



FIELD SERVICE

Revamping the Digital Tool Belt:
On Technology in Field Service

Presented by:



FOREWORD



Ken Walsh
Vice President of Engineering
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As the Vice President of Engineering & Operations, Ken oversees all of the field service crews that service London Hydro's customers and make repairs in the field. He is also tasked with the responsibility for Health and Safety, which is another touch point where he interacts with the customers.

The industry is experiencing a paradigm shift when it comes to providing field service. What does the service model of the future look like? At this point, it is still transforming, but there are certain indicators that show that the future model will be a lot different than it is today. Consider the following four observations about customers and machines.

First, in the connected world of instant gratification that we live in, customers have an expectation of immediacy. They get frustrated when they have to wait, and most customers have little tolerance for delays due to mistakes or a perceived lack of skill. The tech that shows up on site is expected to solve the problem quickly and on his first attempt.

Second, customers are much more educated when it comes to solving their equipment issues. In many instances, they will have researched the problem and developed a theory as to the cause before the tech even arrives on site.

Third, customers want a single point of contact. A given customer may have questions regarding a product's warranty, their latest invoice, or a new service offering. They do not want to be directed to a call center or some other faceless entity. Customers would much prefer to get answers from techs on the spot.

Fourth, machines are becoming more complex and interconnected. The advent of big data has led to the doubling of knowledge at an astounding rate, and it is becoming more difficult to keep techs' competencies and skills up to date.

When we consider these four points, it becomes obvious that the role of the field technician will need to change in the years ahead. My view is that the new model for field service will evolve into a system that orbits around a centralized "specialty technical group." Such a group would be made up of "super techs" that would analyze diagnostic information from machines and field technicians, confer with other specialists, determine solutions, and relay their solutions to the on-site techs for implementation. In this new environment, communication will be essential. It is critical that field techs understand the various aspects relating to communications technology (e.g., smartphones, tablets, Wi-Fi) in order to maintain connectivity with the specialty group. This means that the existing training programs will need to be reshaped to prepare field techs for their evolving roles.

Since portions of current field techs' work will be transferred to "super techs," field techs will be required to assume customer care roles wherein they provide the single touch point of care that customers are demanding. As a result, additional training in the soft skills associated with customer care will be necessary.

In summary, the field technician's role is changing, and current training methods and content will need to be transformed to provide them with the tools they need to meet customers' expectations. In addition, this will provide companies with new opportunities to increase sales and service revenues.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE EXECUTIVE SERIES



The content of this eBook is derived from twelve interviews with leaders of the service industry who provided valuable feedback on the major trends discussed in this report. All quotes, advice, and insights throughout this report came from these executives.



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INTRODUCTION

Revamping the Digital Tool Belt: On Technology in Field Service



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The services industry is constantly evolving. Over the past few years, manufacturers have noticed that service is no longer a “nice to have” but is instead a necessity to be successful in any industry. In a digital age where customers expect instant gratification, one bad review from a single displeased customer can now cost companies a slew of potential customers in the years to come.

“You still need to fix the product, but that’s just a ticket to entry,” said **Bob Feiner, Vice President of Global Deployment & Field Services, Dell Inc.** Increasingly, revenue, profit, and customer loyalty are being driven not just by initial product sales but also by post-sale service and support. For Feiner, keeping customers happy goes far beyond simple product repair – it’s what you can provide in addition to your product that keeps your customers satisfied. As Feiner explained, many forward-thinking companies like Dell have moved their identity “beyond a traditional product company into a services and solutions one” to stay ahead of their competition.

Savvy executives have realized the need for the entire service organization, technicians included, to move toward a customer-centric model to better understand what constitutes the best possible **value** for their customers. Organizations have successfully navigated this shift by recognizing the need to invest in technologies and mobile tools to enable their employees to improve existing processes while meeting customer needs and contributing to the bottom line.

Field services companies are adapting to this change in paradigm by adopting powerful new digital solutions. Tools for service lifecycle management, customer relations, real-time automation, and extracting value from big data have become essential pieces of this new tailored value proposition for service. These are just some of the **key innovations for transforming service delivery** that companies can use to enhance service offerings and **improve customer loyalty and satisfaction**. However, companies are realizing that the most crucial investment they can make is the investment in their people. In order to succeed, one thing is certain: a firm needs the right talent in place, and those people must be ready to perform.



“What is now emerging is a discussion geared toward customer experience. On being more proactive and predictive. It’s a lot more about self-service. It’s about when the field agent is in front of a customer beyond just fixing the product, are there other revenue opportunities that they can provide?”

I think that continues to evolve because the markets have evolved. You still need to fix the product, but that’s just a ticket to entry. You have to do that. It’s about all the other things that you need to be able to ... go and enable.”

Bob Feiner, Vice President of Global Deployment & Field Services, Dell Inc.

Access to advanced analytics and management tools is critical for the success of field service organizations. Effective companies understand how to strategically leverage new and existing technologies to drive efficiencies, improve customer service, and boost profit. As was observed in the **2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report**, remote diagnostics, customer satisfaction, and service revenue are huge drivers in the industry. During Worldwide Business Research’s (WBR) Field Service conference, held in April 2014 in Palm Springs, CA, the thought leaders of the industry discussed the major challenges facing the industry, particularly those posed by rapidly changing customer expectations. Deanna Gillen, Editor-in-Chief of the Field Service Blog, sat down with these experts in the service industry to compile **“Revamping the Digital Tool Belt: On Technology in Field Service,”** the second of five exclusive eBooks released by WBR for the field service sector.

This paper discusses:

- 1** Increasing service revenue by involving service teams in promoting and selling services
- 2** Enhancing the customer experience and product lifecycle through predictive services and remote diagnostics
- 3** Utilizing future mobility applications and tools that drive service performance
- 4** Increasing technician utilization and performance
- 5** Effectively planning services capacity – preparing for resources and service strategies (e.g., sourcing labor, developing pricing, scheduling, dispatching)

This eBook delivers actionable advice from cross-industry and cross-function service leaders for their colleagues to implement at their own organizations. Some of the best practices are recognizable extensions from the Field Service Industry Reports, but others are wholly new insights that come directly from the leaders of the field. **“Revamping the Digital Tool Belt: On Technology in Field Service”** gives key insights into how to improve sales and empower service in the field, how to enhance customer experience through predictive services, and how the investment in the right tools will increase technician utilization and performance in the years to come.



