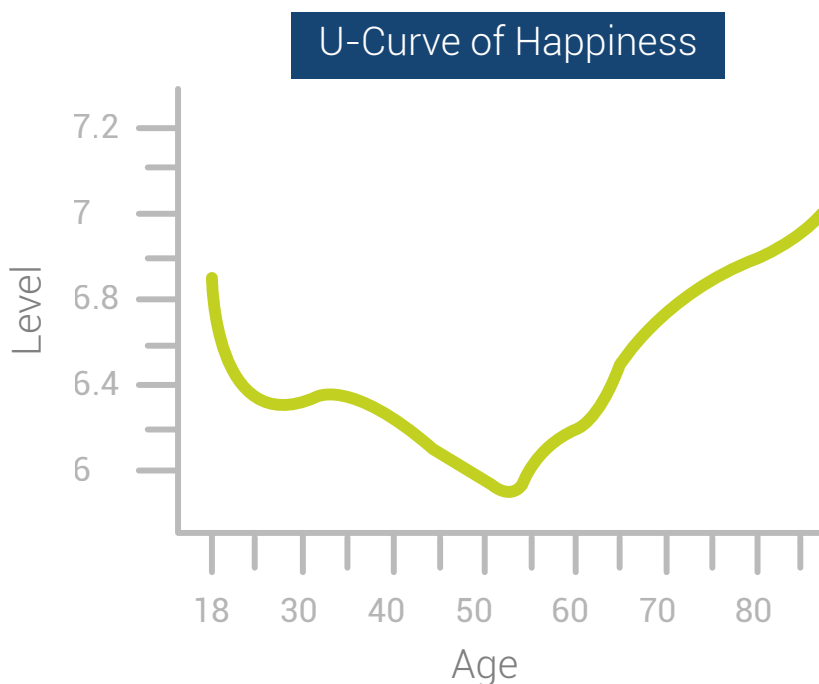


# Using Field Service Management to Improve Work-Life Balance



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The cover story in *The Atlantic*'s December 2014 issue was called ["The Roots of Midlife Crisis."](#) There are a lot of stereotypes associated with going through a midlife crisis -- buying a car or boat, for example -- but the article mentioned one concept not often discussed: the U-Curve of Happiness. Visually, it looks like this:



As you can see, the decline in happiness tends to occur between about 24 and 55 -- which, perhaps not so surprisingly, are primary working and career-building years for most first-world residents.

Work has evolved dozens of times in the past 20-30 years. Digital and mobile have changed everything in some respects. Cloud storage has shifted operational procedures. The 2008 recession was a major turning point for many financially.

As a result of new technologies and continued concerns about the potential for revenue growth, there has emerged an idea in many companies of 'doing more with less.' Field service organizations often have this mantra, too. The idea of 'doing more with less' typically involves fewer employees trying to tackle the same amount of work or employees making do with less-than-stellar resources so that the company can spend less on a solution.

When you combine the 'do more with less' attitude with mobile technology and cloud storage, you put many employees in a tough spot. Mobile + cloud = an employee can be 'on' (or asked to be 'on') all the time. Twenty years ago, your boss didn't necessarily have a full suite of ways to contact you at 10 p.m. -- and if he or she did, you probably couldn't work on the project because what you needed was back at the office.

That's all different now. Your boss can email you at 10 p.m. fairly easily, and whatever you need is probably stored somewhere (i.e. Dropbox) and you have the potential to access it and work on it right then.

This is where you see the drop in the U-Curve of Happiness. Work takes up a lot of your time (perhaps more than anything else) in the middle part of your life, and yet work can often be seen as an overwhelming series of demands, processes, protocols, and tasks. (Not to mention meetings and calls.)

There are thousands of books and articles promising that you can "work less and earn more," but is that really true? For most people, it doesn't seem so.

Now let's bring in some research from Wharton on [defining happiness](#), including this section:

*An interesting implication for consumers, or really anyone who's interested in feeling happy, is to shift attention away from money, which is a resource that tends to absorb most of our attention and our thinking and planning on a daily basis, and shift attention to this fundamentally precious resource of time. Making that shift will remind you and motivate you to behave in ways that are happier, and to spend your time in more fulfilling ways.*

Shift away from money (which is a primary reason many people work) and shift toward time that can be spent with family and friends and on experiences. Here's where we stand right now:

- Many people in the middle part of their lives are experiencing declining levels of happiness
- Work can often be overwhelming and you're expected to be 'on' all the time
- Happiness isn't even really as connected to money as is time

(And for that third bullet, note that *Wall Street Journal* research has shown [the perfect salary for happiness is \\$75,000](#).)

