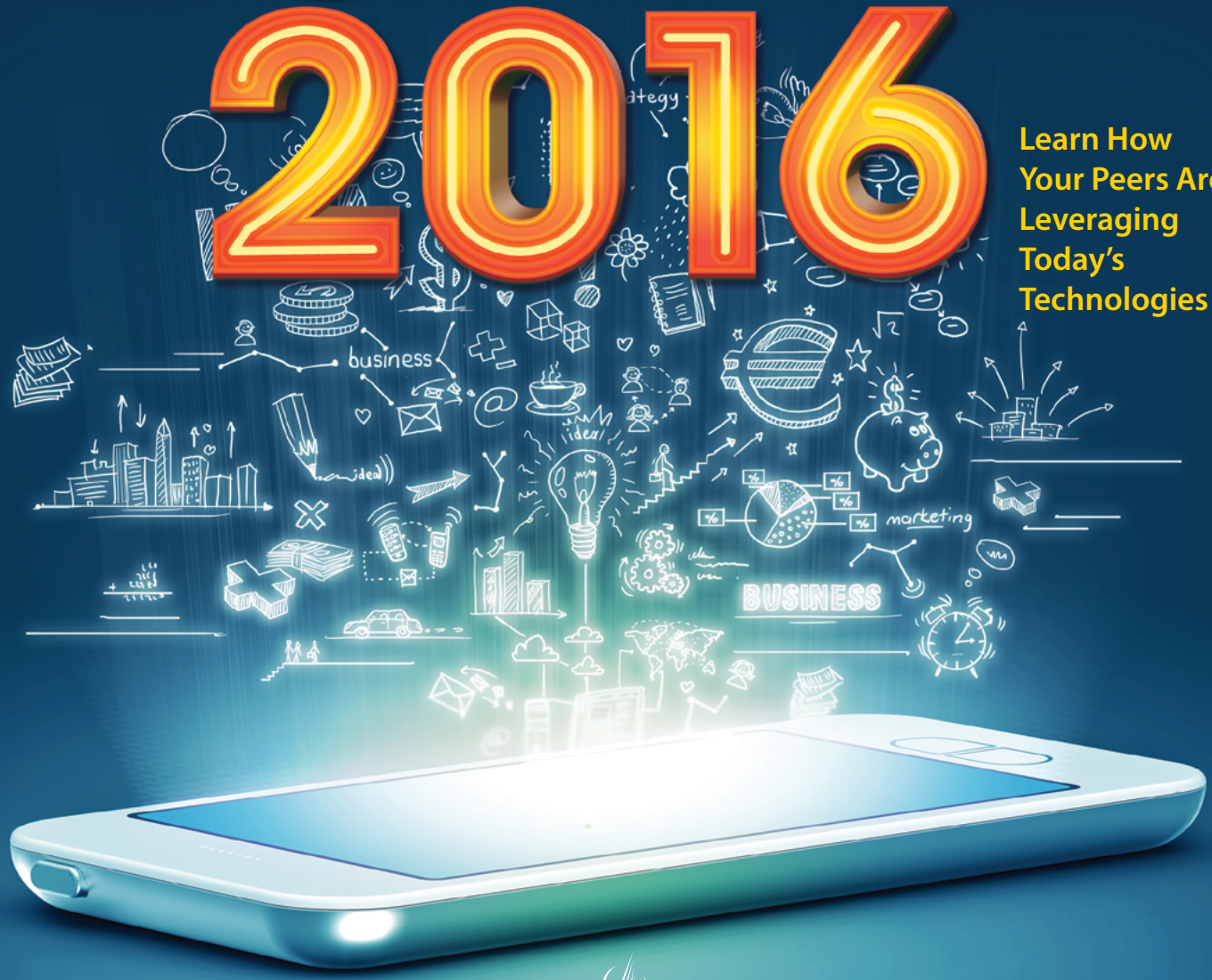
[A Special Report]

Field Technologies

OPTIMIZE FIELD WORKERS, SERVICE & ASSETS

FIELD MOBILITY 2016

Learn How Your Peers Are Leveraging Today's Technologies



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Understanding The Catalysts For Today's Field Mobility Investments

Welcome to *Field Mobility 2016*! This is a report we've done once a year for the past few years to present data from our audience members on the technologies they're currently using, what they're looking to invest in next, and their interests in terms of the current trends and topics related to field mobility. It's always interesting to me to see how our audience is leveraging the technologies we cover, and the feedback I receive lets me know that it's also very valuable to you to understand how your peers are transforming their businesses with technology.