“Over the past 40 years, Airbus has changed considerably from producing just 25 aircrafts a year to last year’s 624. You can see that this tremendous scale up means that we can’t just do things the way we used to do them; we need to adapt. The very DNA of airlines is to have high utilization. To achieve high utilization, you’ve got to have very fast turnarounds. With 7,000 aircrafts that Airbus has in service now, data from customers is used for predictive maintenance. Data helps us understand how the aircrafts perform as they get older and allows us to anticipate the kind of modifications and maintenance requirements needed to keep the aircraft in the air.”

Paul Oliver, Head of Field Services Worldwide, Airbus

THE MAN BEHIND THE WRENCH



"It's like having a dinner at a nice restaurant. The food could be excellent, but if the server is rude, you would likely give the restaurant a bad review and never go back."

Len Van der Hulst, Global Service Product Manager, Mettler-Toledo Inc.

In the field service space, the scope of field technicians' responsibilities goes far beyond break-fix these days, and such an approach has become the industry standard. Over the past ten years, there has been a shift toward a customer-centric model that emphasizes delivering service with the customer in mind.

A customer-centric model is a necessity given the evolution of our products and technology. As our products become more complex, so do the expectations of our customers. Further, the proliferation of technology has enabled customers to have more options than ever before. Growing customer demands are apparent in every industry and have completely transformed the field services model. Due to ever-increasing competition in the industry, quality service is what has become the true value proposition in the space. Technicians are extremely valuable to any company because they are the first and perhaps only interaction with a given customer. Responding to calls quickly, fixing issues on the first visit, and delivering the best possible experience for customers are just some of the many tasks that technicians are charged with on a daily basis.

Customer expectations are set before the technician makes his way to the door and are solidified during the first visit to the customer's home. Although customers may be new to your product, they will have certain expectations of service that have been long ingrained in their beliefs. As such, company executives know that their greatest and most enduring assets are the relationships that their technicians form with their customers. Through this transformation from break-fix to value-add, the scope of the field technicians' responsibilities has expanded to encompass revenue generation and product solutions, in addition to providing services. They are crucial for delivering exceptional customer service, fostering loyalty, and providing upsell and cross-sell opportunities.

"Providing a technical solution (i.e., a repair) is the basic expectation," said **Len Van der Hulst, Global Service Product Manager, Mettler-Toledo Inc.** "From the call contact to the resolution, poor service can negatively affect the customer and ultimately could result in losing their business. It's like having a dinner at a nice restaurant. The food could be excellent, but if the server is rude, you would likely give the restaurant a bad review and never go back."

Companies are realizing that focusing solely on customer satisfaction and loyalty is not enough to stay ahead of the game.

A company's product is only as good as the service the company provides. Van der Hulst acknowledged this shift in the industry and said that he sees exceptional service as a winning strategy to bolster profit and sales.



“The services industry is evolving. Service is now seen as a ‘true business,’ not just a ‘necessary evil’ in more and more companies every day. As such, it needs to be run as a business by service leaders who have both commercial and operational competencies.

Customers are becoming more sophisticated in their maintenance requirements - migrating from simply reacting to preventing to predicting. One size no longer fits all. Customers are looking for partners to help them solve their tough business problems. How can we help customers increase their revenues, increase efficiencies, reduce costs, and reduce risk? The conversations with customers have shifted from products and service to solutions and information. In addition, smart-connected products enable increased efficiencies, longer asset life cycles, and increased uptime.”

Chris Westlake, Vice President of Global Service, Gerber Scientific



“Service is becoming a much more strategic part of most businesses. In product companies such as ours, service was seen as necessary to support the product business. But now, service adds a steady revenue stream to the business while at the same time providing very good margins.”

Len Van der Hulst, Global Service Product Manager, Mettler-Toledo Inc.



At Field Service USA 2014, there was recognizable shift wherein technicians have had to go beyond purely break-fix and thus alter their service model from simply getting the job done to providing a superior service experience. Although soft skills are secondary to capable technical skills, the development of soft skills is a definite area of opportunity to expand the tool belt of technicians and enable you to look to your field force not just as technicians but as revenue generators within your firm. Leaders in field service know that training in soft skills is a key opportunity in this respect, which is why **over 89% of respondents in our 2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report cited soft skills as one of their top three priorities for training, a 16% increase over last year’s respondents.**

Companies are realizing the value of investing in the man behind the wrench. This is particularly true given how the role of the technician has evolved. Technicians that serve customers are increasingly seen as their “trusted advisors.” In this role, technicians are called to provide customers with the right information to help their businesses succeed. Human capital investment and a shift to a customer-centric model are crucial to ensuring that your customers are happy with your service.



Watch the on-site interview with Ken Walsh to see how London Hydro puts its customers first.

CUSTOMERS, EXPERIENCE, & THE BOTTOM LINE



Quick Facts:

Organizations with customer satisfaction rates of **90%** or higher saw service revenue increases of **6.1%** and overall revenue growth of **3.7%**.

Organizations with first-time fix rates below **50%** saw their service revenue decrease by **2.8%** over a period of 12 months.

-Aberdeen

Companies that track if service commitments are met, tasks are completed on time, and scheduling is efficient are better positioned to deliver excellent service.

Fixing First-Time Fix

Last year, companies recognized the need to look at processes through the lens of the customer in order to evolve, improve their operations, and be competitive in the global marketplace. In 2014, companies are realizing that focusing solely on customer satisfaction and loyalty is not enough to stay ahead of the game. Service is no longer about merely delivering support. It is about finding a true understanding of customer needs and providing solutions to ensure customer satisfaction, profitability, and maximum value.

