, embarrassment, and awkward disruption of social exchange. The most basic aspect of that etiquette does not concern the content of what transpires from one person to the next but rather the maintenance of the structural relations between them (Milgram, 1974, pp. 150 – 152).

Media theorist Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) finds that the sense of what is appropriate in terms of behavior becomes visible only when people behave improperly (p. 335). Essentially, we know what should constitute good behavior when we see someone acting in a way that doesn't look or feel like a fit. The difficulty with the rapid diffusion of new mobile technology and its gateway to the Internet is that it is becoming less clear what *fitting in* looks like. There are new social environments, for example, virtual communities and new mediating mobile technologies that influence existing social environments. For example, cell phone usage in

restaurants, theatres, classrooms and business meetings. Meyrowitz (1985) points out “electronic media have changed the rules that were once particular to specific social situations” (p. 174).

Goffman’s research provides us with a framework from which to examine our assumptions and practices. The situational proprieties of *fitting in* help us to better understand patterns of social interaction and interpersonal communication in public. He also instructs us to consider situational improprieties and misbehavior to help clarify appropriate behavior (Sternberg, 2009).

Today interpersonal communication in public places goes beyond face-to-face interactions to include technologically mediated interpersonal communication. It is important that we are conscious of the importance of manners, and basic consideration and respect for others in all communication environments. Today, the challenge becomes in consistent modeling of what appropriate behaviours look like, especially with the rapid diffusion of mobile telephones, and most notably, smartphones into society.

**1. Social Learning Theory.** Psychologist Albert Bandura (1977, 1986) studied how we come to acquire appropriate behaviors in society now turns to the work of psychologist Albert Bandura. The essence of Social Learning Theory is that people learn within a social context, learning from their environment and seeking approval from society by learning from influential models. His theory explains behavior and learning as the result of a continuous interactive process involving the person, the environment and the behavior being observed. We learn from watching others who model behaviors in their environment and experience the consequences; this encourages appropriate behaviors and discourages inappropriate ones. Social learning theories provide insight into the impact that technology has on how we socialize as students or business colleagues (West, 2008). Student behaviors with mobile telephones will be heavily influenced by their environment and the role models they observe. If the majority of their day is

spent in the social context of friends, the mobile telephone usage behaviors seen in that environment would logically be a strong influence guiding their actions. It is conceivable that the role models and appropriate behaviors with mobile telephone use could change within the different environments of home, school and the office. Preece's (2004) research includes recommendations for technology etiquette solutions that include those explored by social learning theorists including using role models and mentors to encourage shared understanding on behavioral expectations (p.4).

The impact of social learning is at the heart of a current longitudinal study funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), self described as the UK's "expert on information and digital technologies for education and research" (JISC, n.d.). The research is a collaboration between the University of Oxford and the University of North Carolina. The latest report finds that student learners develop a variety of digital literacies often through a social trial and error process, without the direct support or advice of their educational institutions (White, Silipigni Connaway, Lanclos, Le Cornu & Hood, 2012).

### **E. Acquiring Mobile Telephone Etiquette**

Three key influences of etiquette acquisition are examined: the home environment, the college classroom environment, and the business environment.

**1. The Home Environment.** Sherry Turkle's (2011) research finds that parents are not modeling the use of mobile technology in ways that positively influence their children. She notes that from the youngest ages, youth today associate technology with shared attention:

Teenagers complain that parents don't look up from their phones at dinner and they bring their phones to school sporting events . . . I've seen parents pushing their kid on a swing

with one hand and looking at the phone in the other. Parents are physically close but mentally elsewhere (p. 164).

Turkle states that parents admit they are ashamed of their behavior but quickly get around to explaining if not justifying it. She emphasizes that when parents see their children checking their mobile phones and thus feel permission to use their own that they are “discounting a crucial asymmetry” (p. 267). Parents have a responsibility to model appropriate mobile telephone use behavior in the company of their children. Their multitasking teenagers want and need adult attention and guidance. Turkle characterizes these behaviors that are changing as a result of mobile telephones as having made each of us “pausable,” that a face-to-face interaction being interrupted by an incoming call, text message or email is no longer extraordinary; rather, in the new “new etiquette”, it is close to the norm (Turkle, 2011, p. 295). Turkle’s findings are supported by a recent *Mobile Etiquette* survey conducted for Intel Corporation (2011), which found that what constitutes good manners, is not always clear and that those who are responsible for instilling and supporting proper behaviors are not doing so. With respect to role modeling behaviors for mobile telephones, the survey found 59% of children have witnessed their parents commit common mobile infractions, including use of a mobile device on the road (59%), at dinner (46%) and during a movie or concert (24 %). Additionally, nearly half of U.S. children (49%) say they don’t see anything wrong with using technology at the dinner table. Almost 40% of parents surveyed admitted they sometimes spend too much time using a mobile device in front of their children, and 42% of children think their parents need to disconnect more when they are at home. In contrast to these results, the same survey indicated 95% of parents believe it is important to establish rules and guidelines in the home about the proper use of mobile devices, specifically regarding manners related to using their mobile technology devices. The research



indicates a theme of contradiction in terms of what parent role models think is appropriate behavior for using mobile phones in the presence of others and what they are actually modeling themselves.

Greengard (2011) draws on the opinions of numerous notable academic experts in the area including Turkle and Clifford Nass from Stanford University, author of *The Man Who Lied to his Laptop: What Machines Teach Us About Human Relationships* to explore the idea that heavy use of digital technology trains society to have less patience for the particular skills, pace and sensitivities of face-to-face interaction and that there is a breakdown of social etiquette as a result (p. 17-18). Greengard quotes Nass who says that “a breakdown of social etiquette – if not outright rudeness – is also more pervasive. ...Today, people think it’s okay to text in the middle of dinner, at a meeting, in class, wherever” (Greengard, 2011). Mansbacher (2010) is also concerned that new communication technology is stalling the social growth of our children and teaching the members of society to confront each other electronically, not personally (p. 27).

**2. The College Classroom Environment.** There is an abundance of literature regarding student distraction in the college classroom linked to the increasing proliferation of mobile telephones (Baker, Comer & Martinak, 2008; Braguglia, 2008; Burns & Lohenry, 2010; Dortch, Brown, & Bridges, 1995; Gurrie & Johnson, 2011; Lipscomb, Totten, Cook & Lesch, 2005).

*a. Student Perspective.* Braguglia (2008) found 100% of their sample of 1,150 full time college business students used cell phones in the college environment. Her research found that voice calls were the most frequently used feature (66%) followed by texting (30%) and accessing the Internet (4%). Students spend a great deal of time on their phones: 45% spend more than four hours per day and 56% of students are using them for less than three hours per day (note: original source tabled values do not equal 100 due to rounding). Also, regardless of whether classroom

instructors prohibit them from class or require they be turned off during class time, students reported they interacted with their phones in every class they attend (p. 60). Braguglia found 77% of students also believe that using a cell phone during class seldom or never interferes with classroom learning. Hanson, Drumheller, Mallard, McKee and Schlegel (2011) found similar results when they explored the competing time demands of today's college students and confirmed that, not surprisingly, students use class time to text, particularly in large classes "all the time, in most cases with some admitting that they might send over 200 texts in a day" (p. 27). These findings are supported by Taekke and Paulsen (2012) who report that students overwhelmingly cannot resist the lure of their cell phones in class; this is regardless of whether their instructors take either of two consistent approaches; complete indifference about students' mobile telephones or outright classroom prohibition.

A pilot survey by Burns and Loheny (2010) of graduate students in Health Science programs revealed that despite more than 50% of the respondents being aware a no-use cell phone policy existed, more than 53% admitted to using their phones in class to text or check phone messages. The majority (72%) of students reported their phones rang during class time. These distractions were of concern to more than 85% of the students polled. Not surprisingly, 84% of faculty offered that cell phones were a source of distraction during class time (Burns & Loheny, 2010, p. 807). Gurrie and Johnson (2011) undertook a study of undergraduate students to determine what they were doing on their cell phones in class and what motivated their behaviour. They learned that 92% acknowledged that they had used their cell phones in class while their professor was lecturing or a student was speaking. Of these students, 75% identified that they did this despite being aware that the professor did not like it. The most cited usage (by 75% of students) was for social networking including chatting, e-mailing and interacting with

friends via Facebook (Gurrie & Johnson, 2011, p. 15). Additionally, 77% of students agreed that they were likely provoking a negative response from professors. Yet 98% of students acknowledged the importance of eye contact as an important part of respectful conversation. Students appear to have difficulty resisting their mobile phones despite recognizing the poor image it conveys to their professors (p. 16). Similarly, Tindell and Bohlander (2012) focused on college students' use of text messaging in the classroom with students reporting on their own and others' use of cell phones. The majority (95%) of students bring their phones to class every day and (92%) use their phones to text message during class time. The majority of the students (54%) surveyed believe that instructors are largely unaware of the extent to which texting and other cell phone activities engage students in the classroom. Class size was an influencing variable with the vast majority (90%) believing they could text without the instructor being aware in a class of 100 students while (50%) were confident in a class of 25 (p. 4).

There is literature that indicates students themselves are tired of disruptive behavior and desire a more civil classroom (Benton 2007; Burns & Lohenry 2010; Carbone 1999 as cited in Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010). Student perceptions of "uncivil" behaviors in the college classroom were reported by Bjorklund and Rehling (2010) who found that students who continue to talk having been asked to stop and the use of cell phones to text or that ring in class were rated in the top three of "very uncivil" student behaviors (p.16). Findings from Lipscomb, Tooen, Cook and Lesch (2005) revealed student's perceptions of etiquette regarding cell phone use in many scenarios from driving to classrooms and restaurants and concluded with a call for increased education on proper cell phone etiquette (p. 53).

It seems clear that students are using their phones during class, and that this behavior could be disruptive. If students are spending time texting, they are not paying attention to the class lecture.

***b. Faculty Perspective.*** The literature reveals that students' mobile telephone behaviors and perceptions are disruptive to them, so it is not surprising to find this perception reflected by the faculty who teach them (Attwood, 2009; Baker, Comer & Martinak, 2008; Bayer 2004; Bourke 2008; Burns & Loherty, 2010; Flaherty, 2011; Intel 2011; Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, 2010). Intel (2011) research results support the findings of other studies in this area regarding instructor agreement that technology, when used properly, enhances students' education experience. Three-quarters of them (74%) agree that with the fast pace of technology today, it is becoming just as important for children to learn about mobile etiquette as it is to learn math and science. Not surprisingly, 84% of instructors said they wished their students practiced better mobile phone etiquette in the classroom. Mirroring this perspective, the vast majority of teachers (96%) said that parents need to teach their children better mobile etiquette. The majority of parents (64%) stated that schools should require students to take a class on how and when technology should be used. The Intel research (2011) indicates both parents and instructors would like to see more be done to educate on what is appropriate mobile telephone etiquette.

Flaherty (2011) comments on how mobile telephones have provided increasing opportunity for distraction and can undermine the enthusiasm of any professor. The findings recommend confronting digital distraction head on by enlisting students to help develop respectful guidelines particularly around technology etiquette. Flaherty suggests a range of solutions from an outright ban to simply turning cellphones off and providing appropriately

timed digital breaks. Attwood (2009) finds student's use of mobiles tops the list of uncivil teaching disruptions. Her study included both students and faculty members and had similar findings for both segments. Disruptive classroom behaviors experienced by faculty members specific to mobile telephones included a mobile phone ringing in class (97%) and texting in class (91%). Young students, 23 and under, while still noting the distraction of mobile telephones disruptions such as texting or phones ringing, were more tolerant of them than were faculty or mature students.

The fifth *Future of the Internet* survey from the Pew Research Centre (Anderson & Raine, 2012) polled Internet experts from a variety of backgrounds, including academia. The research results note "teachers express many concerns . . . you can feel the tension in their words". Although not specifically referencing mobile telephones, teachers' observations of them in many comments are strongly inferred. The cellphone is the most ubiquitous technology tool of students and their primary access to the Internet and their personal connections. One teacher comments:

I teach at the college level—have been for 12 years. I have seen a change in my students; their behavior, their learning. . . . Technology is playing a big part in students not only not being able to perform as well in class, but also not having the desire to do so. (Anderson & Raine, 2012, p. 23)

Another respondent comments; "I have horror stories about lack of attention. . . . I have also seen the loss of interpersonal communication competence. . . . It is extending adolescence (Anderson & Raine, 2012, p. 23). Similarly, research by Clark and Springer found that incivility in the classroom was on the rise and could be compared to the broader concern for civility in society and at work (Alberts et al., 2010; as cited in Baker, Comer & Martinak, 2008, p. 66).

