

The 2010 Mobile Field Service Agenda

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We are all becoming incredibly mobile, both in our personal and professional lives. Functionalities that were limited to paper based manuals and then to desktop computers in the not so distant past are now available on an incredible variety of mobile devices that allow for newer and faster, and albeit less personal (brief), modes of communication and interaction. In a professional setting, mobility allows for employees to be on the “always-on” mode, thereby being able to access work-related information without being tethered to their specific work desks or cubicles. The mobile device is the new cubicle.

A Growing Interest In Mobility

In response to a recent set of surveys conducted by Aberdeen, made possible with the support of Metrix, ClickSoftware, Psion Teklogix and TOA Technologies, over 200 service and manufacturing organizations provided insight into the growing role of mobility. While the major focus of these surveys was to investigate and unearth service workflows that are enabled via mobility, survey respondents also uncovered the growing interest for mobility in various other organization functions such as human resources, sales, marketing, etc. In the service realm, mobility isn't a new topic of discussion. The nature of field work infers the need for a mobile workforce that is equipped with mobile tools and workflows. As such, nearly 70% of survey respondents for this research indicated that they are currently leveraging mobile tools within their service organizations. These results are on par with results captured from a similar survey in 2009 (in which 61% of survey respondents indicated their organization leveraged mobile tools). Specifically with regard to work-related mobile device usage, responding firms in this year's research indicate that nearly 69% of their current

workers are equipped with a mobile device (or devices), and that these firms intend to raise this proportion to 77% in 2011.

The increasing interest in mobility from a service perspective is directly related to the need for these organizations to drive higher levels of workforce productivity and utilization. More than three-quarters (and 88% of the Best-in-Class) of all survey respondents indicate the need for better worker output as the primary driver for the evaluation and increased interest in mobile tools. Greater utilization and efficiency help in the improved management of service costs that may be tied to dispatch-specific costs for return service visits or overtime costs for time spent completing unnecessary paperwork.

Is Your Application Best-in-Class?

For technicians at Best-in-Class organizations to have the ability to manage the entire service lifecycle out in the field for expedited service resolution, they need to be equipped with the right mobile tools in the form of applications, devices and networks that allow for uninterrupted communication and interaction between the back-office and the field. 62% of Best-in-Class organizations rely on mobile applications for technicians to access service work information as opposed to 38% of all other organizations. A majority of these applications come in the form of mobile field service extensions to broader service management or customer management systems. Fifty-five percent (55%) of Best-in-Class organizations indicate that they use a service management system-based



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mobile extension as compared to 36% of all other organizations. Nearly 20% of leading firms indicate that they are currently evaluating stand-alone solutions in the next 12 to 24 months. Also in demand for the next 12 to 24 months are applications (pre-built or customized) on mobile platforms.

Companies Are Using A Variety Of Mobile Devices To Get The Job Done

To provide field-based access to mobile field service applications, service organizations reveal the use of a variety of devices. Sixty-five percent (65%) of organizations state the use of more than one type of device in their service operations. Usage trends across all organizations reveal the familiarity with cell phones and consumer-grade laptops. However, with the integrated communication and work order management capabilities afforded by smart phones and ruggedized handhelds, it isn't surprising to see the intentions of respondents to move away from cell phones and move towards smart phones or durable handhelds. An increasing amount of attention is also being paid to tablet PCs, specifically in functions tied to the healthcare and medical manufacturing industry verticals. With respect to peripheral devices, between 38% and 45% of Best-in-Class organizations are looking for credit card readers (either stand-alone or as a device attachment) while 36% indicate interest in mobile printers that can be used to print receipts, contracts or invoices. Forty-seven percent (47%) of Best-in-Class organizations are also looking to fur-

ther leverage barcode scanning attachments.

The reconciliation of usage or return data captured peripheral attachments with back-end systems requires the ability to transfer data over cellular or other networks. Currently the use of cellular 3G networks is dominant with 64% of respondents indicating the use of these networks for information transfer. Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents indicate the use of Wi-Fi with 14% and 12% claiming the use of cradle-based synchronization and Cellular 4G networks respectively.

Productivity Enhancements Highlight Mobile Benefits

Organizations that have successfully deployed mobile solutions indicate that they have been able to eliminate an average of 41 minutes of non-productive administrative work from the daily lives of every service technician. More so, these mobile solutions have also greatly reduced the amount of paperwork required for completion of every service task, from 2.6 to 0.8 forms per task from the use of a mobile solution. The less time spent on administrative tasks and paperwork greatly impacts overall workforce utilization and productivity. On average, organizations have seen 23% and 18% improvements in utilization and productivity respectively from the use of mobile solutions. This leads to concurring improvements in key customer satisfaction and profitability metrics. ●

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