As products become more complex, the expectations of customers do as well. The return on investment when it comes to customer service is clear. That is why over **79% of service executives reported having metrics in place to measure customer satisfaction.**

Delivering excellence is tightly linked to the quality of work performed and the information communicated by field technicians to customers, who use it to measure integrity, credibility, effectiveness, and overall brand perception. Performance metrics like service revenue, customer satisfaction, and first-time fix compliment one another and are inextricably linked. According to Aberdeen, organizations with customer satisfaction rates of 90% or higher saw service revenue increases of 6.1% and overall revenue growth of 3.7%. The same report found that organizations with first-time fix rates below 50% saw their service revenue decrease by 2.8% over a period of 12 months. Companies that track if service commitments are met, tasks are completed on time, and scheduling is efficient are better positioned to deliver excellent service.

Advances in the quest for customer centricity have introduced new methods of survey engagement, such as the ability to collect feedback at multiple touch points, including social media, mobile devices, and online media. Couple this with the ability to understand and analyze the data captured on their own products, and the implications are huge: companies in service now have the potential to provide holistic, timely insight designed to immediately deliver on customer expectations.



“Everything from our wireless products to how we train our technicians is based on customer feedback. We get it from all kinds of sources, from surveys, personal emails from customers, and websites. We collect customer feedback from probably eight or ten different paths, including focus groups, to find out what is important to our customer. We design our products and our training accordingly.”

Dave Baker, Senior Vice President of Field Services, DIRECTV

Dave Baker, Senior Vice President of Field Services, DIRECTV, said that companies must be realistic about the inevitability of eventual product failure in order to ensure a quality customer experience. Therefore, you need to equip your field service technicians with the tools needed to be successful.

“Everything from our wireless products to how we train our technicians is based on customer feedback,” said Baker. “We get it from all kinds of sources, from surveys, personal emails from customers, and websites. We collect customer feedback from probably eight or ten different paths, including focus groups, to find out what is important to our customer. We design our products and our training accordingly.”

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) acts as a quantifiable scale for gauging customer satisfaction. Expectations are set before the technician makes his way to the door and are solidified during the first visit to the customer’s home. Although customers may be new to your product, they will have certain expectations of service that have been long ingrained in their beliefs.

Aberdeen reports that organizations leveraging analytics see increases in profits of nearly 20%, customer retention of 42% and service level agreement (SLA) performance of 44%. Dell, for instance, is enacting a new metric when it comes to measuring customer satisfaction that surpasses the NPS, a measurement they collect after every service call.

“We’ve also started to think about what we call ‘least effort by the customer,’” said Feiner of Dell. “As in, ‘How much effort does it take the customer to get their problems resolved?’ Essentially, we want to make sure that we send the right person at the right place at the right time and that they fix the problem.”

How to Deliver on Exceeding Expectations

“The service industry and its customers face challenges tied to the current environment,” said **Craig Simon, President & CEO, FedEx Supply Chain**. “We have become accustomed to continuous improvement. Customers want higher SLA performance, faster turnaround time, and lower cost. As a service provider to those service companies, we must do the same thing.”

In 2013, companies in field services recognized the value of servitization, the business proposition that is now embedded in successful business plans across the globe. At the Field Service USA 2014 conference, companies continued to showcase the innovative ways in which they are able to employ the value-add of service in order tap into this new service offering.

“For us, it means adding more stocking locations so that inventory can be placed closer to our customers’ products. FedEx has added flexibility to the way our systems work, who can see the information, and how frequently we capture information,” said Simon. “We continue to invest in



“The trend of running field service as a profit center is accelerating. In order to realize the benefits of this shift, organizations must continue to attract and develop talented employees who are capable. Field service is at the onset of a significant transformation . . . one that will include connected machines, next gen field engineers, and outcome based service offerings for clients.”

Jim Saccone, Global Service Leader, Americas Region, GE Oil & Gas

technology to allow us to scan more often and more efficiently. We have also combined in-transit information and storage information so that a technician, a customer service agent, or a customer can go to www.fedex.com and see where a part is located—whether in a warehouse or in transit.”

“The trend of running field service as a profit center is accelerating,” said **Jim Saccone, Global Service Leader, Americas Region, GE Oil & Gas**. “In order to realize the benefits of this shift, organizations must continue to attract and develop talented employees who are capable. Field service is at the onset of a significant transformation . . . one that will include connected machines, next generation field engineers, and outcome-based service offerings for clients.”

According to our findings, **70%** of those surveyed reported that **tailoring their value proposition** is a growth strategy that is working for their organization today. Through this new servitization value proposition, companies are going from purely cost-based models to profit-based ones. Nearly three-quarters of respondents said that their **service organizations** operate **as profit centers rather than cost centers**. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that 31% or more of overall company revenue comes from service revenue, and 35% or more of overall company profit comes from value-added services.

“The results are very positive,” said Saccone. “Boards of Directors will continue to pressure service to find new ways of generating profit. While we navigate this exciting journey, we must continue to keep our eye on the ball and remember the field service fundamentals of rapid response and quality work performed safely.”

Reap the Rewards of Exceptional Service

Moreover, **over 70% of American companies surveyed reported their profit margins for service to be as high as or higher than that of product sales**. Treating customers as partners in business and helping them solve problems is one of many strategies used to enhance customer satisfaction. Companies’ services are key drivers influencing their bottom lines, and successful companies in the space are focusing on customer satisfaction and loyalty before realizing the revenue and profit that result from those changes.

“Customers are becoming more sophisticated in their maintenance requirements. As such, companies are migrating from simply reacting to preventing and predicting. One size no longer fits all,” said **Chris Westlake, Vice President of Global Service, Gerber Scientific**. “Customers are looking for partners to help them solve their tough business problems. How can we help customers increase their revenues, increase efficiencies, reduce cost, and reduce risk? The conversations with customers have shifted from products and service to solutions and information.”



“More than ever before, our customers want us to demonstrate that we know their businesses, we are in touch with their staff, and we are aligned to their business objectives.”