So, we want to help you move from focusing a lot on work and money to focusing more on time and relationships.



# Work-Life Balance

A lot of people tend to view 'work-life balance' as a buzzword. Executives hear it and think, "People will be working less? How will we meet our goals?" Regular employees hear it and think, "I'm drowning in my inbox as it is. How will I be able to get everything done?" Both sides are frustrated.

Interestingly, though, Towers Watson did some research in 2014 and found that 'work-life balance' is [a company's third-biggest strategic advantage](#). No. 1 was 'effective leadership' and No. 2 was 'goals and priorities.'

It is important to connect the dots here.

Oftentimes, a poor work-life balance comes from unclear goals and priorities. One of our co-workers used to have a sign that said "Just because you didn't plan well doesn't mean it's now my priority." Many workers feel this way; work piles up because others aren't committed in the same way -- or leave projects until the last second.

Because most workplaces are collaborative in 2016, especially field service organizations, a domino effect is created around work-life balance. If X-person isn't doing his or her job effectively or in a timely fashion (i.e. scheduling), it makes it harder for Y-person to do his or her job well (i.e. dispatch). This means that both X-person and Y-person have work piling up throughout a day or week, and that limits their work-life balance. It essentially limits their happiness. Who wants that?

If you believe and understand the connection between 'poor priority management' and 'poor work-life balance,' the next step is trying to solve that problem.



# Solving Work-Life Balance

## Version 1

There's a concept called ROWE, or [Results-Only Work Environments](#). You might be able to guess what it means, but essentially: *only* the results matter. So if you have five work goals and you can achieve them in five hours per week, that's fine. You will still get paid for 40 hours per week (or whatever your contract is), even though you're not around for the other 35 hours.

ROWE workplaces are a unique idea, because all of your employees are going to be different. If you observe the work of five technicians over a month, chances are they all have different first-time fix rates and they all have different levels of billable work and time spent at client sites. There are dozens of factors that play into this, from their own abilities to scheduling and drive time to client needs and more. But because everyone is different, should everyone have to work the exact same schedule? This applies even more to your back-office or logistical staff.

Here's the thing, however: almost every company that has adopted ROWE, notably Best Buy, has dropped it within a year or less. It can foster resentment and other problems to have certain people leaving the office after 1 hour or not showing up at all, etc.

So, ROWE is a potential concept you could consider to get better priority management -- but it's still pretty far off in most FSOs as an effective strategy.



# Solving Work-Life Balance The Right Way

To get better priority management in your FSO, the crucial elements you need are:

- Effective processes
- Quick decision-making
- Alignment of 'strategy' (big picture) with 'execution' (task work)

We've worked with hundreds of FSO small businesses, and in almost every case, the fastest way to get here is through FSM software tools.

The software tools typically allow you the following solutions:

- **Design processes and workflows:** This is a topic worthy of its own eBook, but basically you can simplify your processes so that everyone understands them -- and understands where in the workflow he or she contributes.
- **Transparency.** Everyone from an executive to a low-level back-office worker has access to some of the same information about customer needs, scheduling, routing, inventory, etc. It allows for more open decision-making toward revenue growth.
- **Alignment of systems:** When scheduling and dispatch and customer information and inventory all 'talk' to one another, that's a recipe for a high first-time fix rate. That, in turn, is a recipe for repeat business and referrals.

This just scratches the surface. FSM software tools allow you to integrate, manage, and refine dozens of core business operations and KPIs you track.

But the end goal here is a little bit different: obviously your business will become more effective, which is great. Over time, you'll see increased revenue growth -- which is great. But remember: here we've already discussed how money doesn't drive happiness. People, relationships, and experiences do.

For us, the single-biggest benefit of FSM software implementation isn't better business practices or more money (although those are great things!). Instead, it's more time back to you -- because the processes are streamlined within the FSM software and take less time to complete or track -- and that's more time you can spend with friends and family. That's increased happiness, which chips away at that U-Curve above.

We love it when small businesses come to us and say that our programs helped them make more money. It's a great feeling, and it's part of why we do what we do. But when a small business owner who felt overwhelmed comes to us and says that our software or mobile tools made it so that he could spend more time with his wife or young daughter or friends, that's a greater accomplishment for the work we do. We want to increase your revenue, yes, but it's more important that we increase your overall quality of life.

If you have any questions about how work-life balance and personal happiness can be bettered through the use of FSM software, don't hesitate to [contact us](#).





# Ready to learn more?

**Schedule a Demo** 