Sarah Nicastro
publisher/editor in chief,
Field Technologies
fieldtechnologiesonline.com

While this report takes a look at our audience's use of field technologies, it's important to understand WHY companies are making the investments they describe here. There has been a huge shift in the service industry in recent years that has had a ripple effect on technology investments. That major shift is in the perception of the service function. A couple of years ago, service was perceived as a cost center and was treated as such in that it often operated in a silo; service organizations often had trouble getting buy-in on technology initiatives or investments, and so on. Now I'm not saying some service organizations don't still face those challenges, but by and large, the service function is now viewed as a profit center. Companies have come to understand that service is the road to differentiation and profitability. As such, a lot has changed for service organizations — including buy-in on the importance of technology use and investments. With that major shift in thinking, let's take a look at some of the drivers for companies investing in the technologies covered in this report:

The Focus Is On The Customer

With service playing the important role it does today and field service workers being the face of the service organization, mobile investments have shifted in focus from just cutting costs and increasing efficiency to really being about the customer. What technologies, tools, and processes can we use to make sure we meet and exceed our customers' expectations? How can we equip our workforce to give the best impression of our company? What's the best way to measure customer satisfaction and work toward continuous improvement? These are some of the newer questions companies are focusing more on now than they have in the past. Again, that's not to say that companies didn't care about the customer experience in the past — just that from a field service perspective, customer experience and satisfaction has become far more a driver for technology investments than it ever has been before.

The Move To Predictive Service

The days of a company responding to a call due to equipment failure or sending techs around to regularly check on or service assets are quickly becoming a thing of the past. The leading field service organizations are looking to today's technologies to help them shift from a reactive to a proactive, or even predictive, service model. This ties in with improving customer experience and satisfaction, but it also has a huge impact on productivity and utilization of resources. The use of IoT and mobility means that field technicians are no longer dispatched for jobs unnecessarily (for example, a driver who visits vending machines weekly to see if they need filled) and instead is dispatched only when service is known to be needed (that machine is monitored so that it's apparent when service is necessary). When service is required, techs can remotely diagnose prior to arriving on site to ensure that they know what the details of the job are and that they have the skills and required tools/parts to complete it.

The Wholistic Approach To Customer Service

The focus on the customer means that field service no longer operates in a silo. Instead, companies are ensuring that communication and collaboration exist between the service organization and other functions of the business — most notably, sales. Integration between sales and service helps to streamline communication with the customer and maximize revenue potential.

The technologies covered in this report are helping companies to achieve the three goals outlined here, among many others. We'll take a look quantitatively at what our survey respondents are investing in and anecdotally at how some of today's leading organizations are leveraging field mobility. We also welcome insight from two of the leading analysts in the field service space on what they're seeing within the industry. ●

Sarah Nicastro

Modernizing Field Service For Today's Outcomes-Driven Economy

The use of mobile solutions to support field service operations is not new. In fact, according to VDC Research, more than 70 percent of organizations offering field services have deployed mobile solutions at some level. Organizations have benefitted from these investments through a more productive workforce, improved first-time fix rates, and an increase in customer satisfaction. However, in the context of shifts to the service sector and significant advances to mobile and wireless technologies, there is a growing opportunity to leverage these developments to modernize field service solutions to effect even greater benefits to their business.

That service organizations are increasingly being viewed as strategic business units within many organizations should come as no big surprise. With continued compression of "product" margins, organizations are looking to increase levels of revenues and profits through service-centric revenue streams. However, service organizations are not immune to similar market and margin pressures with increasing commoditization of traditional support services and, where relevant, shifting the focus towards higher value-adding services and new business models. Consequently, the changing role of the service organization will require organizations to rethink not only their HR requirements but also their technology investments.

