# The use of iPocket coach in business education

Tulay Girard and Rachel C. Litzinger
*Penn State Altoona, Altoona, Pennsylvania, USA, and*
Mark M. Lennon
*Penn State World Campus, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to present a review of an iPad application called iPocket Coach that can be used with a mobile device in business education.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper discusses the educational benefits of this application for classroom use and develops a pedagogical exercise by which students can build interpersonal skills.

**Findings** – The iPocket Coach can not only be used to develop skills but learn about common management issues involving conflict resolutions, personal development, providing constructive feedback, interviewing, performance evaluations, promotions, rewards, and terminations.

**Originality/value** – The exercise developed can be used in a consumer behavior or sales management course that teaches students how to handle difficult customers.

**Keywords** Educational apps, Using technology in business education, Mobile technology, Learning methods

**Paper type** General review

## Introduction

The use of tablets in schools has increased dramatically. According to Apple's public second quarter report, more than two iPads were sold for every one Macintosh computer (Dowling, 2012). Mulholland (2011) reports that first-grade students are using the iPad for basic word processing by using software applications educational apps, using technology in business education (apps) like Pages, Simplenote and SmartNote. With the increased use of apps in educational settings, the demand for mobile device applications that can be utilized in classrooms is growing. Nagel (2012) reports that "overall worldwide tablet shipments grew 120 percent from 7.9 million in first quarter 2011 to 17.4 million in first quarter 2012, according to IDC's latest Worldwide Quarterly Media Tablet and eReader Tracker."

There are advantages and disadvantages to using tablets over computers in the classroom. According McLester's (2012) article, the comparatively low cost of tablets plays a large role in the accessibility to tablets and affordability in a time when most schools are facing large budget cuts. Another advantage is increased student focus on what is occurring in the classroom when an interactive app (e.g. iPocket Coach) is used as part of the class work. Because current tablets are less efficient at multitasking applications than laptop computers, students are less distracted by multiple applications and are forced to stay on task (McLester, 2012).

According to Greg Smith, CIO at George Fox, the iPad's technological limitations are its inability to multi-task and print, and its limited storage space. These limitations have kept students dependent on their laptops or notebooks (Kaya, 2010).

Lennon *et al.* (2012) describe five major reasons for purchasing the iPad (or mobile) tablets: portability, productivity, entertainment, adaptability, and battery life. Thanks to these benefits, students can use tablets to organize and record lecture notes, read
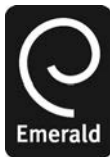
digital materials, surf the web (Kaya, 2010), play games, watch films and images (Lima *et al.*, 2012), record videos, take still pictures, and play music (Auletta, 2010).

Many applications are available to enhance student interaction in the classroom (Online-Colleges, 2012, Degrees-In-Business-Blog, 2011). Although most apps are designed to obtain or organize information, jot down notes, keep a schedule or remind tasks, only a few focus on building business and management skills. One of these applications is known as iPocket Coach, which can be used with either an iPhone or iPad and is downloadable from the Apple App store for $0.99. This application is a tool that can be used to understand common management issues, including resolving conflict between individuals and teams, professional development, providing positive feedback, interviewing for the right talent, measuring and discussing job performance, promotions, rewards, and termination. iPocket Coach is appropriate for use in classes pertaining to management, human resources, sales management, consumer behavior, negotiations, and almost any class whose primary goal is teaching students interpersonal skills.

Therefore, this paper explains how the skill-building exercises can be utilized effectively in classrooms by using iPocket Coach to enhance business education and help students build interpersonal and communication skills. As Ledesma (2012) suggests, personalized learning requires first effective teaching, then technology. The authors believe that it is only a matter of time before the use of applications on tablets becomes a common practice to enhance teaching and learning in classrooms. It is important to respond appropriately to the increased popularity of tablets by incorporating the use of applications in learning (Schaffhauser, 2012). The following section reviews literature on the use of mobile tablet apps in education, and elaborates on the uses of iPocket Coach app in the classroom.

