SERVICEBENCH®

INTEGRATED SERVICE MANAGEMENT

UTILITIES PROVIDERS ACCESSING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FIELD SERVICE TECHNOLOGIES

IMPROVING FIELD SERVICE EFFICIENCY WITH CLOUD-BASED SERVICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS.

"... automatic notifications about the status of an installation or repair improve customer engagement."

In today's world, utilities across the globe need to maintain and repair power networks and their infrastructure, 24 hours a day 7 days a week with minimal disruption to the customer while achieving the greatest cost efficiencies. At ServiceBench we understand this challenge by ensuring that productivity and efficiency are increased, the amount of time required to complete a job is reduced, and that parts and equipment required to complete work is intelligently scheduled with field technicians. Most importantly that all parties have a 360° degree view of each service related event from start to finish.

The convergence of cloud computing, business management systems, and utility providers service administration benefits everyone involved in a service event. As in many industries, cloud computing eliminates the cost of purchasing and maintaining individual computer systems. Additionally, hosted services like business management software (BMS) are easier to access on the same interface. Increased performance efficiency — through the alignment of manufacturers, third party service administrators, installation and service companies, distributors, and retailers — drives costs lower when it comes to utility provider's service administration.

Of course, performance efficiencies are only one advantage of applying business management systems to utility service programs. Web enabled cloud services also open the door to increased customer engagement. Too often, homeowners wait for service technicians to acknowledge service requests before performing an installation or repair; however, cloud enabled BMS portals allow consumers to view technician assignments, parts orders, schedules, and other transactions associated with a service event. Additionally, automatic notifications about the status of an installation or repair improve customer engagement.

This report identifies those pain points and highlights specific areas where companies of all sizes can leverage scalable, cost-effective, cloud-based models. It also focuses on field service management solutions that increase business value, competitive advantage, and connectivity throughout the supply chain.

1. AN EVOLUTIONARY STEP IN FIELD SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Field service technologies have recently reached an inflection point in terms of new field service management solutions: customers increasingly want empowerment, visibility, and greater satisfaction with each service visit, and field service organizations must build customer-centric business models and use new technologies to meet those requirements. Technicians must also leverage centralized company resources in real time, even as they apply their core skills to projects at hand.

Improved field service management capabilities in scheduling, dispatching, and process automation are critical to these experiences, and technologies that facilitate them increase efficiency and overall business value at the organizational level.

UNDERSTANDING CLOUD APPLICATIONS IN FIELD SERVICE MOBILITY

Cloud technologies provide both technicians and field service management teams with more flexible service capabilities and tools for managing large amounts of data in the field, accessed via mobile devices. This contributes to both better quality service work and greater customer satisfaction, if properly implemented.

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The cloud is increasingly used for application hosting: technicians with access to customer data, parts information, and mission-critical applications can provide a wider variety of services while in the field. These include scheduling and rescheduling new appointments, providing customers with more visibility into service information, and accessing equipment data to improve efficiency and the quality of customer experiences. Despite these advantages, however, many field service organizations have been slow to adopt new technologies, citing cost issues and problems transitioning personnel to new mobile and cloud-based systems.

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2. LOGISTICS OF CLOUD ADOPTION AND APPLICATION HOSTING

Customer expectations have evolved, and organizations must increase their agility in all aspects of field service. This includes providing greater efficiency, seamlessly accessing customer information, and connecting technicians with service experts while in the field. Field service technicians must also have access to all relevant company resources when on the job.

As a result, cloud technologies and applications have become important solutions for field service management. According to market research from **Research and Markets** released earlier this year, the global cloud field service management market is expected to grow from $1.01 billion today to $2.25 billion by 2022, more than doubling in size. This accelerated growth rate can be attributed to the increased accessibility of cloud technologies as they become available to smaller organizations. Cloud technologies now typically offer scalable payment models, empowering small companies to pay for only what they use.

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Despite this projected growth, however, the degree to which field service companies have deployed cloud technologies in the U.S. today is minimal: according to **Field Service News**, 77 percent of companies are still using on-premises field solutions. The remaining 23 percent hold a competitive advantage in terms of capturing a larger share of the market.

But the entry point to cloud-based field service management technologies is widening, and the cloud has become the logical next step in the evolution of this industry. **A recent industry survey** showed that 61 percent of field service organizations using cloud-based field service management solutions have found that easy remote access is driving success for their business; 54 percent claim the scalability of the cloud is doing the same.

LEVERAGING THE CLOUD IN FIELD SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Cloud hosting for mobile field service management is becoming increasingly accessible: the cloud is "meant to be more cost-effective by eliminating the high capital expenses of building infrastructure, and allowing users to pay only for the storage and bandwidth they actually use," according to **Field Service Matters**. "And because the cloud service provider maintains all the infrastructure, enterprises don't have to put in the work or the associated IT staffing costs."

Cloud-based solutions also lend themselves to mobile-centric service management models. Migrating IT assets to a cloud-based infrastructure can relieve companies of the management and maintenance costs associated with on-premise equipment. Cloud providers centralize security resources as well, incorporating these features into their business propositions. Since companies achieve greater visibility into essential information across the organization, they can improve efficiencies and reduce the cost of processing information. Technicians can access a broader range of resources that increase the value of service visits. Management teams can reduce the costs and time of logistics as well.

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"Migrating IT assets to a cloud-based infrastructure can relieve companies of the management and maintenance costs associated with on-premise equipment."

