



## **Addressing Field Service Management's Greatest Challenges**

**GETTING THE RIGHT ENGINEERS TO THE  
RIGHT JOB**

Globally, 20 million people work in field services. Often, we think of field service engineers working in industries like utilities, cable providers and telecom. But the challenge of managing remote workers and employees who never work from an office, sit at a desk or connect to a computer, extends beyond the industries mentioned above.

### **Did you know more than 80% of Americans don't work in an office?**

No matter your industry or who your employees are - from delivery personnel, to mechanics, repairmen, exterminators or mobile pet groomers - field service workers often represent a company's largest cost. Empowering your managers to pursue company goals and address team challenges can have a substantial impact for the workforce to operate as efficiently and profitably as possible. An effective field service manager can also impact the engagement and satisfaction of their team.

A man wearing a white hard hat and an orange safety vest over a blue and white striped shirt is looking down at a tablet computer. He is standing outdoors in a grassy field with a body of water in the background. The image is partially obscured by a teal text box on the right side.

**At the core of every field service manager's job is a foundational goal: "Get the right engineer to the right job with the right parts required for that job as quickly and efficiently as possible."**

*- Field Service News*

# Shift from Cost to Profit

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**“To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace.”**

**– Doug Conant**

In 2015, competition for talent became top of mind for most companies engaged in professional services. In field service management, this is largely driven by a dramatic shift in the business model for services centers. Because service centers are moving away from a cost-centered model to a profit-centered model, engineers must become less transactional and more consultative. This places a greater importance on engineers having soft customer service skills in addition to technical skills needed to complete a job.

This shift to a profit model is also responsible for servitization emerging as a popular revenue stream for manufacturers. Rather than tacking on maintenance packages as part of a traditional purchase, manufacturers are now creating products that rely on necessary, ongoing service packages to increase service center profitability.

With more field service managers tied to their own profit and loss statement (P&Ls), leadership is tasked with finding new ways of boosting productivity, increasing efficiency, reducing costs, measuring performance and most importantly, increasing customer satisfaction.

# Boosting Efficiency and Productivity

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The impact of **field readiness** far exceeds profit and loss - it ensures reduced friction between field engineers and service departments by improving the flow of communication, empowering engineers with real-time information useful in conveying expertise and knowledge and up-selling services to customers. Verifying that each engineer is “field ready” also ensures that the number of first-time fixes increases and reduces the time an engineer spends preparing for and traveling to the next job. Improvements in this area can positively affect customer satisfaction as well.

## How does a company achieve field readiness?

By automating regularly repeated processes and tasks, managers have an opportunity to reduce frustration from inefficiency felt by many engineers in the field. Mobile software tools that offer features such as **smart forms** preloaded with customer information allow field service employees to reduce the time they spend on routine tasks including: job acceptance and completion reporting, entering customer information and inspection data, accessing equipment service histories and more.

**Optimized scheduling** not only enhances engineer performance and field readiness, it also improves the customer experience. Optimized scheduling allows companies to maximize the number of tasks an engineer can complete in one day, plan the order of tasks by proximity, thereby reducing fuel costs and time spent traveling between jobs and alert service centers about parts needed by an engineer to complete a day's tasks.



# Cost Reduction

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As more service workers become billable, every dollar saved increases the value of the service department and reduces overhead costs associated with managing those departments. In order to reduce costs, managers are improving operational processes to reduce truck roll, fleet maintenance, fuel expenditures, excess labor, optimize company device management and leverage product connectivity.

Field service communication and connected hardware provide service departments a way to **leverage remote diagnostics** to determine whether or not an engineer must dispatch to a customer location. By reducing the number of visits engineers must make to service an individual customer, the manager eliminates excess fuel costs and reduced vehicle maintenance associated with truck roll.

In addition to the efficiency benefits, smart forms help managers ensure engineers get to the right job with **electronic proof and attendance**. Geolocation features give managers real-time information about where and when a report is completed and by whom, reducing faulty or fraudulent reporting sometimes associated with paper-based field reporting solutions. Providing a central means of team monitoring can reduce employee-safety risks.

## Cost Reduction cont.

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Managers that understand the habits of field engineers and other remote employees will reduce costs associated with wear and tear on company-owned mobile devices. If a team of engineers works in hazardous or strenuous conditions, they need devices that will endure the challenges of functioning in that environment. Ensuring **durability and ruggedness of devices** used in the field will translate to fewer device replacements over time, thereby reducing the overall cost of ownership.

## Performance Measurement

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With pressure to increase revenue, **performance measurement** plays a big role in optimizing department processes. Collecting data can help managers trial new processes and quickly discover whether or not those processes are creating new operational efficiencies, cutting costs or boosting profits.

Seventy-two percent of companies implemented field service management software in 2015 and an additional 43% of companies plan to do so in 2016. With technology playing such an important role in many companies' field service operations, managers shouldn't overlook benchmarking existing operational performance. Many operations have used these systems for several years and seen dramatic operational savings, not only justifying the investment in software, but validating their department's contribution to the company's business goals.

### A good system should track these types of data points:

- fuel consumption
- miles driven per service job
- time spent in transit
- miles driven per day
- proof of work
- timesheet entries
- overtime
- scheduling
- completion times for service jobs
- number of service jobs completed in a day per engineer

Each of these data points can help managers discover areas to improve **first time fix rates**, find cost savings and improve customer service. Additionally, customer-facing features such as **automating feedback inquiries** via mobile app gives you regular opportunities to gauge how people most likely to become repeat customers feel about your brand at any moment.

# Improving Customer Service and Satisfaction

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According to a survey conducted by Trimble Field Service Management, customer service has replaced fuel prices and budget concerns as the number one challenge for field service managers.

Responsiveness to customers' needs remains the primary way for companies to differentiate themselves. The customer's experience with their service engineer often accounts for the only post-purchase interaction that customers will have with a brand. Ask for their feedback!

Ensure your engineers have the tools necessary to complete the job, then polish your communication with your customers and provide any additional information useful for enhancing your customer's experience. These suggestions will go a long way toward increasing customer retention and satisfaction. By demonstrating responsiveness to a customer's needs, you are far more likely to see repeat purchase (60% versus 5-20% likely purchase from a new customer).

# Conclusion

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If service centers are going to be truly profitable, field service managers and IT department heads need to understand the business priorities of their entire organization. Because technology plays such an important role in providing leaders with the data to understand the financial impact their departments have on a company's bottom line, IT and field service departments can work together to drive an organization's financial health.





## stablekernel

Founded by Joe Conway, author of the best-selling iOS Programming: The Big Nerd Ranch Guide, stablekernel is an Atlanta-based mobile app company offering end-to-end development services to craft smartly-designed software that connects brands directly with their users – across tablets, smartphones, desktops, wearables and the Internet of Things. Our team of developers takes clients from strategy through design, development and deployment, ensuring timely delivery of the highest quality apps

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