Michael Suman, research director at the Centre for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California says that the students he teaches have more trouble than ever focusing on lectures and learning. Text messages and emails arrive in gibberish and students end up asking the same questions over and over (Greengard, 2011).

*c. Education Policy for Mobile Telephones.* A popular theme in the literature is a recommendation that policies be established with students regarding how mobile telephones will be used in class (Alkandari, 2011; Brown, 2007; Campbell, 2006; Dechter, 2007; Flaherty, 2011; Ritchie, 2009). School policy regarding cell phones within the majority of public schools in the U.S. has historically been prohibitive, requiring students to leave them at home, or to turn them off or to leave them in lockers during the day (Obringer & Coffey, 2007). Similarly, Kiedrowski, Smale, and Gounko (2009) found the same policies exist in the largest Canadian school boards, Toronto and Vancouver. Other schools report changing policy from banning cell phone use to allowing students to access them before or after school (St. Gerard, 2006).

Colleges are struggling with how to implement effective policies regarding cell phone use. As a result of the rapidly occurring technological advances within the cell phone industry, it has been difficult for educational institutions to make and keep current educational policy regarding the use of cell phones (Kiedrowski et al., 2009; Obringer & Coffey, 2007). Dodds and Mason (as cited in Tindell & Bohlander, 2012, p. 2) found many educational institutions and faculty are not sure how to handle the issues and some may not even be aware there is a problem. In a study that addressed the perception of cell phones in a college classroom, Campbell (2006) found that college students and faculty tend to have negative attitudes toward cell phones in the classroom and are in favor of formal policies governing their use. However, colleges and universities do not tend to ban the use of cell phones as a policy, but rather leave it to the

discretion of individual faculty, who have inconsistent policies. Pew Internet Research supports this finding. More than half of recent college graduates (57%) say when they were in college they used a laptop, smartphone or tablet computer in class at least some of the time. Most colleges and universities do not have institutional guidelines in place for the use of these devices in class. Some 41% of college presidents say students are allowed to use laptops or other portable devices during class; at 56% of colleges and universities it is up to the individual instructors. Only 2% of presidents say the use of these devices is prohibited (Taylor, Parker, Lenhart, & Patten, 2011, p. 2). Additionally, post-secondary institutions like the University of Alberta and NAIT are increasingly building mobile telephone communication to students into their emergency communication procedures which ideally require they are not turned off.

Tindell and Bohlander (2012) discovered that students do not want to risk a confrontation with the professor on the use of their cell phones and are less likely to text in class if the instructor has a set policy and seems to care whether the students are texting. But if the instructor turns his/her back or is too focused on the lecture, students indicate they will text. The literature indicates that having a no-use cell phone policy in place may curb but doesn't prevent inappropriate etiquette. Students, not surprisingly, are very reluctant to support a policy that completely forbids their use and believe they should be allowed to use their phone in class as long as they do not disturb anyone else (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Kiedrowski et al. (2009) conclude that today's educators should recognize that handheld telephones are not a passing trend but a staple of society: "Therefore learning the proper use of cellular phones and not just the restrictions should be considered a vital life skill for students" (p. 61).

In summary, the research literature reveals that policies, if existent at all, are inconsistently applied, hence how mobile technology is used in the classroom may not be

providing the consistency required for young adults to acquire appropriate behaviours within the academic and work environments.

**3. The Business Environment.** Graduates from business college classrooms eventually move into the workplace. There is an abundance of current literature that indicates mobile telephone etiquette is of growing concern to business. Numerous studies across various industries report negative perceptions around mobile telephone use in the workplace (Hauser, 2011; Galbreath & Marx, 1994; Intel, 2012; LexisNexis, 2008; Long, 2004; Lookout, 2012; Milne, 2005; Palmer, 2012; Pearson, 2010; Randstad, 2012; Robert Half, 2012; Sears, 2010; Smith, 2011; Toth, 2011; Wayne, 2010; Williams, 2009).

*a. Industry Research.* Global human resources and employment services firm Randstad (2012) surveyed 11,600 business respondents across 29 countries inquiring about appropriate technology use behaviours in business, and their resulting attitudes and perceptions. Global results were consistent with the 400 Canadian respondents who revealed they “can’t stand technological interruptions during meetings and want more face time with their colleagues” (Randstad, 2012, p. 15). Similar to the contradictions other researchers found in the classroom, Randstad learned 73% of employees report they are bothered by people who answer their mobile phone or respond to email during business meetings, yet 14% of respondents admitted they were guilty of these acts themselves. A strong preference for face-to-face contact over phone or email was also reported by 68% of employees (Randstad, 2012, p. 15).

Global staffing firm, Robert Half (2011), surveyed 650 human resource managers in Canada and the U.S. on the subject of business etiquette. The majority (76%) said technology etiquette breaches can negatively affect a person’s career prospects (Robert Half, 2011). The survey identified examples of the top five technology breaches and recommendations to avoid



them. One example cites using mobile technology to check email during meetings and hence not being aware of the discussion; yet 45% of executives confessed to this behavior themselves (Robert Half, 2011). The 2011 research supported the results from a previous Robert Half survey with 1400 Chief Information Officers in 2010 which found more than 51% interviewed had seen increased instances of poor workplace etiquette resulting from frequent use of mobile electronic devices (Robert Half, 2010). Intel, a leading innovator behind the technology powering mobile devices, commissioned Ipsos in 2009, 2011 and 2012 to research consumers' changing mobile usage models. The purpose was to determine the impact of the technology on consumers' lives and how technology should evolve into the future. Titled *Mobile Etiquette* (Intel, 2012), the survey found that most U.S. adults (81 %) believe mobile manners are becoming worse (compared to 75% of adults surveyed the year prior), and 92% of U.S. adults wish people practiced better mobile etiquette in public. The data is consistent over the three survey years in citing the top three annoyances. These include texting while driving (77%), talking on a device loudly in a public place (64%) and having the volume too loud in a public place (55%). Genevieve Bell, Head of Research at Intel Labs notes, "Our appropriate digital technology behaviors are still embryonic, and it's important for Intel and the entire industry to maintain a dialogue about the way people use technology and our personal relationships with technology as they continue to help shape societal and cultural norms" (Intel, 2012).

Global mobile security company, Lookout, also conducts research in this area; the company has 20 million users across 400 mobile networks in 170 countries. Lookout's (2012) *Mobile Mindset Study* explores data-based trends about relationships, emotions and behavior driven by phones. The online survey contacted 2,097 adult smartphone owners, and Lookout's findings further support other findings on etiquette breaches. Thirty per cent (30%) admitted that

they check their phones during meals with others, 24% said they check their phones while driving, and nearly 10% said they check their phones during religious services of worship. The data indicates adults are becoming more addicted to checking their phones. Fifty-eight per cent (58%) of smartphone users don't let more than one hour lapse without checking their phones. This figure jumps to 68% in the 18-34 age groups. Young adults also report the worst behavior when using their smartphones; nearly 90% admitted to some etiquette breaking and questionable behavior, for example, 51% check their phones while using the bathroom and 74% before sleeping, immediately after waking or in the middle of the night (Lookout, 2012). The study's conclusions consider the emerging social behaviors to question whether what we consider good etiquette with mobile telephones is changing as society becomes more attached to them. This echoes Meyrowitz's (1985) comments that electronic media have changed the rules once particular to specific social situations.

*b. Academic Research.* University led research is consistent in identifying that the constant evolution of mobile technologies has created a dilemma: thorough investigation is problematic when change is a constant (Bonometti, 2009; Bott & Montagno, 2010). In studying the prevalence of mobile communications and its impact in the workplace, Bott and Montagno (2010) found that despite the lack of evidence of effectiveness, emerging media technology, including smartphones, has become ubiquitous in most workplaces. Mobile technology is quickly being integrated into the workplace with little examination of its impact (p. 5). Bott and Montagno's research with human resource professionals identified the most dominant technologies to mediate office communication in the workplace and how important the skills associated with them were in hiring and training. Email and mobile devices (e.g. Blackberry) were the most dominant technologies to mediate communication in the workplace, with 67%

reporting more than minimal use of mobile technology for some part of their workday activity (60% used a mobile device for at least 20% of a workday).

With this increasing reliance on mobile technology in our daily lives, academia is exploring the social consequences. Srivastava (2006) examines the impact of the mobile phone as it shifts from “being a mere technical device to becoming a ‘social object’ present in every aspect of our daily lives that influences social etiquette” (p. 7). Mobile phone technology has ignited discourse on how to communicate privately in public spaces, how and when to be contactable, and how and when to end a mobile conversation. Its profound impact on communication challenges established and traditional norms of social behavior. She notes that some countries, such as Japan, have made efforts to regulate mobile phone usage in public by restricting use in restaurants and public transport, but the tension between remote and co-present interactions has not yet led to the establishment of any widespread social norms. In the absence of widespread social norms, those who answer phone calls in meetings or quiet areas while subjected to annoying glances by others are, therefore, rarely called to task for inappropriate behaviour. In a related academic study, Zarowin (2006) concludes that managers must set the example in terms of etiquette in the workplace, giving specific examples for appropriate behavior with cell phones, for example, silencing them during meetings.

Academic research is also consistent with industry-led research results regarding increasingly poor perceptions of mobile telephone behaviors. Hauser (2011) draws on numerous professional and expert opinions in her paper *The Degeneration of Decorum; Stress caused by rude behavior in the workplace might be costing the US economy billions of dollars a year*. Specifically discussed is how electronic communications are not exempt from the rules of civility and that technology is outpacing the etiquette associated with the tools (Hauser, 2011, p.

16). Galbreath and Long (2004), find that in a recent survey of 150 executives, 63% say mobile phone users are less polite than three years ago. These researchers offer specific parameters regarding appropriate workplace behaviors for cell phones that are consistent with guidelines espoused by technology etiquette experts: for example, turn cell phones off in meetings and remind mobile telephone users to do so (p. 10). Marx (1994) explores specific examples of “unmannerly” communications behavior and says “we need to better specify the conditions under which new communications technologies are appropriately used and the criteria for defining transgressions” (p. 538). Marx notes there is little academic attention to how changes in communications technology require the appearance of new manners.

*c. Workplace Technology Guidelines.* Despite the growing concerns of business on how employees are conducting themselves professionally, specifically with regard to their mobile phones, workplace policies are not developing to match. The Centre for Professional Excellence (2012) research revealed less than half of business respondents (46%) have programs to orient new employees on what is considered to be appropriate professional behavior. With that finding it is not surprisingly that 93% of business respondents indicated colleges should be developing professionalism in students (pp. 15, 98). This gap, in industry expectations versus academic reality, suggests that graduates are bringing into the work place the etiquette acquired through their daily lives, including their personal social networks and notably their classroom experience, which the literature assesses as a poor foundation for business mobile telephone etiquette.

The findings are supported by Bott, Montagno and Lane (2010) in their study on the prevalence and impact of mobile communications and emerging media in the workplace. Given the high level of use with emerging media, the researchers expected that organizations would need policies and procedures to manage employee behavior relative to the technologies that

mediate office communication – including mobile devices. Although mediating technologies are used by virtually 100% of businesses, formal email usage policies were adopted by only 88%, internet surfing by 79% and security policies by 61%. The researchers expressed surprise that the percent of firms with policies was not higher; 7% of business managers had not created any policies or procedures at all (pp. 12, 14). Although respondents placed great importance on emerging media skills and 67% were willing to pay a premium to hire employees who have these skills, 77% reported they do no formal training for these skills for workers already in their organizations (Bott & Montagno, 2010, p.13). This lag in establishment of technology policy and training may be reflecting how quickly the technology skills needed in business are changing.

As the research articles examined in this section show, there is increasing concern by business for deficient mobile technology behavior in the workplace setting, but the literature also reveals that businesses are not undertaking formal training to correct it, and many do not have guidelines in place to establish workplace expectations.

