



Eliminating Front Office and Field Workforce Communication Barriers to Improve the Customer Experience

In today's business environment where customer satisfaction is often the determining factor in a company's success, a mobile workforce management solution is a must-have.


If you've ever had the experience of waiting for an appliance repair technician to come to your house, you can appreciate just how frustrating it is to plan around "someone will be there between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m." As a COO or field service manager, you may have a level of sympathy for the challenges these and other service-based companies face when it comes to predicting when a service person will arrive. Even if a service company knows the average time it takes to complete a particular job, there are several additional variables that need to be taken into consideration. For instance, how much travel is required between appointments?

What if one customer requires a special part that a service technician doesn't have in his truck? What if a new technician runs into a problem and needs to contact another technician for assistance? These factors and more combine to create the five-hour plus appointment window, a situation that's inefficient for businesses and frustrating for customers.

In this business paper, we'll explore three types of business challenges many service companies face and show how improving the communication among your field workers, dispatchers, and customer service

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representatives with a mobile workforce management solution can make these problems a thing of the past.

Lack of Business Process Visibility is Jeopardizing your Customer Service

One of the biggest challenges facing many large organizations today is a lack of communication, which might seem like a surprise at first when you consider the fact that the communication devices available today are so sophisticated. The problem is that without the right tools to automate communication processes, smartphones rely on users to make calls, send text messages, or send emails at the right times and to all the right people. Whenever a key business process is a manual process, miscommunication rears its ugly head.

If one part of a business isn't aware of what another part is doing, best practices are missed, redundant tasks are created, and profitability suffers. When it comes to managing mobile workers and service assets, this lack of visibility can become problematic even for smaller businesses. Consider the following real-world example of a customer with a broken washing machine calling a service repair hotline to schedule an appointment to have the machine fixed. After spending 15 minutes

on the phone explaining the problem to the customer service representative, the customer service representative determines that the problem will require a maintenance person come to the house. The customer service representative then transfers the customer to the dispatch center to schedule the appointment. During the call with the dispatcher, the customer spends another 10 minutes choosing a date and time for the appointment, giving directions to her home, and emphasizing to the dispatcher that the repairman needs to use the back door, not the front door, and to please not ring the doorbell because her baby will be napping between 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. Once the appointment is confirmed, the customer is given a date when the service technician will arrive and a five-hour window for the technician's time of arrival.

When the repairman arrives for the appointment and rings the doorbell next to the front door, he's greeted by a perturbed customer who's holding a crying infant. After apologizing for not being prompted with the special instructions in his CRM system, he proceeds to start asking the same questions about the customer's washing machine that the customer had been asked two days earlier by the customer service representative. Now, the repairman has two strikes against him even before he

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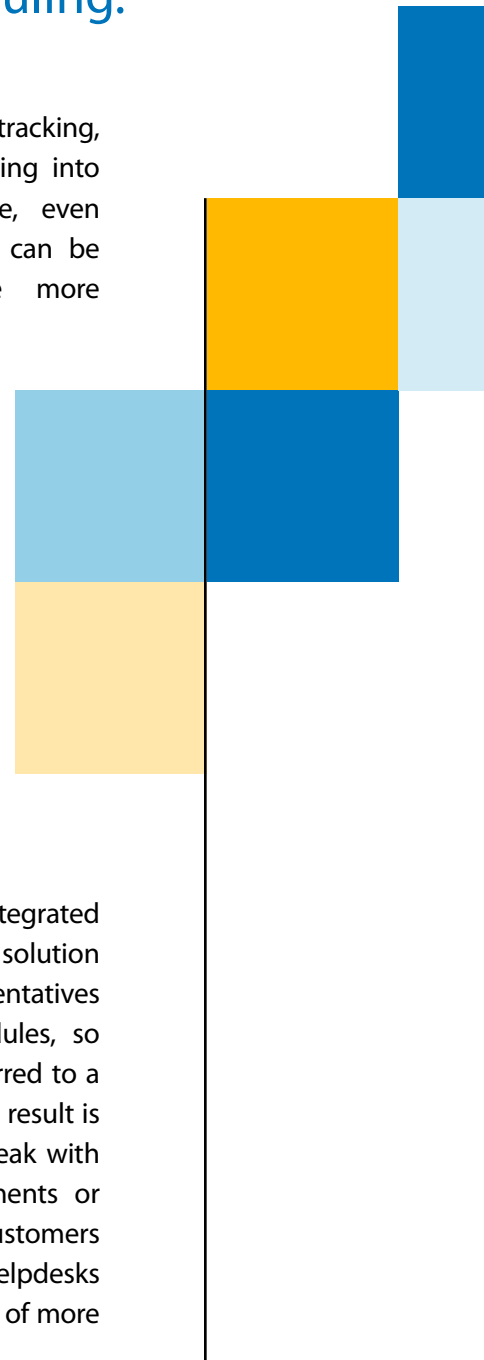
starts working on the washing machine. Hopefully everything goes perfectly, or the third strike might be enough to cause the customer to file a complaint – either directly with the company or more likely via Twitter or Facebook.

