

Responsive intranet website vs Native mobile app



Time to “get personal”

We often encounter companies that are considering using the responsive mobile intranet web portal that comes with their intranet solution to reach their employees “mobile first”.

At first sight a native mobile app and a responsive web portal seem to be comparable alternatives. We were expecting this to reflect in our analytics data. The data however, shows a world of difference. Somehow our behavior on a mobile app is totally different from our behavior on a (responsive) web portal. A difference, we (the internal communications people) can utilize while composing and targeting our messages.



My name is Marijn Deurloo. I am the founder of ORTEC for Communications (formerly known as imgZine).

Our “Relevance” Platform for internal communications helps companies to reach their employees with relevant information and engage with them on a digital level. The platform consists of a single content repository and a control room (dashboard) for publishing to native mobile apps, web portal, newsletters and our narrow casting (digital signage) solution. We provide our customers complete control over the whole content journey.

Since our customer base primarily consists of large national and international companies (5.000-100.000+ employees), we have access to a lot of (anonymized) analytical data that allows us to study behavioral patterns on a local, regional and global scale. This allows us to analyze the differences in behavior in different groups, on different devices or across channels and share our findings and insights.

The hat-graph

Humans are creatures of habit. When examining the data of the daily usage graph of web portals, in mobile browsers as well as on desktops, we consistently find this graph (that may be familiar from your daily intranet analytics):

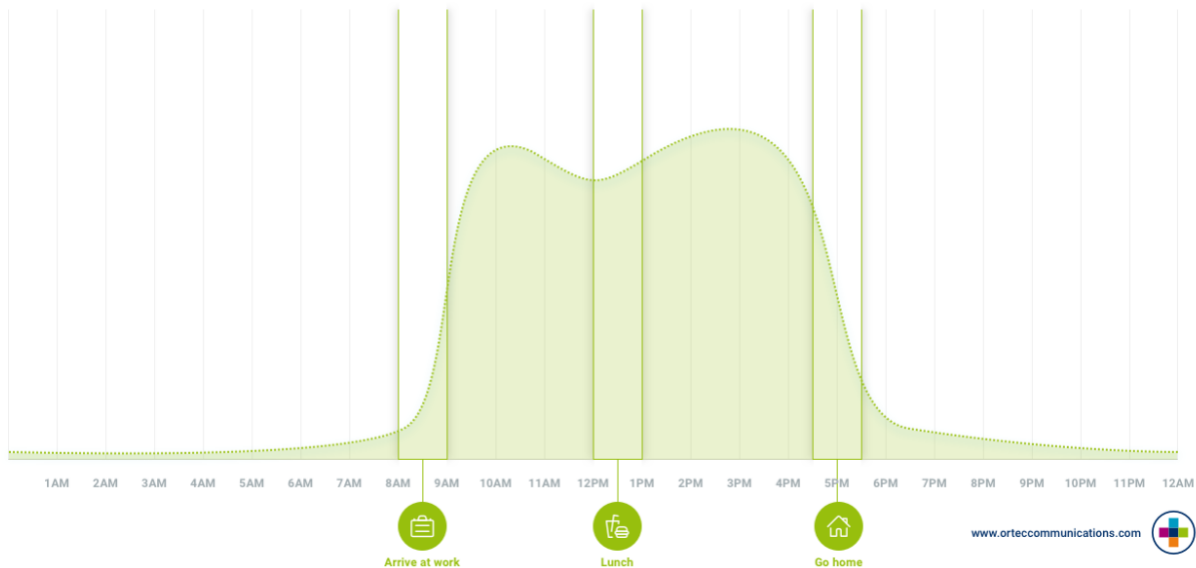


Figure 1: average daily use of (responsive) web portal

For someone with a background in publishing, this graph (sometimes referred to as the “hat” graph) is a familiar one: a steep peak at the beginning of the working day (after arriving at work) around 8am, a dip around lunch-time and rapidly declining visits after 4pm.