**4. Connecting Behaviors Between College Classroom and Workplace.** The connection between the classroom and the workplace is explored in various research projects within the literature related to professionalism issues and mobile telephone use (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Bloomberg, 2010; Burns & Lohenry, 2010; CPE, 2012; CPE, 2013; Fox News, 2010; LexisNexis, 2008; PSOW, 2011; Sears, 2010; Wright, 2011). Anderson and Anderson (2012) make a direct connection between the academic and workplace environments: “Prior to adapting to a company’s business culture, the only primary communication resource a student has to draw upon is that which was used in the classroom” (p. 56). Similarly, Burns & Lohenry (2010) reference that “[d]emonstrating courtesy and professionalism in the graduate classroom represents a first step in translating the same behaviour to the professional practice arena . . .”

The research undertaken by the Centre for Professional Excellence (CPE) at the York College of Pennsylvania is specifically monitoring professionalism displayed by new employees in their transition from classroom to workplace. The CPE surveys human resource professionals and managers who are in a position to assess the level of professionalism found in new hires who have recently graduated from college. This research has occurred annually since the Centre's inception in 2009 (CPE, 2013, p. 8). The Centre uses the research results to guide campus seminars, classroom experiences and student workshops (York College, n.d.). Their 2013 survey of 401 human resource professionals reveals a continuing five-year trend in managers singling out younger employees as those least likely to exhibit professionalism. In 2013, more than 50% of those surveyed reported IT abuses have increased over the past five years with 49% estimating that entry-level hires abuse IT in some way. The most common observations of abuse included text messaging at inappropriate times (74%), inappropriate use of the Internet (66%), excessive use of Facebook and Twitter (65%), excessive personal calls on cell phones (60%), and text messaging and emailing when direct conversation is more appropriate (56%) (CPE, 2013, p. 34). The research is also tracking an emerging phenomenon with a structured question around how unfocused employees are. The trend is not good, with 38% of managers indicating this measure has increased year-over-year. Most respondents (79%) attributed the lack of focus among young workers to technology interruptions. The top three traits in professionalism that employers seek are what business managers are reporting as absent. The traits include communications skills and interpersonal skills which include the dimensions of etiquette, being courteous, showing others respect, and behavior that is appropriate for the situation (p. 10). In the 2011 survey, a sample of undergraduates was included; they were asked the same question about the professionalism traits

they perceived in their fellow classmates. Interestingly, their answers paralleled those of the surveyed managers (CPE, 2012, p. 4; Fox News, 2010).

Randall, Executive Director of the Centre for Professional Excellence, sees HR budget cuts contributing to the results: he says that one of the first budget lines to be cut is soft-skills training and as a result the researchers at the Centre are seeing a lot of organizations look to colleges and universities to tell students what the rules are and how to effectively use texting and the phone (Wright, 2011). Randall explains:

As college students, they've basically been given free rein to use IT however they want to – they can text in class [unbeknownst to professors], and when they're supposed to be concentrating on their studies they may have Facebook open. When they graduate they get used to doing this . . . senior executives see this behavior as unprofessional . . . and the biggest concern among employers in the study was text-messaging at inappropriate times. The problem festers when employers don't tell Millennials that their behavior is unprofessional (Wright, 2011).

Respondents were asked to consider if definitions of professionalism should change over time to reflect cultural shifts in society. The majority of respondents disagreed with this statement and with the possibility that a perceived lack of professionalism may be the result of older generations judging younger generations (CPE, 2012, p. 14).

When LexisNexis (2008), a global information and service solutions provider for professionals, commissioned WorldOne Research to survey 700 U.S. managers and legal professionals they found that although technology is widely embraced, significant gaps exist among generations regarding its use and application in the workplace. They discovered that vast discrepancies in opinion exist between generations on what appropriate use of technology and

software is, hence potentially causing tensions in the workplace (LexisNexis, 2008, p. 7). For example, 75% of respondents age 44-60 (Boomers) agree that mobile technology, including smartphones and mobile phones, contribute to a decline in proper workplace etiquette and believe use in meetings is distracting whereas only 44% of ages 28 and younger (Gen Y) agree. More than half of working professionals believe that the amount of technology available encourages too much multitasking which the research results support. These results point to a need for increased training on awareness and expectations.

*a. Etiquette Curriculum.* Instances of classroom incivility, including how students are using their mobile telephones, “are sufficiently pervasive to be of general concern to the academic community” (Bayer, 2004, p. 77); this has stimulated a growing trend of campus initiatives ranging from expert guest speakers, such as Miss Manners (Paulson, 2007), to contracts between students and professor about proper classroom behavior (Alkandar, 2011; Brown, 2007; Dechter, 2007; Flaherty; 2011; Marcus, 2013; Ritchie, 2009; Susman, 2013).

Dortch, Brown and Bridges (1995) found business students may not have a thorough grasp of etiquette expected in the workplace, but that they appear interested when it is brought to their attention, in particular noting interpersonal skills and social issues among their top areas of concern (p. 37). The research from the CPE (2012, 2013) and the Protocol School of Washington (PSOW) (2012) confirm this interest. This suggests that if students were educated on how industry is reacting to declining mobile phone etiquette in the workplace that they may take note. Mausehund, Dortch, Brown and Bridges (1995) recommend specific curriculum on etiquette and specifically mention demonstrations, case studies and lecture and to encourage students to “continue developing their protocol after they leave the classroom (p. 37). Both the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have



offered an optional, non-credit “charm school” for 20 years (Marcus, 2013, Susman, 2013). It addresses many aspects of professionalism from dress to dining, business etiquette and communications. These are the skills that employers emphasize that graduates are increasingly lacking (Marcus, 2013; CPE, 2012; CPE, 2013).

The Protocol School of Washington (PSOW) opened in 1988 with a curriculum totally focused on business etiquette and international protocol. It is the first and only accredited school of its kind in the U.S. (PSOW, 2011). According to President Pamela Eyring, people skills account for 85% of job success. She notes that “College grads grew up on technology and don’t realize smartphone’s and now Tablets are huge distractions that send a message to the other person that this text, this email, this download is more important than you. It screams poor communication skills” (PSOW, 2011). Understanding the etiquette of new technology is becoming increasingly important as employees and businesses struggle to define what is correct, often resulting in misunderstandings. Indeed, etiquette experts indicate they are fielding more questions on technology than ever before (Palmer, 2012). Consequently, etiquette schools are thriving (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2010). This is reflected in increased business to Etiquette Schools such as the Etiquette School of New York who have expanded their business to California due to increasing demand. Also, reflecting the increased market demand, the Protocol School of Washington currently has a waiting list for etiquette protocol officer training (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2010).

The increasing popularity of etiquette curriculum at highly regarded academic institutions and the emergence of entire schools dedicated solely to this curriculum indicate a growing market for this content. If students are made aware that mobile technology etiquette is an issue

for potential future employers they will be more inclined to find this a relevant topic and work to improve or be more consciousness of their behavior in certain environments.

## **F. Summation of Literature**

A review of long-standing, popular etiquette guides on the subject matter of mobile telephone etiquette reveals the topic is in high demand. The materials reviewed for this research devote whole chapters and entire books to the topic, specifically with respect to how and when mobile phones are used in the business environment. The behavioral advice given is consistent; that mobile telephones should enhance, rather than interfere with interpersonal communication.

The theoretical literature reviewed key findings from Goffman (1963), Milgram (1974) and Meyrowitz (1985) to underscore our strong social urge to conform to the expectations society has of us when interacting with others. People want to fit in. The challenge presented by defining appropriate mobile telephone behaviors in the company of others, is that the technology has diffused rapidly and is constantly changing. Consequently, the norms of behavior that were once clear in specific social situations are modifying. Bandura's (1977, 1986) Social Learning Theory holds that we learn by observing others behave in the environment and experience the consequences of their actions, which positively or negatively reinforce correct behavior. Logically, the environment and role models students spend the majority of their time with will influence their behaviors with mobile telephones.

Overall the literature revealed three primary environments of cell phone use to understand how we acquire mobile telephone etiquette and from whom. This included the home, classroom and workplace. The literature reveals that parents in the family environment frequently do not model the use of mobile technology in ways that positively influence their

children. A theme of contradiction emerges where parents can articulate what they consider appropriate behavior for mobile telephone use, yet it is not what they are modeling.

Within the classroom environment, from both a faculty and student perspective, the research studies uncover an abundance of distractions in the college classroom linked to the increasing proliferation of mobile telephones. Overall the studies in this area reveal that students cannot resist the lure of their cell phones in class to text or access the Internet, regardless of whether their instructors have a no-cell phone policy. The majority of students report that using a cell phone in class seldom or never interferes with classroom learning and that their instructors are largely unaware of their behaviors. The literature from the faculty perspective underscores that instructors are indeed aware, citing students' use of cell phones in class as the root of disruptive behavior and lack of focus. The contradiction theme reappears in the literature for the classroom environment with several studies noting that students themselves are tired of disruptive behavior and desire a more civil classroom. The Intel (2011) research found that teachers and parents were equally concerned with poor mobile telephone etiquette. Both groups wish more be done to address it, with parents pointing to more action from the school and the teachers pointing to more being done in the home. This pattern reveals itself again between industry and post-secondary institutions, where business employers are looking to colleges to provide more guidance in professionalism and appropriate use of technology, yet the majority of colleges report they do not have policies on technology at an institutional or classroom level. This inconsistency could result in confusion for shared understanding of what is considered professionally appropriate.

Overall within the business environment, the literature is consistent in finding that mobile telephone etiquette is of growing concern to business. Studies from academia and industry

repeatedly report mobile telephone etiquette is becoming worse, notably with employees who use their cell phone at inappropriate times in the workplace to cause disruption or at the expense of face-to-face interaction. The industry research in this area picks up on the contradiction theme again with research respondents identifying mobile telephone behaviors that bother them but admittance that they are guilty of the infractions themselves (Randstat, 2011; Robert Half, 2012). The literature also reveals that businesses are not undertaking formal training to correct deficient mobile technology behavior and many do not have guidelines in place to establish workplace expectations.

Strong inferences can be made with several research studies that closely connect the behaviors acquired in the college classroom with those displayed by new employees in the workplace (CPE, 2013; LexisNexis, 2008). The results indicate the overall findings from the college literature, are also appearing in the workplace, with negative trends being reported by managers who cite IT abuses becoming worse over the last five years and acknowledgement that younger employees are responsible. The same infractions as those reported in the college classroom appear in the industry literature; including texting at inappropriate times, inappropriate use of the internet, excessive use of Facebook, Twitter and personal calls, and texting and emailing when a personal conversation was more appropriate.

The literature reveals the increasing concern by both industry and education for increasing professionalism in students through the growth of new and expanding schools, some wholly devoted to professionalism, and some with extra, non-credit programs within colleges and universities that are focused on etiquette.

The classroom is the training ground for students to acquire the knowledge and skill industry wants on the way to their business careers. What is being experienced in the college

classroom could be a predictor for what transpires in the business environment. However, a search of the literature in this area revealed that there is limited, direct academic or industry research on this connection outside of the noted survey based research. The affective element of the topic, the insights and discussion obtained through personal, in-depth discussion, appears to be a gap in the research. The literature also reveals a disconnect in the expectations of industry that appropriate mobile technology etiquette is being addressed within the post-secondary classroom environment, when in reality it is not. Mobile telephone use policies are non-existent and at best inconsistent.

#### **IV. Methodology**

This research project was based at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT); a polytechnic post-secondary institution located in Edmonton, Alberta. NAIT is positioned in the market with the advertising theme “education for the real world” to reflect a focus on providing students a practical, skills-based education. Therefore, NAIT’s connection to industry is paramount to its success in its applied education and research approach. The JR Shaw School of Business at NAIT has six formal Advisory Committees comprised of 82 local business people who volunteer their time to meet regularly with faculty to consult on industry trends and skills with a view to informing curricula. Many of the companies represented on these committees hire post-secondary graduates from local post-secondary institutions including NAIT. Hence the Advisory Committee members are a credible, logical source for a discussion on the research topic.

##### **A. Research Design**

The research was exploratory in nature and used survey methodology within a cross sectional design to investigate the research questions. This approach was undertaken to help inform on the topic as it is particularly well-suited to the JR Shaw School of Business at NAIT and the local businesses who participate on the NAIT business advisory boards. The data collection method used in-person, semi-structured interviews with a sample of employers sourced from each of NAIT’s six Business School Advisory Committees.