According to responses received to a survey fielded among more than 200 field service decision makers, today, the leading market pressures driving investments in mobile field service solutions remain primarily centered on the operational performance benefits associated with automating these workflows and introducing real-time visibility into various processes. These include:

1. Enabling better communication and collaboration among field service workers
2. Greater visibility and access into real time information for issue resolution
3. Need for faster response to exceptional or unexpected events.

The Emergence Of Outcomes-Based Business Models

Beyond these more "traditional" requirements that are business critical and inextricably connected to optimizing field service operations and driving customer value, an additional category of drivers is beginning to emerge that fundamentally addresses the core business model, forcing organizations to explore and evaluate expansion into new markets or service offerings. More specifically, outcomes-based business models and managed services are being evaluated across several industries, with many successful use cases beginning to emerge. Many of these opportunities are being enabled by organizations leveraging trends associated with the Internet of Things (IoT) and embedding connectivity into a broad range of assets. By integrating assets as diverse as jet engines to vending machines with IoT solutions — such as cloud-based software, analytics, visualization technologies, etc. — organizations are introducing new levels of insight and control.

David Krebs
EVP, enterprise mobility and connected devices,
VDC Research
www.vdcresearch.com

These solutions represent a philosophical change in the way that a business deals with its technology. Instead of following the old-school tradition of break-fix, a business operating with a managed service focuses on the prevention of these issues before they disrupt employees, management, and/or clients. The opportunity to embed networked intelligence virtually anywhere is upon us as the underlying technology and eco-system become broadly available and affordable. At a time when machines will soon outnumber humans, this will usher in a period of convergence of the Internet, mobile networks and applications, enterprise systems, and physical objects. This convergence will offer enterprises the ability to combine massive amounts of machine-generated data with human-generated data to substantially enhance insight and real-time decision making capabilities. These automated sense and respond solutions have the opportunity to disrupt established business models and enhance and improve operational and logistics efficiencies, asset management, safety and security, and customer experiences, and influence new business models across virtually any industry.

Although the increasing prevalence of connected assets and the development of more sophisticated self help tools and call center support are reducing the volume of on-site visits — by as much as 20 to 30 percent — thus reducing

overall support costs, the need for field service technicians clearly remains. Moreover, the need for modern and sophisticated mobile solutions to support these workers is perhaps stronger than ever. However, when evaluating satisfaction with existing field mobility solutions, many organizations are expressing increasing levels of satisfaction. In fact, according to VDC's most recent field mobility research, only 44 percent of respondents are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their existing mobile solution.

It's Time To Modernize Field Mobility

This is very much a reflection of the continued use of legacy mobility solutions that do not fully leverage the recent advances in mobile solutions. In addition, escalating costs of supporting these legacy solutions represent an increasing burden for these organizations. Today organizations are looking to leverage modern mobile platforms — smartphones and tablets represent over 70 percent of the primary mobile devices used to support field technicians — and are seeking more integrated and flexible field service platforms that address their entire spectrum of service requirements, from the simple to the most complex. In addition to smartphones and tablets, wearable devices — from smart watches to smart glasses — are being evaluated with increasing frequency. However, these remain complementary devices to existing mobile form factors and carry with them some major functionality and performance barriers to being considered major influences for near term field mobility solutions.

Key actions that organizations are taking to support field service mobility solutions include improving data integration between the field and back office systems and enabling real-time tracking of field assets while providing service technicians with work related information in real time. From a specific mobile application functionality perspective, the capabilities with increased importance include:

1. Improved dispatching and scheduling capabilities
2. Leveraging cameras and video technology for enhanced field-based data capture solutions
3. Analytics capabilities to drive better asset, customer, and service decision making capabilities.

