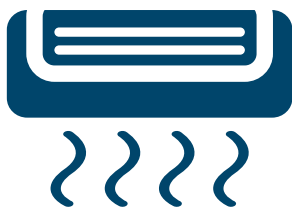


# Delight Your Customers with HVAC Field Service Management



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HVAC -- or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning -- is an industry within field service where time and efficiency are crucial. If a client's heat goes down in the winter (in most parts of the world) or their AC goes down in the summer (ditto), it could mean millions of dollars of lost revenue and affected parts and machines if an HVAC technician can't be dispatched quickly and fix the problem the first time out.

Despite this need for more effective integration of services in HVAC companies, research has found that 74% of such companies -- essentially 3 in 4 -- aren't using any field service management software systems. Of the 26% that are, most use GPS-enabled scheduling software (66%) or GPS-enabled routing capabilities (61%).

In short, it seems that within the HVAC sector of field service, GPS technologies have caught on but not broader FSM solutions. How could the latter benefit HVAC companies?







# Integration of Core Business Processes

A focus on GPS technologies within HVAC makes sense -- it makes sense for any field service business, of course, because you don't want lost technicians all over your geographic area -- because speed is crucial for many HVAC clients. They need a technician there now because their HQ is overheating and machines are potentially being damaged.

While scheduling and dispatch being GPS-enabled is crucial, FSM software programs will typically integrate much more of the core business processes.

Typically, this refers to:

-  Scheduling
-  Dispatch
-  Inventory
-  Billing/Invoicing

... although it can incorporate other practices as well, dependent on your business model.

The overall idea is tied to customer journey or customer experience. If a customer or client has a field service need, you want this person to go onto your website or app (or call you) and be able to schedule the appointment at a good time for him or her. On your end, this scheduling of an appointment should be 'speaking' directly to dispatch -- knowing where techs are and what their days and week look like. (And hopefully involving GPS, as the stats above note.) This also needs to be 'speaking' to inventory, so that you can identify what parts are needed for this newly scheduled job -- and then make sure the technician will have access to those parts. The final component is billing and invoicing; the tech needs customer data loaded into his or her phone so that billing can take place on-site.

All these elements need to be integrated to (a) assure a good customer journey and experience throughout the process and (b) improve your first-time fix rate, which will also keep customers coming back.

The simplest way to integrate them is through an FSM software program where all the different variables can 'speak' to one another and be seen holistically. If you try to integrate core operations without an FSM solution, it can become painstaking and tedious and silo mentality can take over, whereby dispatch doesn't communicate properly with inventory, and the end customer is disappointed.

When a customer is disappointed, you tend to lose money in the intermediate to long term.

Now, there is a natural evolution here -- a GPS solution for scheduling and dispatching is (usually, not always) relatively easy to install and not that expensive. A full-service FSM suite of solutions that can integrate your business is a bit more complex -- you need to involve IT for customizations, etc. -- and will cost much more than GPS-tracking technology.

That brings us to the next part of the equation: if you're in the 74 percent of HVAC companies without a formal FSM solution, and your biggest fear about adopting one is cost, then how can you make the case to a decision-maker that FSM software is worth it?



# The First Step in the Case for FSM Software in Your HVAC Company

In most organizations, two types of projects tend to get the most attention:

- Those that are measured
- Those that make money or reduce costs

The case for field service management software starts by explaining the contribution of field service to the bottom line. With the right operations in place, most aspects of field service operations can be measured, from first-time fix rate to percentage of billable hours. Tracking number of work requests, even, can shine light on how efficient your scheduling and proactive services are, helping you reduce costs by improving operating margins.

When field service operations become measurable, it becomes possible to calculate how changes in operations impact costs and revenue.

Your CFO or other decision-maker will want to know that customer service programs are generating higher margins than product selling. And this makes sense: good service means loyal customers, and loyal customers mean more repeat business, potentially at higher price points.

If you're following the bouncing ball here, most of the necessity for FSM software comes from wanting to ensure a good customer experience for your end customers and clients, and having a system that unifies the various aspects of your business toward that end.

Customer experience equals retention and referrals when done right. That leads to revenue and profits. FSM software can be an expenditure, yes, but it's an expenditure that pays dividends.



# Your Other Customers

That header might confuse you. Who are your other customers? Do we mean customers that haven't been acquired yet?

No. We talked about that just a bit ago – that's 'referrals.' That comes from good customer experience, and good customer experience will come from creating a unified set of business processes, as opposed to a disjointed set where your clients are never sure what's going on.

'Other customers' in this case means your employees. Those are internal customers. You need to treat them well and make sure they're happy, too.

We've talked to dozens of small business HVAC companies about their key pain points, and one of the most frequent responses is always around technician performance. That takes different forms but usually means finding good technicians and installers -- and then keeping them in your shop.

FSM software actually plays a role here as well. If you have a system in place that integrates scheduling, dispatch, inventory, and billing, you usually end up with more satisfied technicians at the end of a workday. They're not running all over town grabbing parts, grabbing bills, and making repeated visits to clients. It's much more streamlined. Clients are happy (great), but techs are also happy (doubly great).

It's hard to approximate the dollar value of losing a technician, but it can feel like losing a good technician -- which is most likely to happen due to their frustrations around process -- is a major revenue hit. When you lose a good technician, you not only lose organizational knowledge, but you lose someone you know you can send on the tougher jobs. That's hard to replace, and it's a longshot you'll get that back on your first few hires when the new role opens up.

Remember this about FSM software and employees -- both techs and back-office staff. FSM software is designed to improve your processes. When that's done right, business should improve, and more importantly, engagement and morale should improve. These are all wins for your HVAC company. Rather than simply adding process to control more aspects of what goes out into the field, FSM software allows you to streamline and integrate process so that technicians heading out into the field to work directly with clients have all the knowledge and resources they need.





# The Data Side of FSM Software for HVAC Companies

This is the last element we'll discuss here, because it can be far off for some companies that haven't even considered FSM solutions yet. It's still important, though.

If you want to compete on data in the future, as many field service companies are starting to move toward, you need a few key elements:

- A system or program that captures customer/technician performance data
- A way to organize that data within the system
- A process to show that organized data to decision-makers so they can determine next steps

Doing all three steps by hand is nearly impossible; data gets lost or poorly recorded, and then analyzing it and showing it to executives is an uphill battle.

Doing those steps with an FSM software solution, though, is much easier. The often-overlooked part by our clients is how important it is to have all the data in one place consistently so that decision-makers can look at it from time to time and see and understand customer loyalty and technician performance trends. Even though your executives are trying to be strategic, strategy is often driven by day-to-day observations -- and executives want that ability to see that and manage the business each day. An FSM solution gives them that ability. As a managerial benefit, it also tends to make them micromanage less, as they don't need to constantly be asking each area of the business where certain things stand.

## Key Takeaways

HVAC is one of the fastest-moving field service industries; response times, first-time fix rates, and overall customer satisfaction are crucial. Yet, 3 in 4 HVAC companies tend to integrate their business and operational models in more traditional ways. It's time for HVAC companies to start fully embracing FSM software -- we've outlined the why and some of the key benefits above, as well as given you a few talking points on cost.

If you have additional questions, don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We work with small business HVAC companies all the time on pain points, challenges, and other business growth issues. We'd love to help you take that next step as well.



# Ready to learn more?

**Schedule a Demo** 