##### **B. Sample Populations**

The JR Shaw School of Business has six formal Advisory Committees comprised of local business people who meet regularly with faculty members in order to inform and consult on industry trends and skills relevant to academic programs. As the nature of this research is

exploratory, a non-random sampling method was used. A quota sample was used to ensure that the interviews reflected representation from the various committees to ensure, that a range of business industries and management positions were included. The sample population for this research consisted of six representatives from local businesses that participate on one of the NAIT Advisory Committees. Other than the Marketing Committee, each committee is comprised of 11 - 15 different local business people. The Marketing Committee is unique as it includes two sub-committees; the Sales Program, which is comprised of 10 industry members, and the Advertising Program, with 11 members. The six interviews were conducted with one respondent from the Finance, Accounting, Management, and Human Resources committee, and two respondents from Marketing -- one from the Sales sub-committee and one from the Advertising sub-committee.

To select the potential participating Advisory Committee members, a key informant strategy was used. The Chair or Associate Chair associated with each of the Advisory Committees was consulted by the research investigator for a recommendation in identifying three people from each committee with a particular interest in technology and curriculum review. The potential participants were approached in the order of recommendation provided by the key informant; who provided a first, second and third recommendation. In only one case was the first recommendation not able to participate in the research requiring the second choice be used. In total seven interviews took place; the first interview was conducted as a pilot test interview with the intent to trial the interview guide to increase the reliability and validity of the data by ensuring questions were clear and timing allotment appropriate. The subject that was chosen for the pilot interview is a former Advisory Committee member, the Marketing Director for a Retail, Service and Auto Club that employs 2500 employees. The researcher was also aware that he

has hired two NAIT business grads in the last two years onto his team, making him an ideal candidate for the subject matter. No issues were raised, prior to, during or post interview, on questions including coherence, interpretation, or the interview pace, hence no changes were made to the original interview guide. This interview revealed particularly rich data, so as a result, relevant quotes from the pilot interview are occasionally included in the findings.

### **C. Research Execution**

An initial email from the research investigator was sent to the first individuals recommended by the key informants for each committee in the first and second week of May, 2013. The email informed the prospective interviewees of the research project and its purpose: to ensure industry perspective is being considered in keeping curriculum relevant and up-to-date. The email included the researchers intent to personally follow up with them by phone within the next two days to provide more detailed information which would assist them in their decision to participate or not. The initial email was followed with a phone conversation and the delivery of the informed consent form via email to provide all potential participants with all the details required, ensuring adherence to ethics protocol from both the University of Alberta and NAIT. The participation criteria included a requirement that the requested that the respondent's organization had hired a new employee/s within the last three years.

The nature of the research would not enable respondent's anonymity but confidentiality was assured: no personal or business names and references appear in the reported results, which are categorized when appropriate by industry type and size (number of employees). The interviews took place at a location of the interviewee's choice, six of those being at the participant's place of business and one at NAIT due to the renovations occurring at one



workplace. The initial e-mail is included in Appendix A, the Informed Consent Form in Appendix B and the Interview Guide in Appendix C.

#### **D. Data Collection**

The data collection method used in-person, semi-structured interviews. As the topic of mobile telephone etiquette has not been discussed at any prior Advisory Committee meetings with NAIT faculty, the interview approach provided a format to enable participants to raise various points during the discussions and the researcher to explore topics in more depth as required. A semi-structured interview guide with 15 questions was used to guide the discussion: this design was intended to provide consistency in the questions for comparison of responses, but also enabled flexibility and the ability to probe for further information if required. The interview guide was structured to elicit insights and opinions around three areas including (1) a new hires orientation to the work place, (2) how mobile phones are being used in the respondent's workplace setting, and (3) how new hires are learning what is appropriate business etiquette regarding mobile telephone use in the workplace setting. The interviews varied in length from 35 to 45 minutes. The interviews took place from May 3 through May 13, 2013. The interview guide is included in Appendix C.

#### **E. Data Analysis and Final Report**

This study uses a modified grounded theory approach and procedures for data analysis. Grounded theory, as first proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, refers to theory gained from firsthand observations, as opposed to theory testing (Singleton & Straits, 2010). The analysis of the data collected is based on the following steps as outlined by Singleton and Straits (2012): organizing data, identifying patterns, developing ideas and drawing conclusions.

The six semi-structured interviews were taped for ease of transcription and analysis. Interview tapes were transcribed verbatim for the full six interviews and analyzed to prepare the final report. Responses were reviewed for patterns of consistency and variation in response. Coding Tables are included in Appendix E.

#### **F. Reliability and Validity Considerations**

The reliability with the personal, structured interview approach was improved by soliciting feedback on the interview guide from both an external industry research practitioner and the researcher's academic supervisor. The guide was also piloted in a trial interview. The draft interview guide is included in Appendix C.

#### **G. Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the size of the population sample and the prior association of the researcher and the advisory committee members with the JR Shaw School of Business at NAIT.

The largest limitation for the research is the small size of the sample population, which is necessary for exploratory research that uses in-person interviews; however this means that the results cannot be extrapolated to represent the larger industry. Also, the researcher is an instructor in the marketing department at NAIT and the respondents were NAIT advisory committee members, so an arm's length relationship did not exist, but no employer/employee relationship existed. No interaction occurred at all between the researcher and five of the respondents and only limited interaction with the two respondents from the Sales and Advertising sub-committees based as the researcher participates on the marketing advisory committee. The researcher confirmed this topic has not previously been discussed with any of the NAIT advisory committees.

## V. Findings

The interview guide used 15 questions to elicit insights and opinions around three major areas: (1) a graduate's orientation to the work place, (2) how mobile phones are being used in the interviewee's workplace setting, and (3) how new hires are learning what is appropriate business etiquette regarding mobile telephone use in the workplace setting. Responses for each question were analyzed to detect patterns or trends across the six interviews and also unique variances. The following industry classification key identifies which industry representative the quote is coming from and the size of the business they represent by number of employees:

### Industry Classification

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

For the reader's convenience, the classification key is provided at the bottom of all following pages. To set the following opinions and quotes in context, each respondent is briefly described below:

Respondent #1 has worked in the financial services industry for 20 years, currently manages a region of seven offices with 34 consultants and 12 employees, and is primarily responsible for recruiting and management.

Respondent #2 has worked in the accounting industry for over 20 years, is a partner in a staffing and recruiting firm that specializes in the Accounting and Finance industry and oversees an office of 10 employees.

### Industry Classification

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

Respondent #3 has worked in the advertising and communications industry for over 18 years and is currently responsible for the operations and recruitment within a local agency with 39 employees.

Respondent #4 has spent over 14 years in the technology industry in positions of sales, training and recruitment, and is currently responsible for all Western Canadian recruitment strategies for a technology company with 3500 employees.

Respondent #5 is the director for recruitment at a construction company with 6400 employees with over 14 years of human resource recruitment and strategy experience.

Respondent #6 has over 21 years of experience in a wide range of positions with a financial services organization that employs 2300 people, and is a senior manager responsible for management, recruitment, and strategic human resource planning.

#### **A. Graduates—Orientation to the Workplace Questions**

##### **1. What comes to mind when you think of the skills that impress you about new hires that have just graduated and are working with your firm?**

A range of skills was identified by the six respondents, two specifically identified team work skills, one noted good communication skills, two mentioned the need for new hires to think and work independently, and two specified the need for adaptability in the work environment. All six respondents focused their answer more towards the appropriate attitudes and work ethic they were looking for as key determinant for successful hires, rather than skills. Half of the respondents look for new hires that are self-motivated, enthusiastic and willing to learn. All six respondents also specifically indicated that their hiring process was geared to finding the skills and attitudes they wanted from new hires.

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“What we are looking for are people that are really self-assured and self-motivated . . . If you don’t have a strong sense of ego and very strong sense of self you are not going to succeed in our business”. (1)

“. . . the connectedness that they have . . . they are more in-tune with what’s going on than maybe a previous generation. . . with social media and everything else, they’ve got blogs, they’ve got twitter accounts, they’re following people, they’re keeping up with different elements now. . .”(3)

“Skills that immediately come to mind for new grads that come to work at [Company name] would be tenacity; I’m looking for team work, team building, great attitude, goal setters and resiliency.” (4)

“. . . when I look for the skills of new hire it’s a lot around communication, ability to take direction, ability to work in the grey . . .so, here are some accountabilities. . . can they take good direction? Can they think things through on their own or are they waiting for someone to tell them what to do?” (5)

## 2. Does anything concern you about the skills of the new hires?

A common theme that emerged from the responses was the need for new hires to be more realistic about career advancement in their new work environment. The majority of respondents (5/6) commented on the attitudes of new hires as being unrealistic, and impatient in wanting to advance in their careers; partially this was seen as overconfidence but also based on pressure they put on themselves.

“They don’t want to do the time in the trenches . . . I think that is part of a bigger problem with the expectations of having their parent’s lifestyles, the demand of owning your own home, your own car, all those things the salary demands which I think fuels that . . . because if I’m a graduate now I should be making 80 grand within 2 or 3 years – and that’s what I mean by the expectation of how do I get there fast? [The new employee is] in a rush to get there, without really realizing they just don’t have the experience or enough information to understand how to get there”. (6)

“. . .specifically what we are looking for is a Y that acts as an X or has some of their attributes, they don’t have a sense of entitlement, but a sense that they have to earn their stripes. They may be in a position for an undefined time period, sometimes . . . the more junior people want to know how long it is going to take them to get to a certain level – well it depends on how you perform at this level . . . there’s no putting the cart before the horse.” (2)

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An insight from one respondent was that success to the Y Generation is influenced by the awareness of young business icons like Mark Zuckerberg or the founders of Google, who succeeded at a young age. No longer are CEO's required to be at an advanced age in a tenured career before they attain that position. His comment was that the type of work new hires are doing needs to be positioned appropriately so that they understand why they are doing what might be perceived to them as "grunt work." Another respondent stated she had no concerns with skills but did note that in better understanding Generation Y, the company had changed their traditional compensation, rewards-based systems to recognize that Gen Y's like to have more teamwork rewards and/or more activities that involve team and not just individual recognition for success. Two respondents indicated concerns with new hires that were relying too much on the organization instead of themselves to advance their careers.

" . . . Hires that are not successful or who we decide not to hire are people who have been spoon fed for too long. If they are expecting to be spoon fed, need a ton of supervision and 9 to 5, they are not risk takers". (1)

"No concerns with the skills . . . more on the attitude side of things, there is a certain expectation, especially in terms of the new graduate, that it is the employer's responsibility to provide training and career development . . . whereas it doesn't seem to be as much as a shared responsibility . . . so when I look at it from a new grad perspective there is that sense that someone is going to develop my career for me and that it is kind of done to them and not necessarily that they are part of it". (5)

### **3. Sometimes new employees are given guidance about how they should conduct themselves at work? Does your company do this?**

The larger their organization based on number of employees, the more likely the respondent was to reference extensive, formalized processes to bring new hires into the company. A formal "on-boarding" process was described by half of the respondents. They referenced a range of initiation coverage from reviewing company policies and human resource

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benefits, to corporate values, and aspects of codes of conduct (for example, appropriate career apparel), which one respondent indicated can be highly subjective but an important consideration in a financial institution.

“ . . . we have a number of different documents in terms of our hiring process we give them a document that talks about the guidelines for the office and what the expectations are of each individual person . . . they sign the contract to come on board for a two year commitment and we also send them off to New Hire School -- first we do a two week online course which is instructor led that walks you through the history of (Company), the internal processes, and the products themselves. . .” (4)

“ . . . we have an on-boarding program that is customized depending on where that person sits, what line of business and what role . . . a check list of things that person needs to be aware, of so our office practices, our HR policies . . . we do have a mandatory requirement to have Respect in the Work Place Training for all of our employees, we also put on a companywide orientation seminar which is typically done through webinar . . .” (5)

#### **4. Does your company do this (provide guidance on how to conduct themselves at work) with respect to mobile telephones?**

There was variance in the interpretation and response to this question. Half of the respondents specifically identified Information Technology (IT) or Telecommunications policies that employees must sign if they receive mobile telephones. In addition, two of those respondents also specifically identified the importance of adhering to provincial laws and work place safety.