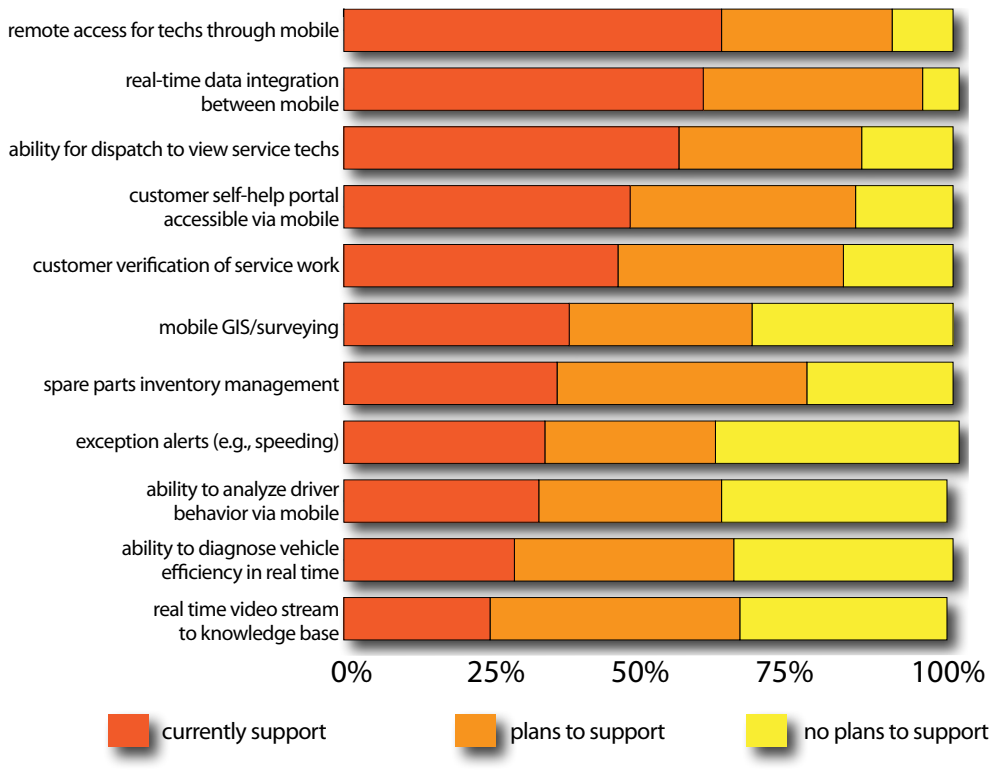
In addition to core technician workflow support, organizations are directing greater attention to spare parts inventory management — often an informational black hole for many organizations — and growing interest in real-time video capabilities. Although the adoption of video solutions is limited today, the capabilities are a focal point for many modernization initiatives. The benefits of real-time video to avoid the need to deploy specialized technicians in the field — often in hazardous locations such as oil rigs — represent a clear operation, worker safety, and cost benefit to organizations leveraging this technology.

As organizations with field service operations look to make investments in their mobile solutions, the most critical capabilities influencing their selection span technical, organizational, and support capabilities. According to VDC's research, these include:

1. Critical functionality capabilities including robust offline support and synchronization
2. Cost of deployment and ownership
3. Industry experience
4. Cloud deployment options
5. Analytics and reporting support.

By connecting things, people, and business networks, mobility, IoT, and digital solutions are changing the way we live and conduct business. The economic impact of this revolution will exceed US $14.4 trillion and deliver advantages to all companies. Unprecedented insight into business processes will lead to new products and services, innovative business models, and greater business growth. ●

Mobile Capabilities Supported



Why Are You Still Using Paper To Deliver Service?

Be honest: what is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning? Turn on the TV. Hit snooze. Tell your spouse "good morning." Check your phone.

I don't think I am going out on a limb to guess that your phone welcomes you into a new day. Put aside the moral implications of living in a world where a day can be ruined by having a phone which isn't charged or — worse yet — dropping your mobile device and seeing it fall in slow motion. Mobility and mobile tools are a normal part of life. I have left the house without my keys, wallet, or belt, but I have never left without my smartphone.