### Literature on iPAD apps
Although mobile technology has become a hot topic in many areas including K-12 and higher education, there is a paucity of published articles in the literature about the use of mobile devices (e.g. iPad, Galaxy, Surface), or smart phones (e.g. iPhone or Droid Razr), in business and business education. The wide use of mobile devices has changed the way faculty and staff operate because of the ability to stay connected to other systems and data while users are on the go (Converge, 2012). In a recent survey conducted by Converge (2012), about 13 percent of the respondents comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff reported that they could not perform their jobs without the mobile device. In all, 39 percent of respondents reported that mobile devices enhanced their work performance (Converge, 2012). As a result, the report stresses the importance for administrators, faculty, and staff to understand how mobile devices can help them work more efficiently and effectively. Mobile tablets such as the iPad are filling a new space between the laptop and the smart phone or an iPod Touch (Wilson, 2012).

At the time of this research, an extensive literature survey of the published work on the use and value of mobile technology in higher education including tablet devices such as an iPad revealed only a few studies. Sheng *et al.* (2010) point out that although mobile technology for education is a new phenomenon and gaining popularity, the value of using mobile technology to support education needs to be further researched and better understood. Through mobile technology, it is possible not only to deliver educational materials to eliminate time and space constraints but provide more freedom for learners (Sheng *et al.*, 2010) enabling learning to take place anytime and anywhere (Farooq *et al.*, 2002).

A technology article by Yee and Pompos (2012) presents a review of an iPad application called OnLive Desktop and discusses its benefits for classroom use. OnLive Desktop is considered a bridge technology (Kaya, 2010) that allows the user to create, present and edit Microsoft Office files and view Flash files on an iPad within the application (Yee and Pompos, 2012) or using the browsers other than Safari. Similarly, Lennon *et al.* (2012) review the use of CNBC-RT (Real Time) app as a pedagogical tool in financial and global business education. These researchers explain that this app allows the user to obtain real-time financial information, better understand and monitor developments in current financial events, track global market indices in Asia and Europe, and understand the relationship between foreign exchange rates and commodities. These researchers also suggest that educators can keep students up to date with market developments by selecting appropriate and relevant news and videos and incorporating them into lectures.

There is also existing research showing how the iPad is used on a global level in education. In Asia, Meurant (2010a, b, c) explores in detail the use of the iPad in Korea. In his research, the iPad is shown to be an effective tool in assisting Korean students in improving their English as a Second Language (ESL) skills. At conferences across the globe, in locations ranging from Toronto to Tokyo, researchers have presented their findings showing successful local implementations of iPads in their respective educational settings (Hall, 2011; Nooriafshar, 2010; Ostashewski and Reid, 2010).

While not iPad specific, earlier research by Adesope *et al.* (2007) examines the prospects and challenges of implementing mobile learning solutions in developing countries. A key finding in their research is that critical to the success of mobile learning is a software and hardware platform that can be readily understood and implemented, in order to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. Given the iPad's elegant product design and intuitive user interface, clearly the iPad addresses the concerns raised by these researchers.

As more literature is published on the educational benefits and use of iPad apps, the higher adoption rate of these apps can be expected by educators in order to enhance classroom interaction and engagement. In the following section, the authors demonstrate and explain how educators can use iPocket Coach to benefit students. Through use of this app, students can build and improve communication and interpersonal skills, which can enable them to become competent business professionals.

*The use of iPocket Coach*
The application is utilized by first selecting one of the eight topics that best fits one's current situation: conflict, development, feedback, interviewing, performance, promotions, rewards, or termination. Once a topic has been selected, the next screen provides an overview of the topic, with an option at the bottom of the screen to "view statements" (Figure 1).

Once on the view statements screen, a choice for a scenario can be made: with employee, between employees (raised to you by both parties), with own team, with peer (on same team), with peer's team, with boss, with vendor/partner, or with customer. Once a selection has been made, the next screen will show suggestions of statements that can be made in a specific situation to a specific person or people. These statements may be used as starter scripts or to begin thinking about a conversation (Figure 2).