“ . . . for every new employee when they start, there are two policies that they absolutely sign off before anything else that is the IT policy which covers cell phone, but also personal computer, laptops and anything to do with technology, and then the code of conduct . . . every employee that gets a BlackBerry they’ll sign the agreement and the parameters around that . . . our travel policy speaks to cell phone usage– so for example, when the new law came out about distracted driving that’s in our policies of what’s acceptable and what’s not acceptable”. (6)

“We do have a telecommunications policy . . . it’s part of the hiring process and we ask everyone to . . . acknowledge that they have read and agreed to those policies . . . one of those is our technology policy where we talk about computer and cell phone usage and we also have a piece on social media as well where we outline some guidelines. We also have people driving . . . we want to make sure that they operate in a hands-free environment in

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vehicles so we are not only following the laws of the province but also a safe work practice as well. . .” (5)

In addressing this question, half of the respondents also stated their organizations had social media policies in their organizations. Of those, one respondent mentioned the importance of a code of ethics in his organization and the guidance provided to new employees via a company wiki which is a repository of company information including appropriate digital and online suggestions for social media use. He explained that he has had to have coaching conversations with employees regarding social media use, especially due to the often sensitive nature of their work in communications consulting.

“ . . .we don’t want to control their [employee] message but we want them to be thoughtful when they are using it [social media] and that’s a tough balance, so we try to lower case “m” monitor just to get a sense if there are any trouble spots and if so try and help to mentor them through that but we try not to be the iron fist of don’t do this and don’t do that because then you are in the classic rule setting scenario where you are always a few steps behind not only the technology but what they are into so we want to encourage them to go out and explore but just do so smartly”. (3)

In response to this question two respondents commented that their workplace expectations were more from a behavioral perspective than a formal policy perspective:

“ . . . it’s not a policy it’s more . . . of a norm and an expected behavior . . . if you continue to use your cell phone and it’s disrupting member service or its impeding your job performance we will write you up for potential corrective action because now you are not performing your duty and your job, the cell phone is just the result of it. (6)

“We don’t have official cell phone use policies per se outside of when we start any group meeting that we ask can you please shut off your cell phone . . . it’s [mobile telephone etiquette] not part of our official training in terms of what we should do with our clients – but now that I think about it probably should be, because you do not want to be interrupted when you are doing a one-on-one between you and your client. To have your cell phone go off, it’s disrupting, it throws off your train of thought, and you can’t answer it. You just can’t”. (1)

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In another interpretation of this question, one respondent described the expectations that all employees bring a cell phone to work and the egalitarian compensation structure for all employees regardless of position:

“No [guidelines regarding cell phone use] . . . our cell phone policy is that we ask you to bring your own cell phone . . . we have the expectation that everybody does have one as in our business it is very, very important that candidates and clients are able to get a hold of us 24-7. . . Our policy is that we pay up to 100 dollars for your cell phone – you don’t have to prove how much is business and how much is personal, that policy is for everyone . . .”  
(2)

## **B. Use of Mobile Phones in the Workplace Questions**

### **5. Does your firm provide your employees with a mobile telephone for use in business?**

The majority of respondents (4/6) indicated that cell phones were paid for by the organization for employees who would require them for business. The recipients were described by respondents as managers of teams, employees on-call and the senior levels of the organization. Half of the respondents (3/6) indicated that new hires need to bring their own personal mobile phones for use in the workplace and that it was a condition of employment.

“We provide the executive tier and senior managers with cell phones . . . we don’t go to the full extent (all employees) but at the same time if an individual is using their mobile phone -- an intermediate or junior [employee] is using it a lot for work and is getting data or long distance charges -- they are free to expense it back and we will cover that no problems”. (3)

“Yes, if the role requires it and I would say about 90% of our business does . . . most of the time it is a BlackBerry or an iPhone so a phone and an email communication device, those are provided to the majority of our employees only a few – administrative and accounting people do not have a cell phone or mobile device”. (5)

Another respondent shared his dissatisfaction of having to use two mobile telephones; one for work and another for personal use. He expressed his excitement about the future development of cell phone technologies which would enable one mobile device but with the ability to differentiate between business and personal use. He commented that

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this future development would provide the functionality of the secure BlackBerry platform and the preferences of new hires for the Apple or Android platforms. One respondent shared “the next wave of employees they want that flexibility—they need that flexibility and that will at least keep us up to date with what their expectations are”.

The respondent from the construction industry shared that the company IT policy has already moved to support both the iPhone and the Blackberry to recognize the different preferences of employees. One respondent noted that previously their IT group did not support this but “they broke down so we’re supporting both now”, adding:

“ . . . we’ve just rolled out 150 iPads to our field pipeline staff. . . these are foreman in the middle of nowhere building a pipeline and because there is limited cell phone coverage, there are no computers and there is really no office . . . we give them an air card and an iPad so they can communicate . . . this is a very old school business that is use to paper and pen and the back of a file folder in the back of the pickup truck so it’s a very different way of communicating but this is supported and encouraged by our business”. (5)

**6. If not provided by the company, do your employees use their own mobile phones for work purposes?**

All respondents indicated that employees who don’t have a company cell phone can bring their personal cell phones to work for personal use when they are not on work hours, for example lunch breaks.

“Employees who don’t have a company cell phone can bring their personal cell phones to work and check them when there are breaks or during down times – if you are expecting an important call – absolutely keep it close by – it’s not like a school thing where we put it away”. (6)

As expressed in question five, three organizations require their employees use their personal phones for the work place. This included the technology, financial investment and the recruiting industries.

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**7. There are both advantages and disadvantages to employees having access to mobile phones during work. Can we talk about what the advantages are if any?**

All six respondents were consistent in speaking about the significant advantages of increased productivity, connectivity and speed that the use of mobile phones had brought to their business operations. The respondent from the Communications industry talked about the ability to instantly research questions that arose in meetings, and how their employees were able to use social media to crowd source questions with topic experts, and friends-of-friends on the social media website LinkedIn.

“The advantages from a work functionality perspective -- everything right now is about instant – instant gratification, instant messaging, getting that information right now because that’s how fast life works right now so that’s absolutely an advantage”. (6)

“We’re (recruiting) mainly in Accounting and Finance . . . people want an A/P clerk for a couple of weeks while someone is on holiday or on a project – those individuals are usually newer to Canada and/or are just newer to the work force and starting their career, so a lot of those people strictly communicate by text – so . . . there is a lot of texting back and forth with candidates, that’s just the accepted way of communicating today – it’s very efficient – it’s quite ironic that 7 or 8 years ago it was a novelty to text a candidate and it was almost viewed as almost having too much of a personal relationship but now that’s common place. . .”. (2)

“. . . the majority of the work in construction is not based in an office so that a mobile device is the key to success for communication for our company. Period. . . [The smartphone] is that person’s lifeline and connection into [Company name]. . . we are not a typical office business, that mobile device is critical to our business operations . . .”. (5)

**8. What about disadvantages – are there any that you see?**

All six respondents commented on the poor optics of how cell phones are being used in the work place, including people checking them at inappropriate times in business meetings and at lunch, and very obviously using them for personal reasons during business. One respondent’s insight was that the majority of calls and interruptions are not urgent and that our dependency on mobile phones is largely unnecessary. Similarly, another respondent stated that cell phones are

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hard to turn off and that they are reliant on the network, noticing this especially when the network is down or access to it is disrupted.

“The obvious thing would be that they are also texting friends and personal use during business hours and you can see that in our open environment . . . you will see them smiling and texting and you know that’s probably not business . . . if it becomes a problem we would probably have a chat with the individual . . . I do see it from time to time and so it is distracting – I’m guilty of this – I’m on my land line and my phone will ring and I’m like can you hold on a second – your eye gets off the ball – that happens a lot too”. (2)

“. . .the downside is the distractions of the connectivity. . . in a meeting when someone suddenly starts clicking away on their phone sometimes you get your back up a little bit . . . [so] give a bit of an explanation [of why you are using your cell phone] because different generations can see it as rude or an interruption [when] the ringer is going off or . . . on vibrate it can sometimes be even louder, so depending on how they have their alerts set can make for distractions. . .” (3)

“The disadvantage is that it is hard to turn it off right? And the nature of our business is that . . . not everyone works the same standard hours, we work in multiple time zones as well and both North and South of the border . . . The connectivity piece is one of the challenges – we rely on it so much – if we don’t have connectivity or TELUS is having an upgrade and something is going wrong we rely on it so heavily that it does impact our business when it’s down”. (5)

## 9. Have attitudes on business etiquette changed regarding mobile phones?

All respondents indicated that attitudes regarding mobile phone etiquette in business have changed, as the use of them has become more prevalent in both of our business and personal lives. The common theme was that this has made us more lenient on behaviors not long ago considered unacceptable or rude.

“Totally. I think not just business but personal; it’s no longer the situation whereby people regard it as a utility device. It’s now just part of people’s lives . . . look at it from just proper etiquette relative to conversation -- you’ll be talking to somebody and their phone will go off and they’ll be reading it or you’re having a conversation and their phone is always at the ready. It promotes multi-tasking to an absurd level”. (Pilot respondent: Retail Service/Auto Club)

“I think at one point we just used our cell phone for business but I think people now realize they are on their phones all day whether they are with their family and friends – it’s just a part of everyday business. I do think at one time it was considered to be extremely rude to have your phone out or to answer your phone while at the table but now . . . the norm is that it is totally acceptable now to take your phone out and have it at the table so beside you

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at a business meeting – there’s your fork, there’s your knife, there’s your spoon, there’s your phone. Right?” (4)

“Yes, I think so, there is instant messaging and texting and so texting is now a mode of communication for many of our businesses not just through email but through that mobile texting – so it’s more casual, it’s quicker, there is the slang and the jargon that goes along with that – that is incorporated into our business communication but it’s a quick easy way to share information and it’s utilized extensively just as much as email is so a quick text or BBM message. . . ”. (5)

### **10. Overall do you think the mobile technology etiquette skills of new employees are improving, declining or remaining the same?**

Respondent interpretations of this question varied. Half of the respondents believed the etiquette skills were improving, noting that society had just become more accustomed to or tolerant of the behaviors around mobile phone usage.

“I think its improving . . . it’s become much more acceptable to have your phone with you at all times. I think as we look back on the old school movies and we see the big cellular phones and it was kind of a status item having a cell phone, now it’s no longer a status item, its common place for everyone in every [income] bracket to have a phone”. (4)

The other half of the respondents initially shared that they felt mobile usage etiquette in business was remaining the same but then went on to describe behaviors they did not like. Specifically, three respondents referenced the shorthand texting language they saw coming through in other forms of business correspondence and one respondent described a concern with how “truncated” communication was becoming as a result of new forms of communication in texting and tweeting:

“I like to use correct punctuation and proper email etiquette – I transfer that over to cell phone use and texting– I never liked it with all the abbreviations . . . but I think we are more tolerant as a society and as a business culture overall of accepting the LOL’s . . . but I have found a lot of times I personally have passed judgement when someone has poor grammar and spelling mistakes spilling over into texting . . . I’m in the judgement business, so when I see spelling mistakes and improper use of grammar . . . I pass judgement on their attention to detail – what is their education level? . . . we are more tolerant which doesn’t make it better . . . we’ve just gotten used to the improper etiquette with cell phone use, specifically texting”. (2)

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“I see the habits from the mobile phone going into emails and other communications – it’s shorthand . . . and I see this coming into other communications, in some cases like resumes, in some cases communications I get from staff members – it’s creeping into email format and communication in general – for a lot of people it has become a lot more acceptable to talk that way using the other forms of communication . . . because they are just so used to it. There was one individual that really took me back – like what grade are you in?” (6)

In one interview a respondent specified that young new-hires, those under 30 in particular, demonstrated declining etiquette:

“But with the newer younger people we hire . . . they spend too much time responding to texts, and/or whatever is coming into their phones, they are phone addicted types and they are very surreptitious about it – in a meeting they won’t have it ring but you will see people on their BlackBerry phones. . .” (1)

### **C. Learning Business Etiquette Regarding Mobile Technology Use Questions**

#### **11. What do you consider to be poor etiquette in the workplace when using mobile telephone technology?**

Respondents were consistent in what they deemed poor etiquette: all six respondents described various ways that cell phone usage in business interrupts both group and interpersonal meetings, causing users to lose focus. The biggest annoyance cited by the majority was texting in a meeting (4/6), but another irritating behavior identified by half of the respondents was receiving poor grammar and spelling in text messages.