Moving Field Service Out Of The Dark Ages

This attachment to mobility seems to have never been greater in the consumer world. But this is not necessarily the case in the world of field service. There are still some manufacturers and service organizations that have paper-based processes for the field team. In a recent Aberdeen research report, *The Mobile Technician: The Evolution of the Connection in 2015*, on average, nearly one-third of field service work is still paper based. Why is this the case? Is there a reason we all carry smartphones, yet keep our technicians in the dark ages?

Organizations shy away from mobility because they were resistant to change, found it too costly, or couldn't rationalize an ROI. This is clearly a disconnect between the way we lead our personal lives and the way in which the field is being managed. But top performing organizations have bypassed these barriers to invest in mobility. These organizations reap the rewards, but don't take my word for it. The benefits of mobile for the field team within top performing organizations are:

- Access to real-time data/insights
- Connection to other team members, business functions, management
- The back office gains a view into the customer experience
- Management can make decisions based on real data and not gut feel
- Customers get more control of service experience through insight into work status.

These are just a few benefits of mobility. Can your service organization afford to operate without these capabilities? Service has become too complex and customers have too many options for you to neglect giving your service team the tools to deliver results. These organizations equip their technicians with the mobile tools to ensure they have the right answer when they get on site, which helps them solve more problems the first time. And that is the true measure of success — helping customers be productive.

Aly Pinder Jr.
sr. research analyst for service management, Aberdeen Group
www.aberdeen.com

Don't Be A Mobility Laggard

Mobile technology is moving quite fast in regard to processing speeds, form factors, and connectivity. So if your service organization is still being run via clipboards, white boards, and paper sheets, you are being passed by. It is time to give your technicians the same technology tools that many toddlers wield in their playpens. To learn more about the best practices displayed by top performers, feel free to read Aberdeen's full *The Mobile Technician: The Evolution of the Connection in 2015* report, which you can find at www.aberdeen.com. Feel free to read it on your smartphone. ●

Mobile Device Usage & Trends

Over the past year, we've continued to see a lot of movement in the mobile device space. Some of the top trends? Companies realizing they may benefit from deploying more than one device type in their organization, the introduction of more semirugged or lightly-rugged device options, a continued move toward the handheld and tablet form factors, and a growing interest in wearables.

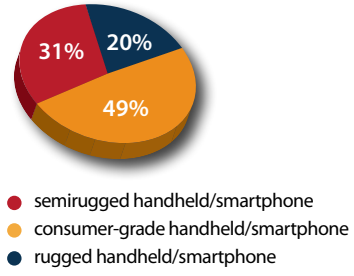
Another mobility trend is the growing interest in EMM (enterprise mobility management). Many organizations realize that taking advantage of EMM enables them to avoid a lot of mobility management headaches. In fact, 35 percent of our survey respondents are considering the use of EMM in the future.

Of this year's survey respondents, 45 percent are using handhelds or smartphones; 32 percent are using laptops, notebooks, or convertibles; and 23 percent are using tablets. Seventy-eight percent of respondents believe that some level of ruggedness is essential for the mobile devices their workers are using, and the number one reason given is that they can't afford downtime in the field. •

35% of repondents are considering the use of EMM

Handhelds & Smartphones

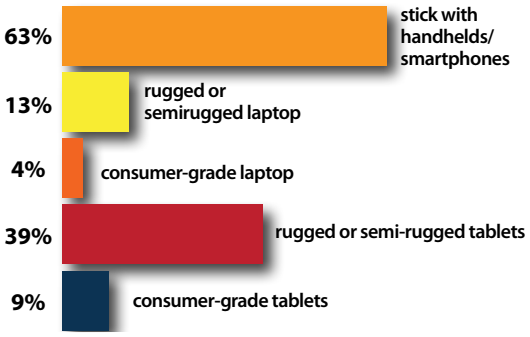
What type of handheld does your mobile workforce use?