Analytics of the use of (native) mobile apps show another consistent, yet very different graph:

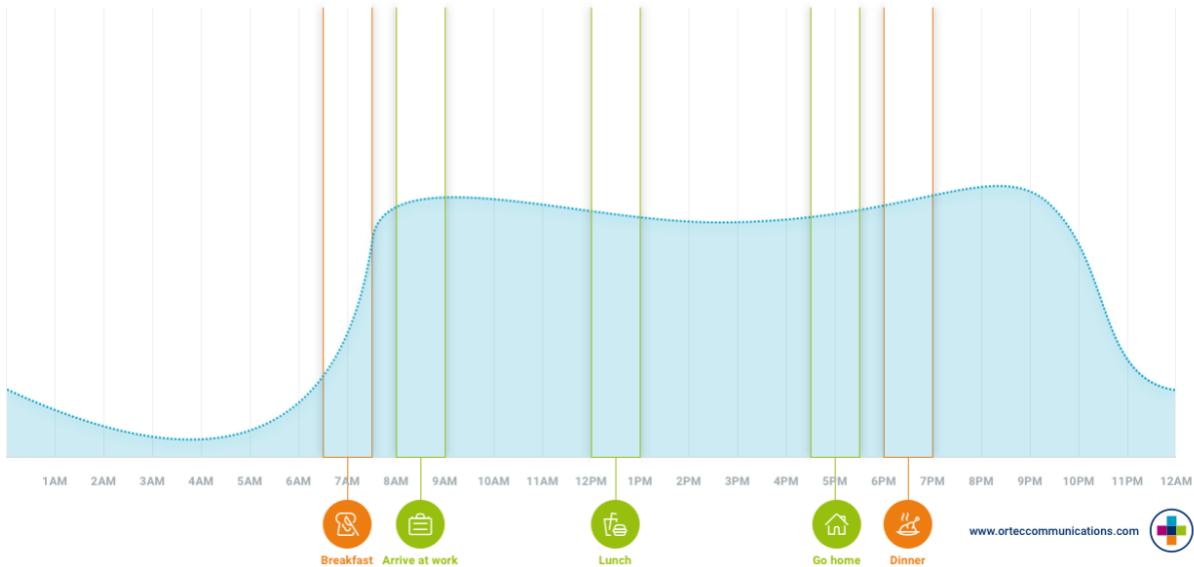


Figure 2: average daily use of a native mobile app

What is going on here? Daily use starts earlier, between 6am and 7am (right after we get out of bed?) and does not drop off after 4pm like on web. Instead, there is an increased use after 8pm (dinner) with a peak somewhere between 10pm and 11pm.

Here you can see the difference with the two graphs overlaid:

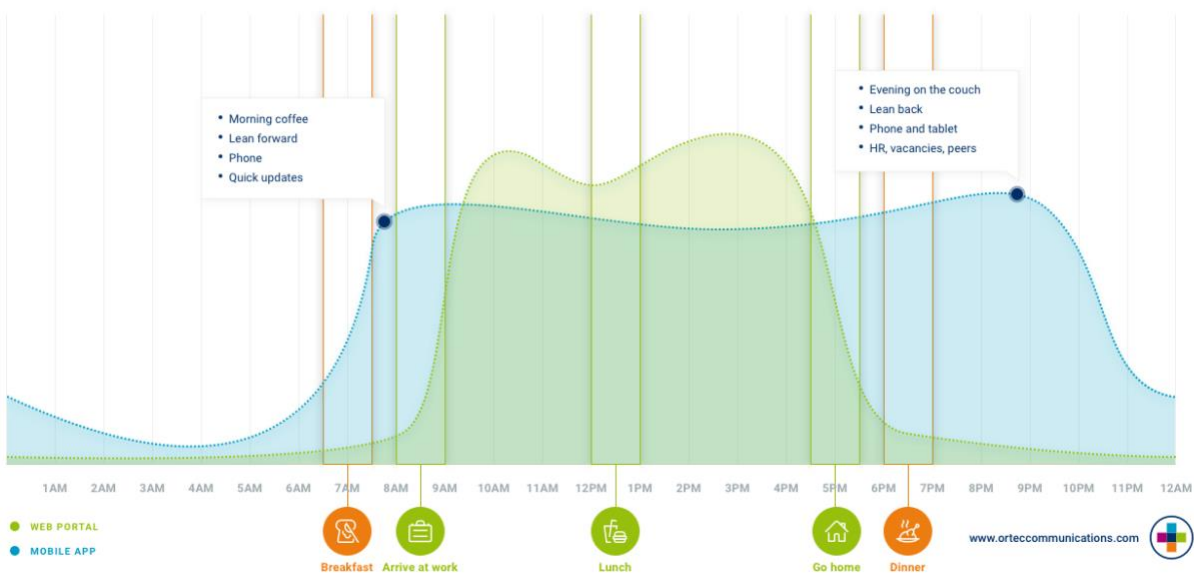


Figure 3: daily use of (native) mobile app vs (responsive) web portal

Wow, that's amazing. It seems like we are able to reach employees outside of the office, in their personal time with a native mobile app?