Jeff Zirker, Senior Director of Global Technical Support, Americas, Cisco

Every customer has the basic expectation that the technician who responds to a call will have the requisite training and competencies to make repairs as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, today’s customers are more savvy in many ways, and field staff are now required to engage the client on a variety of customer care topics, including company initiatives, product updates, product training, and complaint resolution. To be successful and guarantee a positive experience, it is necessary that field staff understand how to deal effectively with customers.


“In terms of evolution, there is more technology available than ever before. The bandwidth of communication and the amount of information that’s available has dramatically changed day-to-day operations in this industry,” said Simon of FedEx. “In the service industry, it’s all about getting the right part at the right place at the right time while also doing so at the right cost. If cost didn’t matter, you could get any part where it needed to be at the right time, but that’s not realistic. We have to find the right balance between cost and service. What I have seen develop are better tools. We are now able to use the information that technology gives us to make real-time decisions between service and cost. You have to service the customer but be able to do so at the right cost.”

“The role of the technicians is going to continue to evolve,” said **Joe Pinto, Senior Vice President of Technical Services, Cisco**. “They are moving from reactive case solving to trying to upsell, as well as helping customers solve their business problems. The field technician is in the best position to see where customers need support. The balance for the technician would be one-third soft skills and two-thirds technical skills to enable business-level discussion around outcomes.”

Since joining Cisco in 1991, Pinto has witnessed the changing business needs of Cisco customers and partners. Along with members of his team, Pinto is responsible for creating and implementing Cisco smart services, which enable Cisco and Cisco partners to help customers predictably manage the health and stability of their networks, reduce costs, mitigate risk, and promote innovation.

“More than ever before, our customers want us to demonstrate that we know their businesses, we are in touch with their staff, and we are aligned to their business objectives,” said **Jeff Zirker, Senior Director of Global Technical Support, Americas, Cisco**. “This approach requires a concerted effort to train and sustain advanced soft skills. You run the risk of alienating a customer if you don’t know how to identify their products, mispronounce or misspell their company name, or respond via email when they’ve asked for a phone call. It’s the little things in the interaction that make a difference.”

Similarly, **James Mylett, Senior Vice President of Service, Comfort Systems USA**, knows that differentiation of service is the key to being successful in this industry. A recognized champion for employee engagement and personal development in his management across the company's 85 nationwide locations, he explained the key leveraging aspect of service for the organization:



“I recently heard a definition of service that revolved around providing something of value to someone. Services are more about experience than tangible objects. As a result, service creates more of an opportunity for value differentiation. This is one of the key leverage points where profit margins for service can be distanced from product margins. If we really understand our customers, we can zero in on the value drivers for them in the service experience. It's much more difficult to commoditize the service experience. Customers will define what they value, not us. **Their voices are the ones that are important here.**

Most organizations that I've worked with go through an evolution where service evolves from being a warranty and support organization to a strategically important profit center that strengthens the overall value proposition. Product-centric organizations will have service to support the sale of products, and customers will pull toward providing a more complete lifecycle services experience over time. As service organizations grow and gain scale, the opportunity for optimization and cost productivity gets increased attention and resources.”

**James Mylett, Senior Vice President of Service,
Comfort Systems USA**

LEVERAGING BIG DATA FOR COST & PROFIT



“To accept that you have products that are more complex than what consumers can reasonably repair themselves, the reputation of your company really relies on your ability to be able to get people out there to maintain your products and get them working again.”

Dave Baker, Senior Vice President of Field Services, DIRECTV

In order to be successful in today's marketplace, field service organizations need to be more agile in leveraging data waiting to be used and keeping up with the increasing demands of their customers. Service companies have shifted toward a customer-centric model to better understand what constitutes the best possible **value** for their customers. This shift toward personalized service has dramatically transformed the role of the field service technician, transforming his role from that of a break-fix technician to the supplier of services that are both imperative and strategically significant.

“To accept that you have products that are more complex than what consumers can reasonably repair themselves, the reputation of your company really relies on your ability to be able to get people out there to maintain your products and get them working again,” said Baker of DIRECTV. “The ability to be sure that you don't have your consumers frustrated about your product longer than necessary relies on the ability to have trained professionals who can be quickly deployed to take care of consumers' products so they don't get mad at you and your company.”

Field services companies are adapting to this paradigm by adopting powerful new digital solutions. Tools for service lifecycle management, customer relations, remote on-demand training, and real-time automation and information have become essential pieces of this new tailored value proposition for service. By taking advantage of new technology advancements, companies are able to see the benefits, like reduced technician downtime, improved billing accuracy, and efficient service delivery.

As a recent Forrester report states, “Through continual monitoring of the network and devices connected to it, these technologies can identify stresses and potential points of failure and predict where problems could surface. In short, they allow firms to understand the usage, demands, and potential weak spots, which can be used to anticipate and prepare for future strains as new services and activities are added to the network.”

Continuous monitoring of networks through automated software systems is no easy task. However, the growing demand for these full-time network health checks is being met by the enterprises equipped to meet the task, such as Cisco's network of smart services.

Cisco's overall smart services strategy leverages Cisco's industry knowledge, expertise, and tools to assist customers and partners alike. With Cisco's foundational support capabilities and smart interactions strategy, the company works to tailor service delivery to the needs of discrete customer segments and regions. Today, the overwhelming majority of Cisco customer and partner technical support issues are solved online, where knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices have resulted in faster issue resolution,

and continuous customer and partner feedback improves services, products, and business processes across Cisco.

Another key element of the smart services offering is a SLA that creates the right incentives for business partners.



“Services are the new differentiator for customer loyalty. Products keep getting cheaper, smarter, and more commoditized. Having a service company that can help achieve business objectives through use of data and analytics is becoming more important to customers in all industries.”

Jeff Zirker, Senior Director of Global Technical Support, Americas, Cisco

Cisco's goal is to use smart software to reduce network management costs while improving performance and reliability for its customers. Across the industry, businesses are attempting to leverage the automated software capabilities in their arsenal to deliver the best value for the customer.