“I think, when you are in a business environment and you are interacting between yourself and your business client there is a respect, you are building a relationship, it is quite clear in our organization, it’s all about customer service and relationship. When you are with that person you need to be in the moment and they expect to have your undivided attention, so you cannot allow interruptions, even if it is a text blinking – even that light or sound is going to throw off the meeting, you can’t have it”. (1)

“During sales meetings downtown all cell phones go into a box and it gets closed . . . I do find being a presenter myself, I do notice when other people are answering their phones or texting or not paying attention to the information I am delivering – and so I do find that unacceptable. I did notice at our last [networking] event at NAIT . . . there were about five

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students who did not put their phone down throughout the entire evening – they were . . . emailing and texting while someone was presenting – especially disrespectful when it’s a heartfelt speech and it’s emotional. . .” (4)

“You and I in this meeting right now and me checking my messages – that drives me nuts as far as meetings . . . and that’s not even in the work place but also out for lunch with a colleague and they are checking their messages. . . versus just putting it down – it can wait. The other thing is a lot more communication is by text versus email and that is definitely a trend . . . I look at job offers and responses and questions and it’s coming through texts now versus the verbal and to me that is poor etiquette when I get communications that way. . .” (6)

In addition, the majority of respondents (5/6) also offered the insight that they were guilty of the very behaviors they were describing critically.

“Daily I am shocked and I even include myself in that . . . you almost need to make a point that you turn your BlackBerry to silent and even in this interview I’ve felt it vibrate about five times since we’ve been sitting here . . . Then you are sitting in meetings and people are texting on their BB devices . . . maybe there is something that needs to be addressed but can it wait 20 minutes? ½ hour? We are so in the “Now” as opposed to idea that it can wait 20 – 30 minutes . . . I’ve seen business presentations with senior executive texting back and forth in a presentation to each other – I find it extremely rude. . . I think we have lost the boundaries of what is the right time and place because there are no boundaries. . .” (Pilot respondent: Retail Service/Auto Club)

“I think I’m maybe a C+ or B- as far as etiquette, I try to be pretty conscious about it, I think in my personal life I’m probably a C and maybe a C- and that is because personal and business are so intertwined and with things like a mobile device are you ever really off the clock? . . . also the work place that I am in – I would say is not your typical workplace – we have fairly lax business codes of conduct . . . we’re not buttoned down and conservative by any stretch of the imagination so we’d probably score harsher than a more mainstream or traditional organization”. (3)

The communication industry respondent commented that the industry work culture was likely more flexible than traditional businesses and mentioned a “positive double standard” indicating that different mobile usage expectations would be expected in an internal meeting, versus one with external clients.

## **12. What do you consider to be good etiquette when using mobile telephones in the workplace?**

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Mirroring the findings in what the respondents considered good etiquette, half of the respondents said that a mobile telephone should be turned off in a meeting or not brought to the meeting at all. Another theme introduced by three of the respondents was a caveat; if an urgent call was expected it was good etiquette to preface the meeting by identifying the important reason why you may need to pick up a call.

“Good etiquette is not to use them in a face-to-face meeting or a group meeting where your attention or participation is required in a lecture, there is a speaker or in a meeting . . . If there is situation where an urgent call is coming in where someone is sick, or if there is an important call that is urgent for some other reason, you need to warn the people you are meeting with [by saying] I am going to stay as long as I can, I may need to leave early, but then everyone is aware”. (1)

“When taking a personal phone call inside of an office its good etiquette to step away so not everyone has to hear your conversation. . . Not knowing if someone has a phone is good etiquette, then it’s not present and it’s not the main focal point”. (4)

Another interpretation of this question came from two of the respondents who shared how the growth in mobile phone functionality had positively benefited their organization. One respondent expressed that their company culture preferred the use of mobile telephone communication, both text messages and voice conversations, to email. The other respondent recounted how efficiently a mobile phone photo feature had instantly captured their morning business meeting white board notes which were then subsequently mailed to all attendees, saving someone the time for interpreting, transcribing and sending the minutes in the traditional way.

“As a communications tool, quick updates with respect to status updates or quick things that you need to communicate do very well on text or messenger -- it’s a great way to . . . bring people together closer from a relationship perspective. [In our company] the conversation is often more important . . . we recognize [with] many of our business leaders that’s their preference – to talk to someone versus email someone and so the good business etiquette is to pick up the phone and call somebody rather than email it. . . ” (5)

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“ . . . we had a meeting this morning -- a brainstorming session for an upcoming session with business – right away out came a cell phone –It [meeting discussion] was already on the white board – click [a picture was taken] – and emailed out instantly . . . otherwise, someone is taking notes, typing it up and sending it out. Instead, it was right there. To me that is a great way of using technology”. (6)

### **13. Where do you think students learn about what is appropriate etiquette in business when it comes to mobile technology?**

This question caused all six respondents to pause and appear to reflect more than any other question. The initial top-of-mind response for two respondents was that they did not know. After a significant pause, they indicated that school is where these behaviors should be acquired, although there was also recognition that they were not sure how effective that would be because of the variance by school and teacher.

“That is an excellent question – I don’t know – I don’t have a good sense of how much it is incorporated into classrooms and I think that still varies from institution to institution and program to program . . .” (3)

“I don’t think they do [learn about what is appropriate]. . . . At university I don’t think there are rules and if there are they’re broken because I text my daughter and I know she’s in class and I get responses. So, if there are rules they are not being adhered to”. (Pilot respondent: Retail Service/Auto Club)

“I think they should learn at the school level – I think that’s where it’s introduced . . . I do other things – like at NAIT, that I’m not sure happen elsewhere -- I do presentations to the graduating class on resume tips, dress for success and we talk about the X and Y generation and how you should talk to an X and vice-versa, so I think having seminars and real life examples is excellent . . .” (2)

The majority of respondents (4/6) indicated that appropriate behaviors would be picked up by observing behaviors and through mentorship in the workplace.

“I think they have to learn it from the company, to be told what is appropriate and what is not because if you have not worked in a business environment before, their [students] social circles do things very differently, and in a business environment you need to be told about meeting etiquette and this how we use our phones . . . .If you need to take a few personal phone calls that’s fine but we don’t want FaceBook open on your mobile phone while you are working . . .” (5)

#### **Industry Classification**

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|---|--------------------------------|
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| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

“That’s actually a great question – because I even know [Company name] with our 2300 employees we don’t specifically train that . . . so that really comes from what have you learned from your manager – good, bad and indifferent – and what they observe from their colleagues or other managers and their experiences. . . I don’t know where they actually learn [mobile telephone etiquette] unless they are teaching that in school”. (6)

**14. If this issue were to be addressed within the business school curriculum do you have any suggestions on how colleges can develop the mobile phone etiquette in undergraduates that you would like to see?**

Respondents offered a range of ideas in response to this question. Two respondents suggested that awareness could be heightened with students by sharing examples of company policies and guidelines.. Giving guidance and tips to students on what is acceptable was the suggestion from half of the respondents. The pilot interview respondent also suggested including course content on this topic in the business communications course, but there was skepticism about the effectiveness of such content given the students’ more dominant exposure to how they use mobile phones in their personal, social environment.

“ . . . there can be policies and guidelines just as we’ve spoken about and you can talk about it in your communications classes with regards to what is good personal etiquette relative to communication. But is that going to help? Again, 7 – 14 – 28 times maybe it will sink in to a certain extent – I don’t know . . . again it comes down to personal behavior and habits that are formed in one place, then outside that environment, the rules are extremely different so when you go back to that one environment where there is no tolerance is that going to change the behavior outside?” (Pilot respondent: Retail Service/Auto Club)

“I think . . . this is the initial stages, interviewing business people and getting a sense of what their view is on cell phone etiquette and then building some type of plan around it. I don’t think it is a full credit semester course but I think it’s integrated into how we are arming our people [students] . . . at least make them aware of it. . .” (2)

Another respondent agreed that awareness should be heightened but suggested a workplace investigative approach be considered for teaching students rather than imposing rules, because this would give students the opportunity to investigate what was considered appropriate

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within the culture of the workplace. The respondent felt this would better recognize the variance in expected behaviors from different companies and also the rapid pace of technology change.

“ . . . one person’s Miss Manners version is always different than another’s. I think that maybe you can teach the absolute base line stuff [mobile telephone etiquette] but it would be more about teaching how to investigate what is considered appropriate, because you are never going to be able to keep up with the [technology] changes outside . . . so when you are going into a new company you need to figure out what the different cultural aspects are whether that’s dress code . . . or what kind of social situations there are. . . and give them [students] the idea that these are the things you should be asking about . . . ” (3)

A suggestion to use a case study approach was provided as an idea, where the impact of poor mobile telephone behaviors could be used to demonstrate the negative impact on colleagues, bosses or external stakeholders.

“ . . . a place to focus on would be learning about what company’s policies are and their philosophies around the topic and the guiding principles for practices in the work place – recognizing school and life is different than the workplace and is there a change? Also look at case studies or some actual policies that companies have to say to students this is what it looks like and be ready for this. . . So I do think there certainly could be some discussion or opportunity to educate on that for sure.” (5)

A unique suggestion from another respondent was that a mobile telephone application could be created for the mobile telephone etiquette topic given “everything is going towards apps”. The respondent indicated the topic could be addressed along with appropriate social media usage behaviors due to their interconnectedness and relevance especially with newer employees.

“ . . . everything is going towards apps . . . I think that whole realm [mobile and social media] can be covered off in one area – how big of an area it is I don’t know? . . . we do have a social media policy now which covers off what is appropriate and not appropriate . . . I’ve had conversations with supervisors who have had employees put something very inappropriate on their Facebook . . . so I’ve literally watched [them remove] or requested they take stuff off their FB . . . it’s staggering how quickly news travels, how information travels and [perceptions of] what is or isn’t appropriate. I think that people have lost a lot of

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the filters. I'd put it all under that whole social media realm, because it all falls in there . . . your FaceBook, your Twitter, your LinkedIn and it's all by your cell phone". (6)

**15. Any other comments you want to add on the subject of mobile technology etiquette that we didn't discuss and that you would like to add?**

Respondents used this question to emphasize their previous points or to summarize; half of the respondents provided personal examples of poor mobile telephone behavior they had experienced in the work place. Additionally, one of these respondents recognized that there was increasing variability with what is considered appropriate but felt there were things that could be done to finesse the negative behaviors in a positive way, for example, communicating with colleagues prior to the meeting that you are expecting an urgent call and need to take it.

"Well I've had to personally deal with a situation in the workplace where a person on my team was in a position of high visibility and they were constantly on their personal device. I had to have a performance workplace review with that individual to say that behaviour was not acceptable because it was beyond what was being deemed as acceptable, meaning that it wasn't just once, or twice it was all the time . . . it was one of the most bizarre situations I've ever had to deal with from an HR perspective in my 25 year career". (Pilot respondent: Retail Service/Auto Club)

". . . I was doing a presentation at NAIT and it use to really, really bother me when I would see people heads down and texting or using their phone, thinking you know, I'm not paid to do this, I took time out of my day, so please give me the respect to listen to me. Now . . . I accept it is just how things are. . . you have a lot of variability on cell phone etiquette . . . but there are some basic things that we can do to set ourselves apart. Saying "hey my cell phone might ring and I need to take that call" those are ways to build credibility – those are the ways we can respond to help people in the business world". (2)

An insight shared by another respondent was that students simply have no idea that what they are doing is inappropriate and disrespectful because it is so commonplace in how they communicate with their friends.

"I think that quite often students have no idea what they are doing is inappropriate, they just have no idea because it is so status quo between all of their friends. One thing that I will point out in terms of etiquette and texting – I have received a number of texts from people over the years looking for employment and one thing that I absolutely cannot appreciate is the slang or code or shortened words inside of an email or text, its really – I

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find disrespectful. . . so it is just understanding that is not professional use of your phone, so yes, you can have your phone and do what you will with your friends, but in terms of your instructors, and those that you are doing business with I think that is completely unacceptable". (4)

A summary of previous comments was shared by two of the respondents including one who offered that on further reflection "encouraging the conversation" on the topic, by having new employees asking questions in the work place, versus making a formal use of do's and don'ts was the preferred approach. The other respondent shared that cell phones were only going to become more engrained in their business and provided an example of how beneficial mobile telephone use was in their daily operations. This respondent went on to reaffirm that company practices need to continue to adjust to the robust ways their potential and current employees are using the technology.

" . . . the practices around mobile communications are only going to get more engrained in our business than what they are now . . . we hire thousands of trades people every year and a lot of these folks don't have access to computers. . . they use their mobile phones to communicate with us, so they take pictures of their tickets and email them to us so we can take those and enter them into our system and validate that they have their journeyman certificate and they've taken the right safety training . . . they're using their mobile phones for that . . . so my comment would be it's not going to go away, it's only going to become more engrained with all the robust ways the technology is used and our business practices have to adjust to that". (5)

The findings from this section of the paper, including the common themes and variances from each research question, will be further explored in the discussion section of this paper where the research questions will also be addressed.