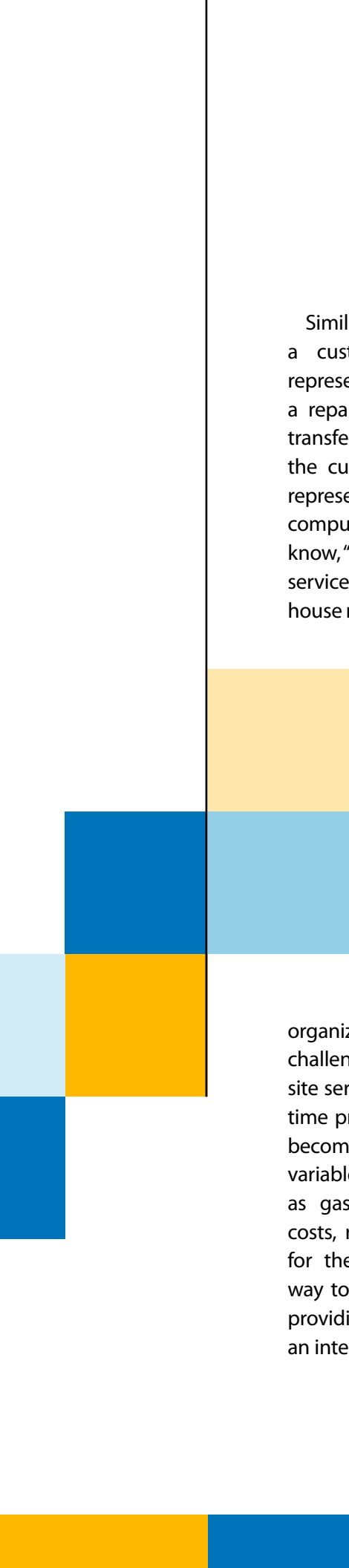
With a context aware mobile workforce management solution, the customer service representatives, dispatchers, and mobile workers all have access to the same application, which includes customer information (CRM), technicians' skill levels and work schedules (scheduling optimization), and is updated in real time. What this means is that the customer service representative's and dispatcher's notes are not only immediately available to the field worker, but presented at the appropriate time (e.g. the urgent message about not using the front door and doorbell is conveyed before the repairman approaches the house), so the customer doesn't have to repeat the same story twice — and napping babies don't need to be woken up prematurely.

Through the use of a contextually based collaborative knowledge app, field workers can quickly search for and identify troubleshooting advice on difficult assignments (e.g. a D249 ATM machine), thus reducing the time it takes to complete

repairs. By incorporating GPS tracking, mapping, and intelligent scheduling into this integrated application suite, even greater visibility and efficiencies can be achieved. Dispatchers become more accurate at assigning the properly qualified technicians for jobs, ensuring the right person in the closest vicinity is sent to a job. What's more is that if a technician discovers he needs a part that's not in his vehicle, he can access an intelligent inventory app, which is part of the mobile workforce management suite, and locate the part he needs from the closest vicinity to his current location.

Additionally, having an integrated mobile workforce management solution gives customer service representatives access to mobile workers' schedules, so not every call needs to be transferred to a dispatcher for scheduling. The end result is that fewer employees need to speak with customers to schedule appointments or resolve problems, which means customers are serviced more quickly and helpdesks and dispatch centers can take care of more customers each day.