Other companies, like London Hydro, have begun to leverage advancements in new technologies to connect their service systems in real time.

“Over the past several years, we have deployed a state of the art outage management system. This system interacts automatically with our customers to notify them of service interruptions. It includes outbound messaging for outage notification and web presentation of system status,” said **Ken Walsh, Vice President of Engineering & Operations, London Hydro**. “With smart meters on every customer, we have access to real-time information and can provide a host of supervisory services relating to power quality and load management. Our customers have responded very favorably to these innovative solutions. Of course, all of these new technologies also allow us to deploy mobile workforce solutions.”

Access to data has dramatically transformed the way in which companies can deliver personalized service. In the advent of the digital age, progressive leaders in field service are reorienting how they think about their customers and are realizing the opportunities that come from the massive amount of data that their machines collect each and every day. This opportunity, however, is not limited to the B to C realm. It is being realized by even the largest providers of the largest products in the B to B space, such as Airbus, the world's leading manufacturer of commercial jetliners and military airlifters, with a 40-plus year track record of innovation, technological firsts, and industry milestones.



Hear from Paul Oliver on how Airbus utilizes big data to deliver predictive and preventative service.

“There is a huge amount of data coming back from the customers that we can make better use of in terms of really understanding how they use our equipment and how they use our services,” said **Paul Oliver, Head of Field Services Worldwide, Airbus**. “Having access to data allows us to have a level of customer intimacy that then enables us to make a better service. It’s really about how we can best use that huge amount of data that wasn’t available just ten years ago.”

Industry professionals are struggling to stay abreast of the astonishing amount of data at their fingertips. Thanks to big data, there’s an enormous opportunity to solidify the position of their companies by delivering measurable business results. According to a recent Aberdeen report on the use of analytics in field service organizations, companies that adopted analytics saw their **service profits increase by 18%**, their **customer retention rates** soar by **42%**, and the performances of their SLAs shoot up **44%**.

Powerful new digital solutions are enabling field service companies to utilize big data and serve their customers. Predictive analytics are enabling companies to examine their field service processes, and techniques can be further improved to drive operational effectiveness.

For instance, field service supervisors can examine the analytics to optimize the routes of their technicians by reducing travel time, fuel consumption, and vehicle maintenance across field service fleets. Information gleaned from GPS alone has yielded double-digit gains for service companies, according to a recent study from NDP Consulting. The use of GPS technology and data has produced 11% savings in labor costs, a 13% reduction in fuel consumption, and 13% savings in vehicle maintenance and repair.



“There is a huge amount of data coming back from the customers that we can make better use of in terms of really understanding how they use our equipment and how they use our services.”

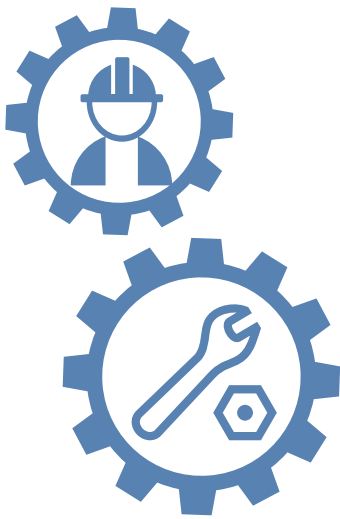
Paul Oliver, Head of Field Services Worldwide, Airbus

“It’s surprising to me to see how quickly disparate industries are coming together in terms of capabilities, interconnections, and shared goals. More and more companies are focusing on customer success over company success. Demonstrating to customers that you can help them realize their business objectives with your products is a common goal. From traditionally labor-intensive field service to new technology-enabled service businesses, there are more commonalities than differences.”

Jeff Zirker, Senior Director of Global Technical Support, Americas, Cisco



STOCKING THE DIGITAL TOOL BELT



Our findings clearly demonstrate that leveraging data is key for efficiently delivering exceptional customer service and customer experience. Additionally, organizations have started to prioritize field technicians' efficiency, effectiveness, and success in solving customer issues. For companies to be successful in service, they must first focus on the multiple drivers of customer satisfaction to achieve the goals of increased revenue creation, operational efficiency, and, most importantly, exceptional customer experience. With newfound access to advanced analytics and management tools that were not available just 10 years ago, service organizations are now starting to understand how to strategically leverage new and existing technologies to drive efficiencies, improve customer service, and boost profit.

This begets the question, "What's the optimal combination of technologies to deliver on these goals?"

Inventory:

1 Profit-Driven Analytics

The data collected through connected systems is key for driving operational intelligence, improving customer service and efficiencies, and retaining much greater profits on a company's bottom line. Companies can better enforce worker accountability and optimize planning through the use of analytics tools designed to interpret collected data. Analytics help identify top performers, determine which schedules and routes produce the best results, and compare results from single workers and teams against the entire fleet. In an increasingly competitive market, this translates to higher efficiency, increased customer satisfaction, and an optimized bottom line.

2 Data-Driven Productivity

Big data flows into organizations in various formats from a vast array of sources, including websites, social media, and company systems. Collecting, organizing, and drawing insights from these volumes of data will help field service organizations improve services and operations and stand out from competitors. Companies will need to review historical data, identify patterns, and compile metrics for predictive analysis and strategic business planning. By leveraging data from multiple systems, including content management, data warehouses, and specialized file systems, companies can better understand their operations and customer needs and make decisions that drive customer satisfaction and increase profits.



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3 Strategic Knowledge Management

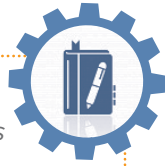
Information gleaned from the ever-expanding set of technology tools and systems used by field service organizations is often used separately for specific tasks or, in some cases, completely forgotten in databases and unused files. However, if aggregated into a digestible form, the information can drive innovation and stimulate change. As this study suggests, organizations are starting to realize the importance of knowledge management as a cross-discipline in shaping strategy and direction across the enterprise. Service companies are implementing lean tools, techniques, and methodologies to maximize value and minimize waste in business processes, providing the greatest opportunity for profit improvement. By implementing a knowledge management solution at your organization, you'll be able to effectively leverage this data to increase competitiveness, enhance staff expertise, and improve communication across different departments.