Top 3 selection criteria:

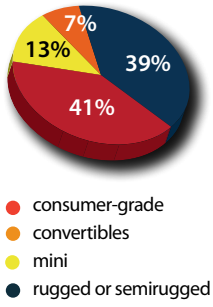
1. Portability
2. Cost
3. Durability

Which device form factors do you plan to consider at your next refresh?



Laptops, Notebooks, & Convertibles

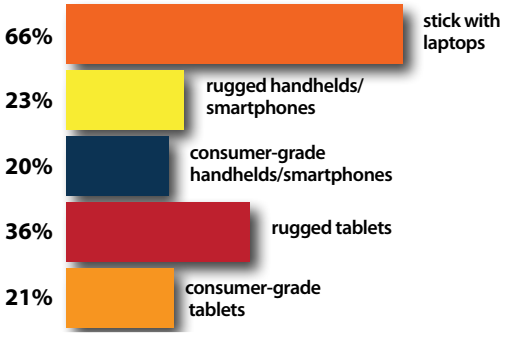
What type of laptop does your mobile workforce use?



Top 3 selection criteria:

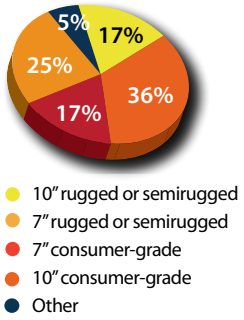
1. Ruggedness/ durability
2. Processing power
3. Cost

Which device form factors do you plan to consider at your next refresh?



Tablets

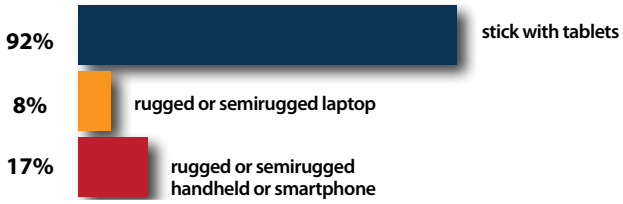
What type of tablet does your mobile workforce use?



Top 3 selection criteria:

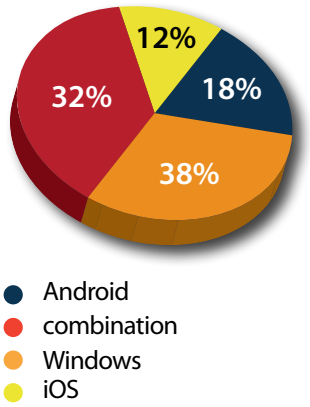
1. Operating system
2. User interface
3. Cost

Which device form factors do you plan to consider at your next refresh?



Operating Systems

Which operating system does your solution leverage?



Rugged Tablets Meet The Apple Watch

Eaton County, MI has equipped its police, fire, and EMS workers with mobile devices for quite some time and has learned a lot of lessons along the way. Previously, its workers leveraged rugged laptops. As the laptops grew antiquated, the county decided to deploy a consumer tablet solution in the hopes of saving money. Eaton County quickly realized, however, that route wasn't going to bring the savings they'd hoped. "The theory behind inexpensive tablets was that if one failed, it would be inexpensive to replace it with a new one. They were considered disposable. Two years after deploying the inexpensive tablets, we realized we weren't saving money because of the IT labor costs related to troubleshooting operational problems with the tablets," says Nathan Nighbert, network and PC administrator for Eaton County Technology Services.

Consumer-Grade Doesn't Always Equal Lower TCO

Since the consumer-grade tablet solution didn't provide the lower TCO (total cost of ownership) that Eaton County was looking for, the decision was made to deploy rugged tablets instead. The move to rugged tablets helped Eaton County keep its police, fire, and EMS personnel connected in the field. The enhanced mobility, improved performance, and lower cost of the hardware as compared to its laptop solution (along with centralized support) will also make it easier for the county to continue to expand the functionality of its mobile initiative.

Eaton County is currently testing how wearables can fit into its mobile device mix. "We're testing the use of Apple Watches," says Nighbert. "We want to see how wearable technology can fit into our landscape, better understand what it can do, and determine its role in the public safety/government application." ●

Nathan Nighbert
network and PC administrator,
Eaton County Technology Services

Mobile Workforce Management Software Usage & Trends

The options for field service software automation tools are vast. There is truly a solution for companies of all shapes and sizes, which is both good and bad: good in that no longer is just the enterprise able to take advantage of these tools, bad in that the options can sometimes be overwhelming.