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3. THE IMMEDIATE BENEFITS OF MOBILE ADOPTION

Mobile technologies quickly provide business value for technicians who need access to resources during service visits. Recent advances in mobile field service management technology empower teams to both manage field service operations and access critical data from the field in real time as well. Mobile processes also allow managers to generate timesheets, provide parts information, and send updates to technicians during service visits — sometimes even automatically — and they enable companies to collect more precise information about every task with minimal oversight.

Meanwhile, almost half of field service organizations have not delivered on customer expectations in terms of mobile field service management capabilities: **Field Service USA** reports that 43 percent of field service companies struggle with scheduling and dispatching, and they cannot show customers where their drivers are on a map. 55 percent of field service companies claim their customers expect these capabilities.

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"To compete, technicians must be able to update job status and service information, acquire signatures, attach job photos, process other documents from individual service events, and access customer data in real time using mobile technology."

SUPPORTING FIELD SERVICE MOBILITY WITH THE CLOUD

Many field service companies are accustomed to managing mission-critical applications in-house, so they're often uncomfortable with the idea of a cloud provider storing sensitive data and trusting that provider with security and regulatory concerns. But this comes at the expense of better customer (and technician) experiences: organizations that hesitate to adopt cloud technologies miss out on greater agility and reduced on-premise infrastructure costs, and their service management and field agent teams often operate at a competitive disadvantage. In fact, 45 percent of companies claim their service agents' **top frustration** with current field tools is that they aren't fast enough, and 38 percent report they can't access the information they need.

To compete, technicians must be able to update job status and service information, acquire signatures, attach job photos, process other documents from individual service events, and access customer data in real time using mobile technology.

Additionally, cloud-based technologies enable field service management teams to optimize scheduling and dispatching for technicians, track job progress, provide knowledge management solutions to technicians, and centralize customer and project data for company-wide access.

4. MORE EFFICIENT FIELD WORKFORCE AUTOMATION

For SMBs, autonomous field service management technology is the next step as companies become more efficient and improve service events. Still, as of today, more than 75 percent of field service companies submit invoices using paper and 87 percent still receive payments by paper check, according to a **recent study**. In other words, there's currently a vacuum in this space waiting to be filled.

Autonomous solutions are responsive in nature: events trigger smart, detailed responses at the exact time they're needed. For example, using autonomous solutions, companies can send parts information, verify unit entitlement, or even provide turn-by-turn directions to field service agents without any direct involvement from management teams. This autonomy frees teams from either tracking technician actions in real time or waiting for agents to call in when they require certain information. Relying on these inefficient manual processes obstructs communication channels and leads to service delays.

PROCESS AUTOMATION AND THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Technicians can utilize automated tools as well, navigating job queues and marking jobs as they're completed. They can request parts and information while on the job with a single action, relieving them of time-intensive administrative tasks so that they can focus on providing high-quality service.

"Forgotten forms, lost paperwork, re-entering data back at the office and even interpreting their own illegible handwriting used to add to the administrative burden of a technician's day," according to **Field Service News**. "With an automated, mobile solution, where everything is in one place and is filled out and captured in the course of the day, the hours technicians literally spent on the admin of their jobs is reduced." In other words, if a task has become routine over time, chances are it can be automated.

5. GATEWAYS TO CLOUD-BASED SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Small- and medium-sized businesses have been particularly slow to adopt cloud infrastructures and the mobile solutions they support: a **recent study** attributed this to fear of risk and concern over lack of security. It goes on to say that those numbers have dropped by double digits year over year, and that 56 percent of field service organizations now see the cloud as the future of enterprise computing.

As previously mentioned, field service technologies have reached an inflection point because integrated cloud and mobile solutions are more accessible than ever. Small field service companies that take gradual, calculated approaches to their transitions have seen as much as an 18 percent improvement simply by adopting mobile devices and digital technology in the field, according to a **recent report**.

THE NEXT STEP FORWARD FOR UTILITY COMPANY FIELD SERVICE OPERATIONS

These technologies have actively been in use across industries for years; as a result, most vendors and service providers are well-equipped to prepare personnel and company infrastructure

for transitional changes. According to **Gartner**, "cloud providers have begun to create incremental technologies to address companies' trepidation about migrating to cloud services... This gradual approach allays companies' fears about 'getting hurt' as they migrate."

Now, small through large suburban gas, water, and electric field service companies have entry points into a cost-effective business model that optimizes service and the supply chain. It's up to internal stakeholders and advocates of change to take the next step.

6. GET THE GOLD STANDARD

Since 1995, **ServiceBench** has offered a cloud-based platform that manages job dispatches and claims from multiple sources, globally. It was developed through the direction of industry professionals, so its BMS applications scale to all business types and sizes. ServiceBench took an extremely fragmented and manual Appliance and Electronics repair industry and streamlined the process. ServiceBench has existing relationships with thousands of service providers across specialized product categories including HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical, Electronics and Appliances and has considerable experience applying its technology to leading industries including Utilities and Home Warranty Companies. Collaboration, ease-of-use, and enhanced functionality empower all parties to successfully navigate the complexities of service.

Additionally, the performance metrics embedded within ServiceBench drive productivity while financial management tools support thousands of users and more than 12 million dispatches and associated claims annually. Without a doubt, ServiceBench established a foundation for customer satisfaction and long-lasting success in home warranty administration: with ServiceBench, the cost of service has decreased by five percent while the number of service contract renewals has increased by 7.1 percent. The services and partnership ServiceBench offers also set a high standard for customer satisfaction, creative marketing opportunities, and long-lasting success.

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