4 Continuously Connected through M2M

Machine-to-machine communication is revolutionizing how service companies do business. Data transmitted from devices in the field to applications in the office can lead to decisions that significantly improve business operations. In field services, data flows in from GPS and in-vehicle data capturing devices, as well as ruggedized handheld computers used for invoicing and confirmation of deliveries and task completion. In addition, sensors and monitoring devices on everything from household appliances to utility meters to complex machinery in oil fields transmit data on diagnostics, measurements, temperature, and overall conditions, all of which is instrumental in preventing equipment failure, scheduling maintenance, and improving safety and energy consumption.

5 Streamlining Service through Mobility

Picture your service technician in the field, moving from one location to the next while constantly connected to back-office applications to receive information and post updates without ever having to step back into the office or repeatedly sign in to the corporate network. In the age of the smartphone, most of us are no strangers to apps that simplify the nuances of the day to day. Like us, field technicians can use mobile apps to increase productivity by leveraging the cloud to access customer files, calendars, routing information, and even social media. This allows workers to instantly access customer information, invoices, and inventory in the field instead of having to return to the office to get it. Information is then backed up and compiled into reports for analysis and future planning.



The ability to access a CRM system remotely in the field allows the technician to look up all of the information needed in real time. The automation of service lifecycle management software has enabled field service workers to streamline legacy paper-based processes, increase field service productivity and customer service, and maximize revenue potential.

6 Cloud-Driven Transformations

The benefits of cloud-based software will continue to give businesses significant advantages. KPMG's Technology Innovation Survey 2013 ranked the cloud as "the biggest driver of business transformation for enterprises in the next three years," citing real-time information and productivity as key derivatives. Best-in-class field service organizations know that the cloud makes them more flexible in meeting customer demands. So, the question is no longer whether you should deploy cloud solutions but when. Organizations must evaluate and implement cloud services as methodically as with on-premises applications to remain agile and effectively meet customer needs.

7 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

As organizations look to improve the integration between parts operations, first-time fix, customer satisfaction, and profitability, companies are streamlining their processes through automated solutions in the field. The ability to access a CRM system remotely in the field allows the technician to look up all of the information needed in real time. The automation of service lifecycle management software has enabled field service workers to streamline legacy paper-based processes, increase field service productivity and customer service, and maximize revenue potential. If charged with revenue generation, the CRM system can also enable technicians to place orders, check inventory, and update status. The CRM system allows the technician to facilitate the entire order remotely from start to finish.

8 Remote Diagnostics

Remote diagnostics have proven to be invaluable in the field. Service companies are realizing the opportunities that come with remote diagnostic tools, such as using connectivity to solve a problem with a product without sending the technician out into the field, using the data from a connected device to find out why the device is going down, and being able to predict and prevent the break in the future.





Quick Facts:

83% of organizations are investing in tools related to customer experience over the next five years.

34% see upselling as the biggest opportunity for growth in 2014.

56% of companies will be implementing a strategy to incentivize field technicians over the next five years.

- 2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report

As the industry continues to move from a reactive model to a predictive one, the overarching challenge for companies is deciding which mobility solutions are needed to deliver on their customers' needs.

"We're constantly challenging ourselves internally and externally about how to take data and turn it into actionable information," said Feiner of Dell. "What do we need to invest in to achieve that, whether that's tools or processes or people? We're constantly talking to our customers about how to improve our processes to better assist them. We're always challenging ourselves in that manner. It's an ongoing balance."

According to a study from Forrester that surveyed some 2,200 software decision makers on their capital spending plans for 2013, field service ranked as their fourth priority, with 27% of responses. In the survey, field service ranked closely behind sales, corporate services, and customer service. Field service ranked even higher when it came to investing in mobility software, with 42% of respondents reporting that they planned to invest in mobility management tools for their technicians. The prioritization of these tools was ranked just behind plans to invest in mobile sales software, which 48% of respondents indicated as a priority.

Since then, field service companies have made big strides in moving from a reactive model to a more predictive and preventative one. Field service professionals of today and tomorrow must implement strategic initiatives that bolster the bottom line while contributing to overall organizational results. Service organizations are looking to the Internet of Things (IoT) to first make sense of how their products work and who is using them. Best-in-class organizations looking to make strategic financial decisions have started to rely more heavily on the use of the IoT to bridge the gaps between blue sky principles and the execution of their services and product offerings.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF AUTOMATION

Quick Facts:



28% of respondents said that **50%** or more of their company's service requests are resolved through remote assistance. **40%** reported an average first-time fix rate of **85%** or higher. **42%** of those surveyed ranked remote diagnostics as the number one area for spend in the year ahead, coming ahead of knowledge management (40%) and customer experience solutions (34%). **31%** of respondents ranked remote diagnostics as their main focus for technician training, coming ahead of PCs (16%), smartphones (20%), and CRM tools (15%).

- **2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report USA report**

Remote Diagnostics

As many products have become commoditized, service has become the key differentiator to edge out the competition. In order to provide the level of service needed to deliver on increasing customer expectations, best-in-class organizations know that they must first get the right technician in front of the right customer at the right place and the right time.

"Over 85% of our service requests are handled via remote assistance," said Baker of DIRECTV. "We've recently added some additional configuration reports on every truck roll to increase that percentage in the future, such as recording the location of key components so customers can easily be instructed on how to identify them and report their status."

According to the Field Service USA 2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report, there is definitely room for improvement in the industry when it comes to remote diagnostics. Only 28% of respondents said that 50% or more of their company's service requests are resolved through remote assistance. Forty percent of executives surveyed reported an average first-time fix rate of 85% or higher. When evaluating budgeting for deployment over the next 6 to 12 months, 42% of those surveyed ranked remote diagnostics as the number one area for spend in the year ahead, coming ahead of knowledge management (40%) and customer experience solutions (34%). Thirty-one percent of respondents ranked remote diagnostics as their main focus for technician training, coming ahead of PCs (16%), smartphones (20%), and CRM tools (15%).