In the app, the steps are self-explanatory and easy to follow. The benefits of utilizing the app can be harvested by implementing different pedagogical methods that may involve role playing, problem solving, and testing knowledge. The next section will elaborate on each of the pedagogical methods.
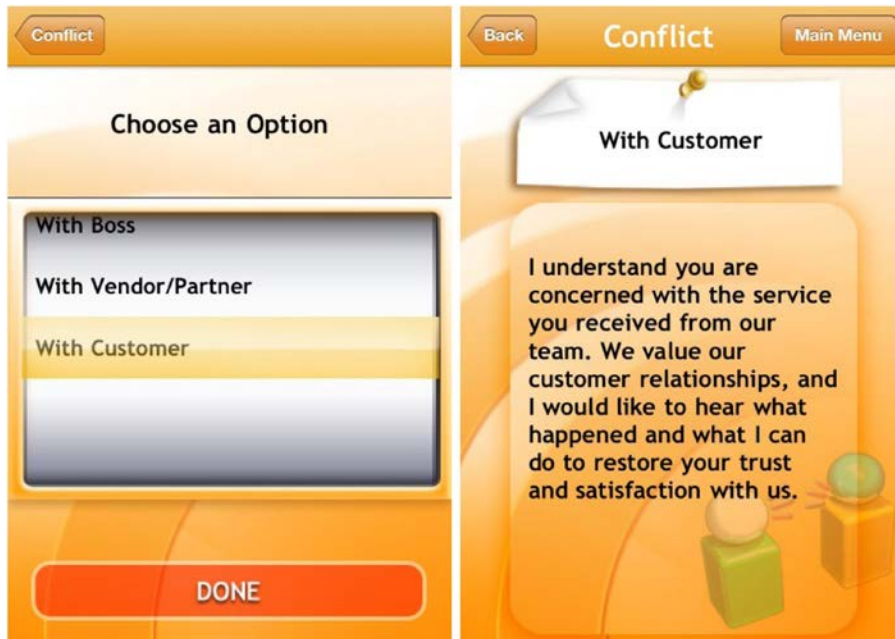
**Figure 1.**
Topics of iPocket Coach



**Figure 2.**
Example of options and
specific statement

*Role playing: customer conflict*
Class conversations can be generated in role playing exercises between two or more students, or between a student and professor. The professor would provide a scenario in one of the eight skill-building topic areas (Figure 1) in which the students would be expected to determine the best possible way to approach the problem given. An example scenario may be:

> There are two main roles, the person who purchased the vehicle and the salesperson at the car dealership who sold the vehicle. After completing the purchase of a car, the buyer realizes there is a small crack in the windshield that he/she did not notice prior to driving home, this crack is on the driver's side. The buyer consulted with an auto mechanic and was informed that the car would not pass the next inspection without replacing the windshield. The crack is considered to be in an area of the windshield that could potentially obstruct the view of the driver. The person who purchased the car is returning to the dealership to speak to the salesperson and would like to make arrangements for the dealership to pay for the repair since he/she has just purchased the vehicle. The salesperson has spoken to his/her supervisor and has been informed that they will not cover the cost of the repair since the buyer signed all of the paperwork and the windshield is not covered in the 30 day warranty.

The instructor would prompt the students to construct responses that elaborate on the statements provided in the app as a starting point and the concepts learned in the chapter that address solutions to this type of conflict. After each group had an opportunity to decide upon a solution, the groups would present to the class what process and statements they used to solve the given problem. The instructor would evaluate the responses based on the consistency with the concept learned and professionalism employed. This classroom exercise is extremely flexible, in that the professor has a lot of control over which class concepts he/she likes to emphasize during the exercise. Depending on the scenario given, it could focus on any concept pertaining to the topics in Figure 1.

This learning experience can also be extended by assigning students to write a reaction paper to the given scenario, and for the outcome of the role play displayed in class. The student could base his/her reaction paper to the given scenario by utilizing the application to assist in determining the best way to approach the scenario and how to improve upon the outcomes from the in-class exercise. For example, an out of class written assignment may ask the student to reflect on the process and outcome that was accomplished by using this application and what things he/she may have done differently.

*Individually problem solving using scenarios*
A variation to the previous exercise could be to assign a scenario to the students as homework asking them to use iPocket Coach to respond to the scenario, without the in-class exercise. The student would be responsible for creating a paper detailing the process he/she would use to resolve the given situation. This exercise also has a wide-ranging application for concepts being taught in business classes, for it can be customized to be applicable to the theories presently being taught in the classroom (i.e. conflict, providing constructive feedback, development).