Of our survey respondents, 68 percent are currently using some sort of field automation solution, and 57 percent of the companies that are not using them currently plan to deploy a solution soon. Software use is growing as companies realize the impact that field automation can have on many areas of their business.

One major software trend we see right now is the shift toward cloud-based solutions. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents' solutions are cloud-based, which is up from 47 percent of last year's participants. This shift is occurring for two major reasons: Small- to medium-sized companies can leverage cloud solutions to achieve the same benefits enterprises have for some time, and enterprises turn to cloud solutions to focus more on their core competencies.

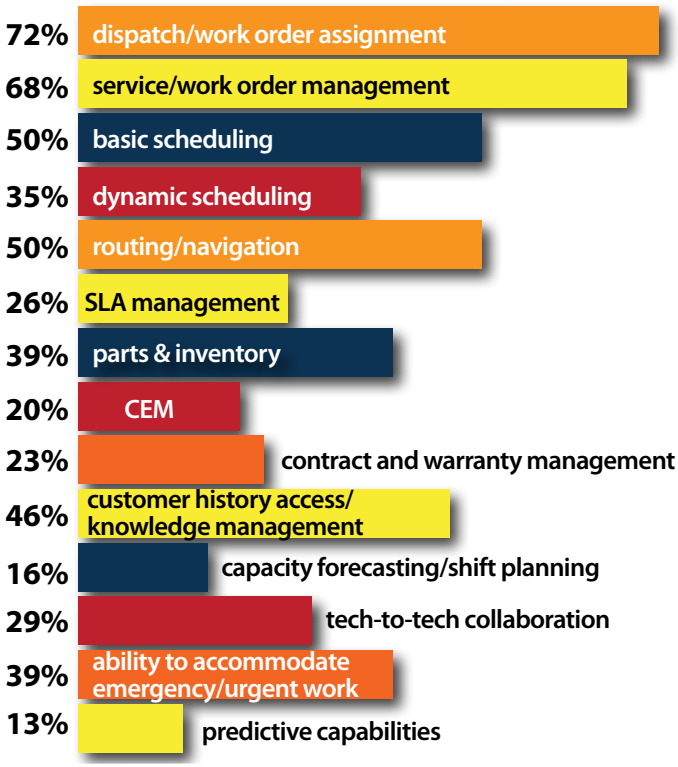
We also see an increased focused on the integration of other data with field automation solutions — namely GPS fleet management and IoT solutions. •

68% currently use a software solution

Top 5 software selection criteria:

1. Ability to customize
2. Ability to integrate with back office systems
3. Real-time communication
4. Ease of use
5. Ability to work offline

What functionality does your company's current software provide?



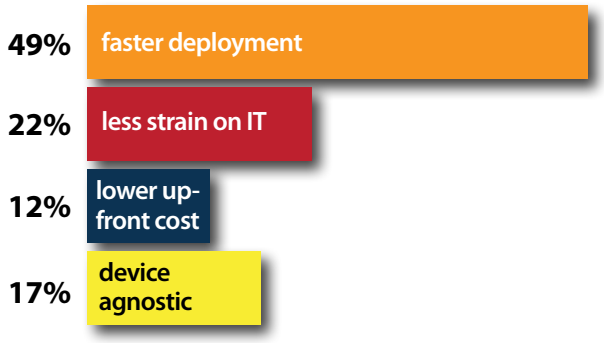
57% plan to deploy a software solution soon

62% currently use a cloud-based solution

Top 3 capabilities sought:

1. Work order management
2. Basic scheduling
3. Knowledge management

What was your primary reason for selecting a cloud-based solution?