Based on these findings, Baker concluded, "We're either the leading edge or hopelessly out of step with the industry. I prefer to believe the former."

"Multinational companies have been operating around the world for years, but now there is a greater expectation that a service will be delivered consistently no matter where you are," said Simon of FedEx Supply Chain. "Whether you're in Des Moines, Iowa or Bangalore, India, customers expect the same service—even if the infrastructure is not the same. That's where service providers must create consistency of service across the globe. We have implemented a warehouse management system that serves all customers all over the world. That helps drive consistency in the process for our customers."

Through this automation of services, 40% of companies surveyed reported an average first-time fix rate of 85% or higher. As we move into the next generation of automation, service and support organizations will capitalize on all of the innovations before them to keep up in the competitive service space. The IoT and smart connectivity will be game changers in the space over the next five years. The IoT, for example, enables service companies to get statistics on their products without coming out into the field. Not only does it give them the ability to be both proactive and preventative, but it also allows them to extend the life of the product while simultaneously delivering on customer expectations. It shouldn't be surprising that 40% of industry executives already are planning to invest in and implement smart-connected products in their field forces in the next 5 to 10 years. Smart-connected

Quick Facts:



40% of companies surveyed reported an average first-time fix rate of **85%** or higher after automating services.

40% of industry executives already are planning to invest in and implement smart-connected products in their field forces in the next 5 to 10 years.

33% of respondents said that smart-connected products are the most exciting of the next generation tools.

- 2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report

products are also cited as the most exciting of the next generation tools, according to 33% of respondents in the 2014/2015 Service, Revenue, & Training Trends Report.

“It’s all about the marrying up of the technician and the part,” said Simon of FedEx Supply Chain. “There is a lot of advancement that will come in that area on the technician side of things. The management of the technician labor, driven by the availability of parts and the integration of those two systems, is something that will get a lot of traction in the next 12 to 24 months.”

Wearable Technology

It is no secret that field service organizations are known to roll out the latest and greatest technological advances in order to stay ahead of their competition. What was once reserved for science fiction is now a reality for field technicians who have access to modern tools for their modern roles.

Wearable computers are now being considered as a viable technology that can help field technicians use voice commands to access records, notes, and diagrams while keeping their hands free. The advent of wearable computers enables field technicians to have the latest in PC portability mounted to their heads or fixed on their wrists. As the ultimate in mobility, wearable devices bring with them the next big trend for mobile field service software.

With these new tools, the on-site field technician would be able to share both videos and pictures with a remote agent. That remote agent could view the problem from the technician’s eyes, give whatever guidance is required, and provide the resources needed to fix the problem and find the solution without having to leave the home base. As a result, the on-site technician will achieve the coveted first-time fix.

The possibilities are endless. But when will these devices be ready to roll out on your field force?

Enter ResolutionTube. ResolutionTube, the thought project from scholar **Arnav Anand of UC Berkeley**, embarked on a mission a few years back to seamlessly integrate new technology into emergent hardware like Google Glass to create one streamlined tool that could easily translate troubleshooting into first-time fix.

Anand, CEO of ResolutionTube, started out as a technician at Boston Scientific and became frustrated when broken machines took hours to fix due to poor, dead-end customer service. He realized that delays in resolution could cost the company millions in revenue, and ResolutionTube was born.



“We have a big vision: to fundamentally change the way broken machines are fixed and, in the long run, how customer service is done altogether. This has got to be the next wave of mobility. This is built for field services, built for medical. Hands-free makes so much more sense ergonomically.”

Arnav Anand, CEO, ResolutionTube



"It's all about the marrying up of the technician and the part. There is a lot of advancement that will come in that area on the technician side of things. The management of the technician labor, driven by the availability of parts and the integration of those two systems, is something that will get a lot of traction in the next 12 to 24 months."

Craig Simon, President & CEO, FedEx Supply Chain

The core capabilities of a wearable device – capturing hands-free photos, video, and audio in real time and instantly sharing it with others – could save a business a fortune. These devices are designed to give workers and managers ways to stay in touch in real time when working on important tasks, omitting the need for messy email chains or prolonged phone calls.

Think about it. A field tech who has a question about a complicated repair job would be able to transmit live video to a cloud server in real time, and their more experienced colleagues would be able to speak to them, answer questions on the spot, and guide them through the process step by step.

ResolutionTube's mobile capacity includes features like instant video tutorials and live chats with customer service agents. The mobile agent essentially serves as a portal for technicians to instantly connect with expert support analysts. Rather than getting caught up in service hotline limbo, field service technicians can put the visual functionality of wearable devices to good use. Technicians can carry out their tasks more efficiently and effectively, and they can also learn new techniques in the process.

Rugged Devices

Ruggedized handheld devices have become essential to field workers as they go about their day-to-day tasks. Workers use the devices for scanning packages, diagnostics, checking customer records, invoicing and delivery confirmation, and other tasks. In 2014, we will see a continuation of the trend to equip field workers with rugged devices. Companies that have used non-rugged tablets and smartphones for field work will be replacing them with rugged handhelds as they realize that breakage rates cost them more than deploying rugged devices in the first place.



Watch the interview with Arnav Anand to see Google Glass in action.



INTO THE CLOUD: THE FUTURE FOR FIELD SERVICE



“The role of the technicians is going to continue to evolve. They are moving from reactive case solving to trying to upsell as well as helping customers solve their business problems. The field technician is in the best position to see where customers need support. The balance for the technician would be one-third soft skills and two-thirds technical skills to enable business-level discussion around outcomes.”

Joe Pinto, Senior Vice President of Technical Services, Cisco

The expansion and evolution of the digital world has had a profound impact on the field service space.

Over the past ten years, technology has enabled service companies to extrapolate from data and leverage their findings to deliver the utmost level of care to their customers. Increased availability of data has enabled these entities to become both predictive and preventative. Companies are now able to maintain and service their products remotely, enabling them to better bridge the gap between when a part breaks and its fix. Forty percent of companies surveyed reported an average first-time fix rate of 85% or higher, and first-time fix will soon become industry standard if growth continues at its current rate.