Another use for problem solving could be to give the student an assignment to utilize the application in a real-life situation he/she had experienced (e.g. job interview, conflict with a friend/colleague/manager/customer) and then the student presents the situation and outcome to his/her class. After the students had the opportunity to practice use of the application in a real-world setting, they would present to the class background on the situation, what process was used to move forward, how the situation turned out, and what he/she would have done differently. A class discussion

could be based on the use of this application and what the students felt could be added or removed from the application based on prior use of the application. This would give the students the opportunity to create alternative methods for approaching business-related situations. It would also provide an opportunity to share ideas with other class members to enhance their understanding of different situations.

*Testing knowledge*
Another way this application could be used is by administering a written test based on the use of this application. An entire semester could be devoted to the concepts addressed in iPocket Coach. Each topic could be given one to two weeks of time. The format would be to lecture on the topic for one or two class periods and then move on to interactive group activities based on the learned concepts and using the application to reinforce what has been presented by the professor. After each topic has thoroughly been covered, a quiz would be given to measure what has been learned over the past one to two weeks. At the end of the semester a written test would be administered based on the concepts learned during the semester of using iPocket Coach. The student would be expected to use the application to answer questions on the test, as well as, the knowledge learned throughout the semester and would be graded on appropriateness of responses to the questions asked.

Although the test cannot be created within the app, the app could be used during the test. The questions can be created in a way that using the app assists in finding the answer. But in order to give a complete answer, the student would need to be familiar with the subject being tested.

**Development process of iPocket Coach**
The iPocket Coach app was created by Tony Deblauwe, a human resource professional and founder of HR4Change. Before Mr Deblauwe created iPocket Coach, he realized that most managers needed guidance in addressing common workplace issues. Therefore, he researched and used textbooks written by human resource consultants and experts (e.g. Lombardo and Eichinger, 2004; Stevens *et al.*, 2001; Patterson *et al.*, 2012; Stone *et al.*, 2010; Benjamin, 2008) to compile summary statements as well as universally acceptable short script statements.

In addition, the statements were revised based on his professional experience, and consultation and interviews with vice presidents of human resource of high-tech Silicon Valley companies. These vice presidents have an average experience of 15 years, with an emphasis on leadership development and organizational design. Mr Deblauwe also consulted and interviewed other professionals, including executive coaches with broad experience with management and leadership interventions across a variety of industries, including high tech, energy, medical, and non-profit. Mr Deblauwe also interviewed line managers who were in high-tech, retail, operations, manufacturing, and medical industries. During this process, Mr Deblauwe asked these professionals what would be the core learning outcomes that would come from each of the categories, regardless of the situation severity. Next, Mr Deblauwe proposed examples of the scripts to confirm that these statements were generic, yet meaningful enough for actual/realistic dialogue (Deblauwe, 2013). Thus through this rigorous research, interview, and consultation process, the iPocket Coach was born.

**App limitations**
Limitations and challenges come with use of the iPocket Coach app in a classroom setting. All students may not have access to devices that support the iPocket Coach

application. Although new versions of Macintosh desktop and laptop computers are compatible with iPad apps, and this may become a trend for all computers in the future, it may still take some time for this technology to diffuse in to classrooms.

In addition, this application has a limited answer base. While there are many given situations, it is not all inclusive and it is possible to have more than one way of addressing differing situations. Another limitation is that the application does not offer an area to add, and save ideas, statements, and suggestions for other ways of addressing the different topics. Thus students are unable to refer back to them within the application. The application would be awkward to use in a real-life situation without being able to consult with the application prior to the situation. Since it is not always possible to predict how a situation will turn out, it is difficult to know which topics to look at before-hand. Also, as previously described, testing students' knowledge based on the application would require a test to be created outside of the iPocket Coach app.