On closer examination, zooming in on the day of the week, we found another huge difference: between weekdays and the weekend.



Figure 4: usage of native mobile app vs usage of web portal between weekdays and weekends

Only 5% of all web portal use takes place in de weekend versus 20% of the use of native mobile apps. This is a major difference and it is not dependent on the size of the company, geography or industry. And again, via the mobile app employees are reached in their personal time. Is it possible that the native mobile app acts as a replacement of the employee magazine?

What do we read and when?

After noticing the differences in usage throughout the day, we decided to analyze the data to see if we could spot a difference in the kind of content employees read during those (personal) hours. We found some remarkable differences.

The early peak: short reading times, general interest topics

During the “early peak” (between 6am and 9am), we found typical “lean forward” behavior: a quick scan of article headlines (very short reading times, few clicks).

Topic analysis shows predominantly global company-related news, providing a hint of intent: quickly catching up with the latest news with regard to my company. This reminds us of the morning-paper-coffee-moment. Have these native apps on the mobile phone taken over some of the role of the morning paper in our daily routine?

The evening peak: long reads, social topics

Data of the “late peak” (after 8pm), shows long(er) reading times (including very long ones) and topics from the more “personal angle”: job openings, news on colleagues (job rotation, life events) and HR related news. This is more “lean back” behavior, after dinner, on the couch.

This reminds us of evening-paper-or-glossy-magazine behavior. Somehow, we allow our company to take a place in our personal lives, as part of our daily routine.

What does this mean for Internal Comms?

This is very good news! These numbers show that employees are willing to engage with the company in their personal time. We believe that this data shows signs of how our behavior is changing from a strict separation between our professional and personal life to a more harmonized blend between the two. Or, in the words of Jeff Bezos: “stop aiming for work-life balance. Instead, aim for work-life harmony”. The rise of Millennials may play a big role here.

However, these new options come with a huge responsibility: we (the Comms people) must provide **relevance** for our employees to stay loyal. Over and over, our analyses show that not providing relevant information is the best way to drive our usage graphs into the ground. If we do provide relevant information (for the individual), we can improve employee engagement, which can lead to positive effects on social advocacy. And social advocacy is known to stimulate trust towards the brand from consumers and customers.

Other research

Our findings are consistent with research from renowned sources like [Gartner](#), [McKinsey](#), [Gallup](#) and [AON Hewitt](#). On mobile usage in general. And in the office.

The past years the secret term to success was mobile-first, nowadays it is all about mobile-only. On average, time spent on mobile devices is twice as much as time spent on a desktop or laptop. This amount of time spent on

mobile devices is divided as follows: apps account for 89% of the usage on mobile devices, therefore only 11% of the time browsers are used¹. This is a big difference, telling us that people prefer apps over responsive web apps and web portals. 68% of mobile users engage with brands via apps². Therefore, people are used to have branded apps on their phone.

Mobile usage on the work floor

Almost 9 out of 10 app users state that using apps for work-related actions changed their behavior as a professional³. With this high percentage, it is not remarkable that 34% of mobile phone-users only use mobile devices to read emails⁴. But are companies able to keep up with this change of professional behavior and how the current workforce spends their time?

In June 2018, Gartner said that too few organizations have ‘digital dexterity’ to adopt and provide for new ways of working⁵. Almost two-thirds of the professionals think that their organization is too slow in delivering apps for the workforce⁶. Thus, companies stay behind digitally and do not offer their employees the right tools. This means that employees might not work to their fullest potential, which of course is a loss for the company.

¹ <https://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/>

² <https://www.tumblr.com/privacy/consent?redirect=http%3A%2F%2Fflurrymobile.tumblr.com%2Fpost%2F115194992530%2Fshopping-productivity-and-messaging-give-mobile>

³ http://www.digitalstrategyconsulting.com/intelligence/2014/05/apps_boost_worker_productivity_34.php

⁴ <http://www.informz.com/resources/library/2014-association-email-marketing-benchmark-report/>

⁵ Gartner

⁶ http://www.digitalstrategyconsulting.com/intelligence/2014/05/apps_boost_worker_productivity_34.php