Experts at Field Service USA 2014 believe that remote diagnostics and service are integral to achieving high first-time fix rates across the industry. “When you’re talking about marrying the technician to the parts, I think part of that would be remote diagnostics,” said Simon of FedEx Supply Chain. “If you are able to do remote diagnostics, you can deploy your technicians in a more dynamic way. Let’s say you have Technician A, who is an expert on a specific problem that’s been diagnosed, and Technician B. If they’re both in the same area, you can send Technician A until Technician B has had further training. That would certainly increase the reliability and speed of your fixes. The other piece is to not send the technician to a location if you know they need a specific part, but that part is not yet available to them. Don’t send them out until that part arrives. That’s what I mean by ‘marrying up’ the two information systems: one from logistics and one from the technicians.”

The increasing acceptance of mobile devices has also revolutionized the playing field for technicians, but the most dramatic change in the space has yet to come.

Across the world, field forces come armed with mobile devices of every shape and size to get what they need as soon as they need it. Field service is being reshaped by the emergence of mobile technologies, and a new breed of cloud management software will soon revolutionize the way that technicians go about their day-to-day activities. The process and paperwork will go online. Some of the leading cloud-based software will enable techs in the field to do work orders, request parts, schedule and be scheduled, look up manuals, and take payments. All of these tasks can be done in real time and on one tablet. Similarly, CRM systems can



“As technology improves, companies and customers get more productive. Both look for new ways to drive that productivity and become more profitable. I think businesses just continue to evolve as technology gets more prevalent, and you’ve got to constantly be at pace with the rate of change. You’ve got to constantly talk to your customers about what they need.”

Bob Feiner, Vice President of Global Deployment & Field Services, Dell Inc.

pick up the information supplied by technicians in the field and ensure that the customer receives future communication, advice, updates, and education related to the product.

Where do we go from here?

“As technology improves, companies and customers get more productive. Both look for new ways to drive that productivity and become more profitable,” said Dell’s Feiner. “I think businesses just continue to evolve as technology gets more prevalent, and you’ve got to constantly be at pace with the rate of change. You’ve got to constantly talk to your customers about what they need.”

That, Feiner believes, will be the main driver of new technology deployment.

No matter what your budget allows for new technology, solutions, or tools in the year ahead, the most important and lasting investment your company will ever make is the investment in your people. Investing in your employees can guarantee a strong customer base for years to come.



“Customers will remember how you made them feel long after they recall what specifically you fixed or maintained. I don’t believe that the pendulum will ever swing too far away from focus on the customer experience. The main reason for that is because the customers won’t allow it. They will always re-center us if we listen; if we stop listening, we cease to exist.”

James Mylett, Senior Vice President of Service, Comfort Systems USA

Technologies may be perpetually changing and evolving, but the key to getting it right when it comes to customer service is to make it simple. You should create simpler and easier practices to enhance your customers’ experiences. If you can ensure a better fix, recovery, and improved capability, you will be able to deliver on your core promises that were set forth in the “buy-sell” agreement, and your customer will likely reciprocate on their end. You will achieve retention; you will keep your customers for life and ensure that they will recommend your product to their friends and families.

At the end of the day, best-in-class organizations know that the true key to success is a focus on the total customer experience. In good times and bad, there is one constant – people expect a great experience. To be successful in this industry, you just have to give it to them.

ABOUT ASTEA



“This is the only conference of its kind. At Field Service USA, I get the opportunity to speak to a good cross-section of companies that come from many different industries to understand what kind of concerns they have and find out what their needs are. That helps us not only find leads but also helps us drive the future direction of our product. Field Service’s main advantage is that it allows us to have a window into top processes, people, tools, and initiatives in the space. We have the opportunity to benchmark best practices and new ideas from a cross-industry perspective.”

Debbie Geiger, Vice President of Global Marketing, Astea International

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ABOUT FIELD SERVICE

FIELD SERVICE

Field Service is the leading service and support event that attracts senior-level service and support professionals from 15 different manufacturing industries, including Aerospace, Medical Device Manufacturing, Hi-Tech Electronic, Semi-Conductor and Capital Equipment, Construction, Automotive, Telecommunications Equipment, Energy, Industrial and Agricultural Equipment, and more!

Field Service tackles the latest strategies in core service functions, including mobility, workforce management, technical support, and knowledge management. Additionally, be sure to gain as much insight to the new areas bounding service and support professionals all over the world, including innovative developments in increasing service revenue, customer soft skills, technician utilization, developing service leadership, and effective mobile resources management.



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FIELD SERVICE BLOG

The Field Service Blog, launched in April 2013, serves as a source of exclusive content generated by and for field service industry leaders. Every week, the blog features new articles on what's happening in the industry, how to educate ourselves about best practices and challenges, and how we can use this information as leverage for our own businesses in the competitive field service space.

The Field Service Blog features articles, weekly polls, interviews, how-to tips, and Q&A's from the leaders of the field on the following topics: service revenue, mobility, integration, proactive and preventative services, and bridging the talent gap in your organization, just to name a few. Stop on over to the blog, and watch out for our exclusive annual benchmarking report to see how you measure up to your peers.



Free exclusive content, social networking, and the best kept secrets to service from leaders in the field service industry.

Editor-in-Chief: Field Service Blog

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REGISTER FOR NEXT YEAR

Make your mark in Field Service. Be a part of next year's audience at one of our 2014/2015 events.



"The working groups and round table events at Field Service USA 2014 were excellent for generating ideas about further developing and enhancing the role of field service within our business, especially as we drive toward more services revenue. Those groups helped me enormously in getting tips and insight regarding how to be even closer to the customers and how to develop even higher level relationships between our field service team and our customers. The event was very well balanced between speeches and working groups. I will definitely be back next year."

Paul Oliver, Head of Field Services Worldwide, Airbus



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