## Conclusion

The more a skill is practiced, the more experienced and comfortable a person becomes with it. This notion can be applied to the use of iPocket Coach. This study reviewed use of the iPocket Coach and suggested different types of exercises to enhance interpersonal and communication skills using iPocket Coach. By using these exercises, the student is given the opportunity to practice business skills while being guided through the process. This guidance will help the student to develop the skills necessary and the confidence needed to approach future situations and increase his/her chances of a successful outcome.

At the end of a semester, after having multiple opportunities to use iPocket Coach, a class discussion could be based on the use of this application. Students could describe what they believe could be added or removed from the application based on their prior use of the application. This would give the students the opportunity to come up with alternative methods for approaching business-related situations. It would also provide an opportunity to share ideas with other class members to enhance their understanding of different situations. Allowing students to have the opportunity to express their ideas and comments on other students ideas assists in improving and increasing their understanding of the concepts utilized in the application.

## References

Adesope, O., Olubunmi, S. and McCracken, J. (2007), "Implementing mobile learning in developing countries: prospects and challenges", in Montgomerie, C. and Seale, J. (Eds), *Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications*, AACE, Chesapeake, VA, pp. 1249-1254.

Auletta, K. (2010), "Publish or perish: can iPad topple the Kindle, and save the book business?", *The New Yorker*, Vol. 86 No. 10, pp. 24-31.

Benjamin, S.F. (2008), *Perfect Phrases for Dealing with Difficult Situations at Work: Hundreds of Ready-to-Use Phrases for Coming Out on Top Even in the Toughest Office Conditions*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

Converge (2012), "Mobile technology adoption in education, the changing landscape of where, when, and how work gets done: executive survey summary", available at: http://c242173.r73.cf3.rackcdn.com/HP-2290688-4AA3-9913ENUS.pdf (accessed June 28, 2012).

Deblauwe, T. (2013), "Background information on the development of iPocket coach", personal email interview, February 7.

Degrees-In-Business-Blog (2011), "Top 10 best apps for college students studying business", available at: http://blog.degreesinbusiness.org/2011/06/28/top-ten-apps-for-business-students (accessed June 28, 2012).

Dowling, S. (2012), "Apple reports second quarter results: record March quarter sales of iPhones, iPads and Macs", *Apple – Press Info*, available at: www.apple.com/pr/library/2012/04/24Apple-Reports-Second-Quarter-Results.html (accessed June 28, 2012).

Farooq, U., Schafer, W., Rosson, M.B. and Carroll, J.M. (2002), "M-education: bridging the gap of mobile and desktop computing", *Wireless and Mobile Technologies in Education, 2002, Proceedings, IEEE International Workshop on Wireless and Mobile Technologies in Education, IEEE*, pp. 91-94.

Hall, O. (2011), "iPad: assessing the impact of mobile learning technologies on graduate management education", *Proceedings of Global TIME 2011*, ACCE, pp. 19-20, available at: www.editlib.org/p/37052

Kaya, T. (2010), "Classroom iPad programs get a mixed response", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 57 No. 6, p. A8.

Ledesma, P. (2012), "Personalized learning requires effective teaching first, technology second…", *Education Week Teacher Blog*, available at: http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/leading_from_the_classroom/2012/07/personalized_learning_requires_effective_teaching_firsttechnology_second.html (accessed July 15, 2012).

Lennon, M.M., Girard, T. and Johnson, M. (2012), "Professor iPad: enhancing business education with the iPad", working paper, Penn State Altoona, Altoona, PA, February 2013.

Lima, R.M.C., Lennon, M.M. and Arruda-Filho, E.J.M. (2012), "How to justify the purchase of an iPad? Users of the latest launch", working paper.

Lombardo, M.M. and Eichinger, R.W. (2004), *FYI: For Your Improvement, A Guide for Development and Coaching*, 4th ed., e-book, Lominger International Ltd Inc.

McLester, S. (2012), "One tablet per child?", *District Administration*, available at: www.districtadministration.com/article/one-tablet-child-0 (accessed June 12, 2012).

Meurant, R.C. (2010a), "Providing every student with an iPad as a means of helping develop Korean EFL digital literacy", *Proceedings of Networked Computing and Advanced Information Management (NCM), Sixth International Conference, Seoul, August 16-18*, pp. 242-247.