Similar efficiencies are realized when a customer calls a customer service representative to inquire exactly when a repair technician will arrive. Instead of transferring the call to dispatch and making the customer wait, the customer service representative can view a live map on his computer screen and let the customer know, "I see that Andy Smith, one of our top service technicians, is en route right to your house now, and he should be there in about 20 minutes. Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Cost Pressures are Driving Down your Profit Margins

Service-based businesses as well as those selling commodity-based products often have to keep their prices low to remain competitive. Many service businesses have the added challenge of being cost centers for their organizations, and they have the added challenge of needing to minimize time on-site servicing customers, while at the same time providing a high level of service. This becomes an even bigger challenge when variables outside a business' control, such as gas prices and vehicle maintenance costs, rise. If raising prices isn't an option for these businesses, the most effective way to grow is by reducing expenses and providing superior customer service. Using an intelligent routing solution, for example,

which incorporates GPS and turn by turn directions with optimized scheduling, a company is able to service the same number of customers while at the same time reducing its miles traveled by 10% or more. Even though this might not seem like a significant savings, it often creates a trickle-down effect, which compounds the cost savings. For instance, fewer miles driven means lower fuel costs as well as longer time between maintenance visits. If each driver is able to service one additional customer per day, it can allow the business to remove an entire vehicle and even redeploy a driver into a new position, which creates significant savings.

Reducing expenses is only half the equation, however. What really matters most to customers — and turns them into repeat customers — is exceptional customer service. Through the use of a context-aware mobile workforce management solution, mobile workers arrive on time (truth-based appointments), they already understand the problem they are about to solve and have the skills, tools, and parts to solve the problem, and they know who their contact person is and the appropriate way to contact/locate this person upon arrival. Arriving at a job with all this knowledge makes the customer's job easier and goes a long way to creating a positive customer experience and long-term customer relationships.

Purchasing an automated mobile

workforce management solution used to require a significant upfront investment that caused the payback period to be delayed. Today, however, cloud-based offerings replace large capital expenses with subscription-based operational costs, and they even allow mobile workers to bring their own devices. Depending on how your business is structured and whether you're staffed to purchase IT equipment and manage it on-premise, or if you prefer to move IT resources to the cloud, there is an option that's right for your business.

You're Missing Sales Opportunities

In today's fast-paced business world, by the time you conduct market research to figure out which service or bundle of services your customers are most interested in and then figure out the best way to package your offering, the trend might be nearly over. By equipping mobile workers with the right information via their mobile devices (using an intelligent upsell app), sales opportunities can be realized as they happen. In the medical imaging equipment space, for example, a service technician may notice while on-site at a hospital customer's facility that in addition to his company's medical imaging device, the hospital has a medical imaging device from another manufacturer.

This information can be quickly noted and the message automatically routed to the account manager, who now has a potential lead.

What often happens is that by empowering technicians with the right information, they can play a more direct role in the sales process. For instance, in this medical device imaging example, a technician may ask a physician about the competitive medical imaging device and discover that the competitive device breaks down a lot. The technician could then pull the diagnostics from his company's imaging device and share that his equipment averages 99% uptime. Whether the technician is able to close the sale or hands off a warm lead to an account manager, the chances for new business are now greatly improved.

With so many benefits to gain — improved business process visibility, greater efficiency, reduced expenses, and increased sales upsell opportunities — why wait any longer to consider using a mobile workforce management solution for your business? The only thing that's growing while you delay is your customers' appointment windows as they wait for your service technicians to arrive.

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About ClickSoftware

ClickSoftware is the leading provider of automated mobile workforce management and service optimization solutions for the enterprise, both for mobile and in-house resources. As pioneers of the “Service Chain Optimization” concept, our solutions provide organizations with end-to-end visibility and control of the entire service management chain by optimizing forecasting, planning, shift and task scheduling, mobility and real-time management of resource and customer communication.

Available via the cloud or on-premise, our products incorporate best business practices from 20 years of experience, and advanced decision-making algorithms to manage service operations more efficiently, in a scalable, integrated manner. Our solutions have become the backbone for many leading organizations worldwide by addressing the fundamental question of job fulfillment: Who does What, for Whom, With what, Where and When.

ClickSoftware is the premier choice for delivering superb business performance to service sector organizations of all sizes. The company is headquartered in the United States and Israel, with offices across Europe, and Asia Pacific. For more information, please visit www.clicksoftware.com.