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FIELD SERVICE MADE EASY

Why Mobility Is a Game-Changer for Field Service Managers

Field service and field service management have evolved a lot in just the past 10 or so years. Because of 'servitization' -- or the idea that companies that primarily sell products add a service line to those products to generate more revenue -- the concept of field service is gaining more attention from CFOs and other decision-makers, which opens up a new world of possibilities as field service emerges into a profit center (as opposed to a cost center).

At the forefront of those new possibilities, you'll find three concepts:

> ❯ Mobility
> ❯ The Internet of Things, or IoT
> ❯ Field service management, or FSM, software

All are game-changers in field service, and actually -- all can work together. First let's briefly touch on what each one is/means; hopefully if you work within field service, you have some idea of the basics, but we'll run through it quickly.

Mobility

This generally refers to a mobile workforce, or one where the techs are connected to back-office processes and information via their mobile phones. Much more on this later.

The Internet of Things

This refers to 'connected devices,' or inanimate objects -- like a machine in a hospital, let's say -- having data sensors and sending information back to a field service HQ. This is a big deal because it shifts the definition of what 'service' even is: beforehand, a company would notice its machinery wasn't working and call the field service organization wanting it fixed. Now the field service organization can show up before it is even called. That changes everything about the customer's experience with the service.

FSM Software

This refers to tools that allow a lot of data points to be stored in one place, including information on:

- Inventory
- Scheduling
- Dispatching
- Sales prospects
- Customer data
- Invoicing
- Special needs for customers

FSM software is effective for organizing multiple parts of a complex field service business -- and for keeping everything in one place, which executives tend to prefer (easier for them to access information quickly in the interest of decision-making).

Now that we've run down the three basic concepts shifting the face of field service, let's focus more on the 'mobility' aspect.

In the last few years, 'customer experience' has become a really big deal as a business metric -- while it basically means the same thing as 'customer service,' the idea is that you do a good job for customers and they (a) keep their business with you and (b) refer you to other people. Both are crucial aspects of any type of business growth.

In a field service organization, your field techs are the closest to the customers -- they deal with customers all day, every day. You want to maximize that experience and those relationships, because they will drive your business.

This is the first important thing to understand about the impact of mobility on field service: it can make the customer's experience so much better, and that has bottom-line impact for your business. Consider some things a field service manager can optimize with a mobile-connected workforce of techs:

> - Easy to sync up inventory with customer needs that day
> - Easy to contact the tech en route to a job and add information or change details
> - Easy for the customer to see where the tech is and have a good time window on the appointment
> - Easy for the tech to use his or her own phone to invoice the customer on-site, instead of having to run back to the office or do the invoicing separately

That's just scratching the surface, but those are all important concepts -- the idea is to create an ecosystem where, because of mobile connectivity, the back office HQ and the tech are constantly connected and also the customer is always connected to info about the tech and the appointment, up to the invoicing stage.

Essentially, a mobile-connected workforce leads to greater flow of information between all involved parties -- and that usually leads to higher customer satisfaction, which benefits your business in the long run.

The 'bullwhip effect' is a concept around the scheduling of multiple appointments in one day for a tech. If the first appointment runs late, what do you think happens to the fifth appointment of the day? It now runs much later. Even if the first appointment only runs 10 minutes late, now you're adding in the beginnings of the second appointment, potential traffic, the second appointment possibly running late, etc. Now the fifth appointment could be 2 hours late, as opposed to 10 minutes.

Not good for the 'customer experience' we discussed above.

Field service managers are countering this concept by connecting mobility to IoT to FSM software. Here's how it generally plays out:

> • IoT data allows the back office to know what customer machines need service soon
> • FSM software allows the back office to schedule those needs plus any new needs from customers that have called in
> • Mobility, including apps for the customer, allows the back office to communicate with the tech about traffic issues, shifted appointment times, and more; it also allows the customer to see exactly where the tech is and where his or her appointment ranks for the day

You can't solve traffic, no -- but you can minimize problems for your business via things like the bullwhip effect if you integrate mobility within your overall field service game plan. (Internet of Things is crucial, but many field service organizations aren't there yet -- and we'd recommend starting with a mobile-connected, FSM-driven plan as well.)

Think about your day-to-day life, aside from your work in field service. You probably do a lot of things on your phone, right? This can include keeping in touch with loved ones, hosting photos, paying bills, playing games, checking account balances, etc. 10-15 years ago, a phone essentially had one purpose: communication/contact. Now it often has 50+ purposes for some people, and that growth in utility is reflected in product sales too: some estimate there will be more mobile phones than people on the planet by 2020.

That growth isn't an accident, and the impact of mobile should never be ignored for a field service business. If you don't have a mobile-connected field service practice right now, we need to help you get to that spot -- because in even 24 months, you'll be laps behind the competition without it.

If you're a smaller field service organization, we'd love to work with you directly on mobile implementation of a service strategy. Feel free to contact us and we'll walk you through the crucial steps and implementation pain points to overcome.

Ready to learn more?

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