Meurant, R.C. (2010b), "iPad tablet computing to foster Korean EFL digital literacy", *International Journal of u- and e-Service, Science and Technology*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 49-62.

Meurant, R.C. (2010c), "The iPad and EFL digital literacy", in Kim, T.-H., Pal, S.K., Grosky, W.I., Pissinou, N., Shih, T.K. and Ślezak, D. (Eds), *Signal Processing and Multimedia*, Springer, Berlin and Heidelberg, pp. 224-234.

Mulholland, J. (2011), "iPads in the classroom", *Government Technology*, available at: www.govtech.com/education/iPads-In-The-Classroom.html?utm_source=related&utm_medium=direct&utm_campaign=iPads-In-The-Classroom (accessed March 3, 2012).

Nagel, D. (2012), "iPad drives tablet growth while android tablets slump", available at: http://campustechnology.com/articles/2012/05/07/ipad-drives-tablet-growth-while-android-tablets-slump.aspx?=CTMOB (accessed May 7, 2012).

Nooriafshar, M. (2010), "A comparative study of human teacher and computer teacher", *2nd Asian Conference on Education: Internationalization or Globalization? Asian Conference on Education, Osaka, December 2-5*, pp. 1-8.

Online-Colleges (2012), "48 iPad apps that college students love", available at: www.onlinecolleges.net/2011/08/23/48-ipad-apps-that-college-students-love/ (accessed August 8, 2012).

Ostashewski, N. and Reid, D. (2010), "iPod, iPhone, and now iPad: the evolution of multimedia access in a mobile teaching context", *Proceedings of the World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications, AACE, Toronto, June 29*, pp. 2862-2864.

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R. and Al, S. (2012), *Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*, McGraw Hill.

Schaffhauser, D. (2012), "iPad app aims to make lecture halls more intimate and students more engaged", *Campus Technology*, available at: http://campustechnology.com/articles/2012/05/24/ipad-app-aims-to-make-lecture-halls-more-intimate-and-students-more-engaged.aspx?=CTEL (accessed August 8, 2012).

Sheng, H., Siau, K. and Nah, F.F. (2010), "Understanding the values of mobile technology in education: a value-focused thinking approach", *Database for Advances in Information Systems*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 25-44.

Stevens, L.A., Skube, C.J. and Lee, D.G. (2001), *Successful Manager's Handbook*, Personnel Decisions International Corporation, Minneapolis, MN.

Stone, D., Patton, B., Heen, S. and Fisher, R. (2010), *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, Penguin Books, New York, NY.

Wilson, I. (2012), "Welcome", available at: www.ipadineducation.co.uk/iPad_in_Education/Welcome.html (accessed August 8, 2012).

Yee, K. and Pompos, L. (2012), "OnLive desktop: an iPad based technology for the classroom", *The International HETL Review, Vol. 2*, available at: www.hetl.org/technology-review-articles/onlivedesktopforclassroom/ (accessed February 2, 2012).

**About the authors**
Tulay Girard (PhD, Florida Atlantic University) is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Penn State Altoona. Her research focuses on product classes, retailer attributes, perceived risk, internet security/privacy, trust, and brand equity in banking industry and higher education. She received several best paper awards and grants. The list of her articles and her background information can be found at www.tulaygirard.com. Tulay Girard is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: tug1@psu.edu

Rachel C. Litzinger graduated from Penn State Altoona with a B.S. degree in December 2012. She contributed to this study as part of her honors project in a consumer behavior course in the fall of 2012.

Mark M. Lennon was awarded his doctorate in strategy and international business from the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA. He has an MBA from Northeastern University, Boston MA, with additional studies at MIT and Kyoto University, Japan. Prior to entering academia, he worked for many years in both the USA and East Asia in the information technology field. Fluent in Asian languages, his dissertation "Monetizing Mobile: Factors Influencing the Development of Mobile Commerce in Korea, China, Japan" is based on field work in these countries, and explores all facets of the development of mobile telephony in East Asia. He has extended this research base into a series of published articles addressing issues of mobile business models, and mobile pedagogy. Additional information about him can be found on his professional web site www.MarkPhD.com