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## VI. Discussion

The research results support many of the findings from the industry literature review, notably the trending research from the *Centre for Professional Excellence* (2013) at York College on the behaviors of new graduates in the workplace in the work place. The research study explored whether the way people use their mobile telephones in the company of others impacts how they are perceived in the work place by numerous stakeholders including colleagues, clients and managers. Skills that are associated with professionalism, including effective communication and interpersonal skills are directly connected to mobile telephone use in the workplace. All interview respondents noted varying concerns with appropriate mobile telephone etiquette in the workplace. Mobile telephone etiquette is an issue.

### **Mobile Usage Behaviors: A Blessing and a Curse**

There was unanimous agreement on the positive impact mobile telephones have had for business operations because of the increased speed of connectivity and in providing new, effective ways of communicating. Most often identified was the positive contribution of texting and instant messaging. However, the benefit comes with a downside, as all respondents also expressed that mobile phones were a source of distraction in business: people using them at inappropriate times, disrupting personal conversations and meetings, combined with the perception that usage was also often not for business. These results were also prevalent in the literature, notably the findings from Galbreath and Long (2004), Intel (2012), and CPE (2013) which tell a convincing story of declining mobile telephone etiquette in the workplace. The majority of respondents also volunteered that they were guilty of the very behaviors they were critically describing. Similar to what Randstat (2011) and Robert Half (2012) found in their research, this study revealed that contradictory opinions and behaviors coexist in the workplace.

The lure of the mobile telephone signal or call is hard to resist. There is recognition that many mobile usage behaviors are not appropriate, but admittance that they are practiced.

Another negative result, expressed by the majority, was that increased use of mobile telephones has made communication more informal; the short hand of texting language was creeping into correspondence that should be more formally and professionally approached. Several respondents also expressed that increasing mobile telephone use also brings the expectation or additional pressure for faster responses.

### **Mobile Telephone Etiquette is in Flux**

Despite the easy recall from all respondents of annoying mobile telephone usage behaviors in the workplace, half responded that it was improving and half stated it was staying the same. Half of the respondents then went on to elaborate their concerns with mobile etiquette by providing examples of behaviors that bothered them. The work of Meyrowitz (1985) and Srivastava (2006) helps to unpack the contradiction: the cell phone is not just a piece of technology, it's a social object ubiquitous in our daily lives, and it has markedly changed social etiquette rules and the attitudes that support those rules. Attitudes within society are in transition regarding what appropriate etiquette is; respondents recognize a trend to leniency and acceptability in using mobile telephones in scenarios that would have been considered rude only a few years ago. One respondent contrasted changing acceptance of cell phone behaviors with the slow acceptance of chewing gum in public, which was once considered very vulgar. Societal norms and expectations around technology are in flux. Rapid technology advances have challenged the establishment of consistent societal norms and expectations in society.

### **Acquiring Mobile Telephone Etiquette**

The larger the organization that respondents were representing, the more likely they were to describe technology or information system policies as part of their new-hire on-boarding process. Half of the respondents noted their organizations had recently formalized policies around social media use. However, two respondents shared anecdotes of how they had intervened to correct inappropriate use by employees in order to protect their corporate brand and reputation. This may indicate that written policies are not sufficient to guide behaviors. Employees may need training that includes practical, actual examples of what is and isn't appropriate to help define expectations and employers who are willing to intervene/coach when infractions occur. As Bott, Montagno and Lane (2010) and CPE (2012) found, no companies had formalized behavioral expectations with respect to how mobile telephones were being used daily in the workplace for interpersonal communications. Poor behaviors are noticed and are of concern to employers but they are not addressed in current training programs.

The implication for this lack of training emerged later in the interview when respondents needed to consider where and how appropriate mobile telephone behaviors should be acquired. This was the question that caused the most reflection from respondents. Here the research findings deviate from the literature; CPE (2012) found a large gap between the number of employers who provide professionalism training and their expectation that colleges should be developing professionalism in students. In contrast, this study found the majority of respondents felt the necessary etiquette should be acquired on the job through observation and mentoring. The two respondents who felt college was more appropriate were also skeptical of its effectiveness, referring to the inconsistencies their children had experienced with mobile telephone expectations in school. This variance within colleges and classrooms on mobile



telephone use appeared in the literature, notably the findings of Kiedrowski et al.(2009) and Taylor et al. (2011). The inconsistency in expectations and behaviors of role models will not help students to acquire appropriate behaviors.

### **Ideas To Educate on Appropriate Behaviors**

Respondents offered suggestions to modify inappropriate student mobile telephone behaviors as they prepared for the workplace. These included raising awareness of business expectations on what is appropriate, increasing the frequency and consistency of the message, using case studies in the classroom, creating a mobile application for the topic, and raising the idea that students and new employees should ask questions and observe the workplace about what is appropriate as work place culture will vary.

During the interviews, half of the respondents made reference to a heightened level of awareness they had about the topic of mobile telephone etiquette as a result of being asked to participate in the interview. They shared anecdotal examples of how this had impacted their behaviors prior to the interview. One respondent shared that the day preceding the interview he had caught himself using his mobile telephone to check his email during a slow point in a business speaker's breakfast presentation and, when realizing his transgression, he changed his behavior. Another respondent commented that he had spent time talking about the subject matter with his wife, hence learning about how strict policies were at her place of employment in contrast to his. Another respondent had prepared by researching his company's documented mobile telephone policies. These stories could give some indication to how simply raising awareness of the topic could bring the issue of mobile telephone etiquette to a higher level of consciousness and hence provide an opportunity to influence behavior.

### **Social Learning Insights**

Bandura's Social Learning theory (1977, 1983) suggests students will learn appropriate behaviors by watching others interact with their environment and experience the consequences. In students' social circles there may be a different set of social norms and expectations around how their mobile phones are used in the company of their friends and family. It is possible that another set of expectations around appropriate behavior will be experienced in the post-secondary environment particularly as the literature review and this study indicate most colleges do not have consistent policies. The literature and current research study also finds that the business employers do not specifically cover expectations around mobile telephone etiquette, anticipating that it will be picked up on-the-job via observation and mentoring or through their post secondary experience. Yet respondents unanimously cited concerns about poor mobile telephone etiquette they have observed from new employees.

If students are not made aware of the potential for different expectations around what is appropriate use in various workplace environments, they may not be aware of the negative perceptions their behavior is causing on their new or potential employers. Currently, mobile technology use behaviors are not covered by curriculum in the JR School of Business at NAIT. The research points to a potential opportunity to improve on appropriate behaviors at the college level, prior to students moving into their business careers. By raising the level of consciousness with students about how and when to use their mobile technology in a business setting we may better meet the expectations of business employers.

## **A. Recommendations**

The findings from this study suggest there are actions that can be taken to make students and faculty aware of potential employers' negative perceptions on the mobile telephone etiquette demonstrated by new employees. The research clearly identifies the mobile telephone use behaviors that employers deem appropriate and inappropriate for the workplace. The challenge is that many of the behaviors that epitomize a lack of professionalism are part of our culture, most notably in personal social circles. Many of those interviewed for this research could relate to the challenges of mobile telephone etiquette in their own daily lives; however, the research study identified that the behaviors reflected poorly on students who were seeking potential job opportunities and, once hired, on how they were perceived by the respondents, their managers. The following recommendations can be drawn from the results of this research:

### **1. Recommendations for Students and New Employees:**

1. As an employee, use mobile telephone technology judiciously being ever mindful of the potential for negative perceptions by others and the potential for compromised career progression. Workplace meetings, whether between two people or many should not be interrupted by mobile telephone usage as it is perceived as invasive and disrespectful. If an incoming call is urgent and taking it is essential, communicate that in advance. A common theme from the research was to simply not bring mobile telephones to meetings in order to resist the temptation.
2. Ensure that mobile technology use is aligned with the culture of the organization and the expectations for how the company uses mobile telephone technology both internally and externally.

3. Avoid defaulting to mobile technology: consider whether a direct conversation with the intended recipient would better support the purpose of the communication.
4. Ensure mobile technology messages are free of slang, bad grammar and incorrect spelling. Employees need to be both conscious and cautious in how they craft messages because how they communicate reflects directly on their professionalism.
5. Align use of mobile technology with the company brand. Employees represent their corporate brand whether they are communicating with colleagues or externally with potential customers. Employee should reflect on the content and timing of messages.
6. Use mobile technology on company time only for company purposes. Employers are incorporating formal social media and informational technology policies into employee expectations. Unless it is part of an employee's corporate role, using Facebook and Twitter are activities that don't belong in the workplace. It is important that new employees mitigate the habit of constantly having to be in contact with others via technology. Companies are sensitive to how employees are using social media tools like Twitter as their messages can be associated with the corporate brand. The timing and content of social media messages require common sense principles to be applied, as they cannot be undone once sent.
7. As an employee, do not demonstrate a sense of entitlement. Employees are looking for the right work ethic and attitude in new employees. Employers want self-confidence in their employees but also realistic expectations regarding their careers. Expect that career success will be earned over time and through appropriate work experience.

## **2. Recommendations for Educational Institutions:**

1. Increase the opportunity for professionalism education with students including heightening the awareness of how mobile telephone behaviors influence the perceptions of others. The five year trending research from York College in Pennsylvania has identified the key criteria that embody professionalism is declining in new employees. (CPE, 2012, p. 10; 2013, p.8). One of several traits includes interpersonal skills which include the dimensions of etiquette, showing others respect, using behavior that is appropriate for the situation, and being courteous. This research study supports the negative trend with respect to new employees' mobile telephone use behaviors. Providing guidance and raising awareness will give young adults a means to positively differentiate themselves from students who have not been exposed to the etiquette tips. This will ultimately reflect well on them and their educational institution.
2. Incorporate the recommendations referenced above to new employees and students into appropriate curriculum where the opportunity exists. For example, at NAIT the second year Business Communications class curriculum prepares students for the hiring process. Include how mobile telephones are used during this process and subsequently in the workplace with consideration to different work culture expectations. Heighten the awareness in the same manner as we would discuss appropriate dress, communications and behaviors.
3. Investigate development of a non-credit professionalism seminar series in the manner of MIT, Caltech and York College. This can be institution led or a collaborative approach with the student associations on campus. For example, Business Connex is a NAIT student organized and operated club that connects students with their peers, their

community and their desired industry through a variety of events to “develop soft skills not taught in the classroom environment” (NAIT Business Connex, n.d.). This organization has run events associated with professionalism including a past event on the topic of dressing for success and the second annual Etiquette Dinner. At this event the appropriate protocol for fine dining is covered and practiced during a fine dining experience in Ernest’s restaurant at NAIT. Recommend the topic of mobile telephone etiquette be included in the session.

4. Encourage faculty to develop appropriate mobile technology protocols with their students, and to create spaces for conversation about differences in cultural expectations. While acknowledging that there is variance among instructors in terms of expectations for how mobile telephone technology is used in the classroom, heightening the awareness that it needs to be considered in the first place is important. This mirrors what students will encounter and navigate in the workplace.
5. Reinforce with faculty members that prior to the arrival of industry guests in class or at industry events and functions, faculty should provide guidance to students prior to the event in terms of what is acceptable behavior with mobile telephone usage. The anecdotal examples from this research can be shared to raise the level of awareness and provide concrete examples. Discuss in what circumstances use of mobile telephones is appropriate; where and when during the evening. For example, if there is a Twitter Hashtag associated with the event and participants are being encouraged to use it, discuss when that would be appropriate given the agenda and nature of the event.
6. Explore the suggestion from one interviewee to develop a mobile technology application, perhaps using gamification theory, for the subject matter. Despite the irony of using a

mobile telephone device, or similar technology, to reinforce appropriate use behaviors, this could be an ideal medium given the primary target audience are students. Applying concepts of gamification would be appropriate and engaging for this material, and levels of advancement in the professionalism game could include those qualities identified by the research as qualities associated with professionalism, for example; appearance (appropriate dress), appropriate mobile technology etiquette, dining etiquette, and communications skills including consideration of what medium is best chosen for a particular message and situation and appropriate social media protocol.

### **3. Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has contributed to our understanding of how new employees are using mobile telephones in the workplace and whether their usage meets with the expectations of employers. Employers were also able to provide ideas on ways to introduce mobile telephone etiquette into college classrooms to support usage that is aligned with industry expectations and purposes. To identify whether generational bias plays a role in perceptions of etiquette, future research should explore the opinions and perceptions of individuals who are more junior in their careers. Since the small sample size does not permit conclusions to be inferred based on the size of company or the nature of the industry, future research should focus on particular industries and employ larger samples. Because the literature review uncovered studies that demonstrate that students are interested in the topic when it is brought to their attention, additional research on their perspectives prior to curricular endeavours and after their completion would also inform shared understandings of social learning in a pervasively connected world. Given the noted inconsistency of mobile technology protocols in colleges and classrooms, further

research into instructional policies, their motivation, their application, and their results would also serve to inform curriculum designers and support industry needs.



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## **VIII. Appendices**

**Appendix A: Research Participant Request E-mail**

- Time frame for email: April 29-May 6, 2013
- Sent from my NAIT Outlook email account

Hi \_\_\_\_\_ (Advisory Board Member), I understand that you represent \_\_\_\_\_ (name of company) on the NAIT \_\_\_\_\_ (Finance/Management/Human Resources/Accounting/Marketing) Advisory Committee which is why I am contacting you. I am an instructor in the JR Shaw School of Business where I teach in the Marketing Program and participate on the NAIT Marketing Advisory Committee.

I am conducting research on the mobile telephone etiquette of new employees in the workplace. This research project (the results of which will be shared with participants) is part of my course work for the completion of the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology program at the University of Alberta. I would like to meet with you or a member of your organization that you would recommend for approximately 45 minutes to an hour to discuss the mobile telephone etiquette demonstrated by new employees hired within the last three years in your work environment. Your name and organization will remain confidential. Reporting of results will be based on the size and type of your industry. I hope to meet with you within the next three weeks, preferably prior to May 8, 2013.

I will be following up with you in the next day or two by phone to provide more you with more information about the research. If you are interested in participating I will send you further details to inform your decision about whether or not to participate in the study. If you would like to contact me prior please feel free to email me or to give me a call at my contact information below. My project supervisor for this program is Dr. Ann Curry. She can be reached at 780-248-1110 or via email at [ann.curry@ualberta.ca](mailto:ann.curry@ualberta.ca) if you have any concerns. Thanks for your consideration.

Teresa Sturgess  
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NAIT – An Institute of Technology Committed to Student Success

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Agreement**

**Study Title:** Mobile Technology Etiquette in Business; What Do Employers Think?

**Research Investigator:**

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780-248-1110

### **Background**

I am conducting research regarding the mobile telephone etiquette (Smartphones/cell phones) of new employees in the workplace. This research project (the results of which will be shared with participants) is part of my course work for the completion of the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology program at the University of Alberta. I am an instructor and a NAIT Marketing Advisory Board member at the JR Shaw School of Business. I am contacting you as you are a member of one of the NAIT Advisory Committees for business.

### **Purpose**

The expectations and perceptions of industry regarding technology use behaviors in a business setting are not well understood and are therefore not available to inform classroom technology policy or curriculum. The research will explore whether mobile technology etiquette in the business workplace is an issue with employers today.

### **Study Procedures**

The research method is a semi-structured personal interview with me and will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interview will take place at your choice of location, perhaps your office. The interview will be recorded with a digital voice recorder. The recordings will be used to transcribe the audio of the interview into text format for analysis. The study will use interviews from six participants which includes one representative from each of the NAIT Business Advisory Committees including Finance, Accounting, Management, Human Resources and Marketing (one representative from the Sales sub-committee and one from the Advertising sub-committee).

### **Benefits and Risks**

Your participation will uncover important employer views and preferences which can inform industry-relevant curriculum and instruction in order to produce graduates who are better prepared to meet industry expectations. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks involved with this research.

### **Confidentiality & Anonymity**

All information collected will be coded to protect your privacy and confidentiality. Data will not be attached to your name, your title or your business organization and no identifying information will appear on any reports associated with this project. Information will be reported by business size and type. Only my supervisor, the Research Ethics Committee and I have the right to access to the data. The interview data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my supervisor's locked office on the University of Alberta Enterprise Square Campus. At the end of the five year data retention period the electronic data will be wiped from the electronic files on my flash drive and written material will be electronically, securely shredded. While the results of the study may be presented and/or published, the identities of the participants will remain protected.

### **Voluntary Participation and Freedom to Withdraw**

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and non-participation carries no negative consequences. You also have the right to opt out without penalty and to have any collected data withdrawn and not included in the study (request for withdrawal of data must be received by me in writing within 3 weeks from the date of the interview).

### **Ethics Approval Statement**

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics office at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

### **Participant Informed Consent**

I acknowledge that the research procedures have been explained to me, and that any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that audio of the interview will be recorded. In addition, I know that I may contact the person designated on this form if I have further questions, either now, or in the future. I have been assured that the personal records relating to this study will be kept anonymous. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and will not be asked to provide a reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of investigator

Please indicate if you would like a copy of the research report after final grades have been assigned: Yes  No

## Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

### Mobile Telephone Etiquette Research

#### Introduction:

Thank you for your time today. Our interview will not take more than an hour of your time. By participating in this interview you are helping me to better understand business perceptions around the topic of mobile telephone etiquette (Smartphones/Cellphones) in new employees in the workplace. A new employee would be defined as someone who has been hired by your firm within the last three years and who was a post-secondary student prior to joining your organization.

- There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your perceptions and opinions on the subject matter.
- As we discussed I will be recording the conversation so I don't have to scribble furiously.
- This report will be shared with my project supervisor at the University of Alberta and the participants from the NAIT Advisory Committee. Your confidentiality will be protected as your name and your company name will not be revealed.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

#### Graduates – Orientation to the Workplace

1. What comes to mind when you think of the skills that impress you about new hires that have just graduated and are working with your firm?

Probe: Skills, knowledge  
 Attitudes, work ethic  
 Expectations

2. Does anything concern you about the skills of the new hires?

Probe: Skills, knowledge  
 Attitudes, work ethic  
 Expectations

3. Sometimes new employees are given guidance about how they should conduct themselves at work?. Does your company do this with respect to mobile telephones? [IF NO SKIP TO QUESTION 5]

Probe: Cell phones  
 Formalized policy or document  
 Orientation day  
 Mentorship on the job  
 Any other methods of orienting them to the workplace



4. What are the general topics that are covered during their orientation? (Looking for a range of topics, such as benefits, ethics, safety, rules, etc.)

### **Use of Mobile Phones in the Workplace**

5. Does your firm provide your employees with a mobile telephone for use in business?  
(LIST)
6. If not provided by the company, do your employees use their own mobile phones for work purposes?
7. There are both advantages and disadvantages to employees having access to mobile phones during work. Can we talk about what the advantages are if any? What about disadvantages – are there any that you see?

Probe: Benefits  
Disadvantages/concerns

8. Have attitudes on business etiquette changed regarding mobile phones?

Probe: Across time  
Generational differences

9. Overall do you think the mobile technology etiquette skills of new employees is improving, declining or remaining the same?

### **Learning Business Etiquette Regarding Mobile Technology Use**

10. What do you consider to be poor etiquette in the workplace when using mobile technology?

Probe: Specific examples  
Impact of poor etiquette

11. What do you consider to be good etiquette when using mobile telephones in the workplace?

Probe: Specific examples  
Impact of good etiquette

12. Where do you think students learn about what is appropriate etiquette in business when it comes to mobile technology? Where should they learn about this?

Probe: At home  
Post-secondary institutions  
Business courses

At the workplace

13. If this issue were to be addressed within the business school curriculum do you have any suggestions on how colleges can develop the mobile phone etiquette in undergraduates that you would like to see?

Probe: As part of course communications curriculum  
As formal rules regarding technology use in the classroom

14. Any other comments you want to add on the subject of mobile technology etiquette that we didn't discuss and that you would like to add?

**Classification Data (ask respondent)**

1. Type of Industry

- 1) Accounting
- 2) Financial
- 3) Services
- 4) Advertising
- 5) Marketing
- 6) Human Resources
- 7) Other\_\_\_\_\_

2. Size of Company (by employee) (**ask respondent**)

**Appendix D: Interview Coding Tables****Question 1. What skills impress you about new hires?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Enthusiastic Attitude	✓	✓		✓		
Good Listeners	✓					
Well rounded			✓			
Team player				✓	✓	
Tenacity		✓		✓		
Good Communicators					✓	
Take direction to work independently						✓
Adaptable to change						✓

**Question 2. Does anything concern you about the skills of new hires?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Overly spoon-fed	✓				✓	
Overconfident		✓				
Unrealistic career expectations	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

**Question 3. Sometimes new employees are given guidance about how they should conduct themselves at work? Does your organization do this?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Formal onboarding process/Training				✓	✓	✓
Very informal		✓				
Code of ethics and online/digital suggestions			✓			

**Industry Classification**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

**What about with respect to mobile telephones?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Nothing official – behavioral requests at meetings	✓					
Cell phone policy – cost based - mandatory and paid \$100/mo		✓				
Telecomm /social media/& safety in the workplace policies					✓	✓
Code of conduct/IT & Travel policies						✓

**Question 5/6. Does your firm provide your employees with a mobile telephone for use in business?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Provided for certain positions			✓	✓	✓	✓
Must bring their own cell phone	✓	✓		✓		

**Question 7. There are both advantages and disadvantages to employees having access to mobile phones during work. Can we talk about what the advantages are if any?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
<b>Increased ease and speed of Connectivity</b> -Instant communications -Confirming meetings -Flexibility for work hours/time zones	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Industry Classification**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

**Question 8. Disadvantages**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Personal time invading work		✓				
Over used /dependency/hard to turn off	✓				✓	
Distraction at work -checking it in meetings -ringing/vibrating in meeting			✓	✓		✓

**Question 10. Mobile etiquette improving, declining or staying the same?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Improving			✓	✓*		✓*
The Same	✓	✓*			✓	
Declining	✓**					

\*but went on to describe concerns of poor grammar and typos or inappropriate usage

\*\*for younger employees -30 yrs but the same for the rest of employees

4 - Rationalized because of increased functionality of mobile phones, misunderstood question

5 - Rationalizes because we are more accustomed to them, ubiquitous devices

**Question 11. What do you consider to be poor etiquette?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Rings in a meeting	✓					
Texting in a meeting			✓	✓	✓	✓
Taking a call in a meeting	✓					
It interrupts an interpersonal conversation		✓		✓		
Bad grammar and spelling via texting				✓	✓	✓

**Industry Classification**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

**Question 12. What do you consider to be good etiquette?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Turn it off in a meeting	✓	✓		✓		
Tell in advance why you need to take a call	✓	✓		✓		
Explain why you are using your phone in a meeting			✓			
Step away to take a call so no one hears				✓		
Use for quick status updates					✓	
Use functionality appropriately						✓*
Forward Mobile Voice Mail to Landline						✓

\*example of visual meeting minutes with a smartphone picture of the whiteboard then emailed out to attendees

**Question 13. Where do you think students should learn what is appropriate etiquette in business when it comes to mobile telephone use?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Colleagues/Workplace	✓		✓*		✓	✓*
In school		✓		✓		

\*initial answer I don't know

**Industry Classification**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |

**Question 14. If this issue were to be addressed within the business school curriculum do you have any suggestions on how colleges can develop the mobile phone etiquette in undergraduates that you would like to see?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Policies & Guidelines Discussion					✓	✓
Give guidance/tips on what is acceptable	✓	✓		✓		
Coach investigating how to determine what is appropriate etiquette			✓			
Use case studies					✓	
Develop application for etiquette + social media						✓

**Question 15. Any other comments you want to add on the subject of mobile technology etiquette that we didn't discuss and that you would like to add?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Descriptor</b>						
Shared anecdote of bad example of mobile use		✓		✓		
Shared anecdote of positive example of mobile & benefits					✓	
Summation of philosophy – build respect - so don't let technology interrupt that-control it	✓					
Encourage a conversation (adapting to culture) versus giving strict rules			✓			
Education on employee brand & tips on appropriate etiquette & expectations						✓

**Industry Classification**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Investment Consulting (55 Regional office) | 4. Technology (3500 employees) |
| 2. Accounting and Financial Recruitment (10)            | 5. Construction (6400)         |
| 3. Communications (39)                                  | 6. Financial Services (2300)   |