Replacing A Homegrown Software Solution

"We are currently in the process of implementing a cloud-based field service software solution for our U.S. field service organization to replace a 20-year-old homegrown system. Along with this software change, we are also transitioning all of our field service representatives to the iPhone platform. Our primary objective for this implementation is to make sure our mobile workers have the lastest technology available to better support our customers each day. We chose the solution we did based on ease of use for our mobile workforce and the ability to easily configure the solution as our business needs evolve over time." ●

Chris Lynch,
VP of global service and logistics,
Acelity

The Importance Of Real-Time Visibility

"We have recently invested in and deployed a global CRM platform that allows our 3,000+ field service engineers and system specialists around the world to see and respond to customer needs and requests in real time. This platform provided significant improvement in response time to our customers' needs due to the immediate visibility of their requests, transparent tracking, and a continuously updated database from around the world. We are also developing a new suite of apps for work order management, dynamic scheduling, equipment maintenance, and time and expense reporting from which we're seeing a major impact on productivity." ●

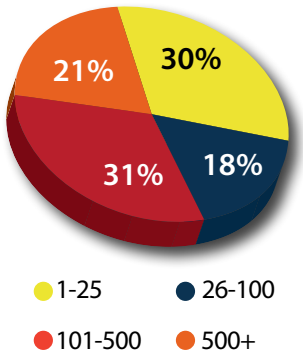
Sasha Ilyukhin,
cluster director, field service operations,
North, Central & South America
Tetra Pak

Fleet Management Usage & Trends

We asked our survey respondents about their top objectives for the technology investments they're making, and the number one objective was maximizing productivity. Similarly, we asked respondents what their biggest challenge is related to their mobile workforce, and the number one answer was ensuring mobile workers are at optimal efficiency. With these types of responses, it's clear to see how fleet management can make an impact for these companies.

Thirty percent of our survey respondents are planning to deploy a fleet management solution in the next 12 months. Below, we take a look at what their top criteria for selection are as well as their top goals for deploying fleet management specifically.

What is the size of your company's fleet?



Top 3 criteria for solution selection:

1. Ease of use
2. Reporting functionality
3. Ability to customize

Top 3 goals in deploying fleet management:

1. Visibility into driver location
2. Reduce fuel costs
3. Reduce overall operating expenses

The Benefit Of Moving Beyond Basic GPS Tracking Functionality

D.H. Griffin Wrecking Company realized it needed to replace its basic track-and-trace GPS solution with a full-fledged fleet management solution after failing an audit. "What really pushed us into finding a better solution was an IFTA audit that we failed terribly. The way we were keeping records, it was just impossible to get the accuracy necessary. Once the dust settled, the IRS was going to level a hefty fine, and we decided it was time to make a change," Richard Swartz, fleet manager at D.H. Griffin, says.

D.H. Griffin chose a cloud-based fleet management solution that provides not only location tracking capabilities but also IFTA and hours of service reporting, the ability to use the driver data for payroll, and the ability to monitor drivers' speeding and hard braking.

According to Swartz, D.H. Griffin's driver productivity has increased by one hour per week, per driver because of the elimination of paper logs. Spread across 200 drivers, that has generated as much as 10,400 hours of added productivity per year. The company was also able to eliminate one position in the compliance department, is saving fuel through more effective route monitoring, and has improved overall efficiency by 70 percent.

Richard Swartz, fleet manager, D.H. Griffin Companies

IoT Usage & Trends

The use of IoT (Internet of Things) in field service continues to pick up steam. Many companies are starting to see the advantages of leveraging IoT data, and plenty more are planning to make the move to IoT in the near future. As you'll see below, 49 percent of our survey respondents are planning to deploy an IoT solution soon.

The use of and interest in IoT continues to grow because the applications for and benefits of the technology are vast. IoT truly enables service organizations to move from a reactive service model to a proactive, or even predictive, model. This is crucial in today's field service landscape. Companies are able to troubleshoot issues before sending a tech on site (which reduces repeat visits and improves customer satisfaction) and sometimes even make repairs remotely (reducing operating costs).

We know that the use of IoT in field service will continue to expand, and we're excited to see what new opportunities it will bring and how it will continue to transform field service businesses. •

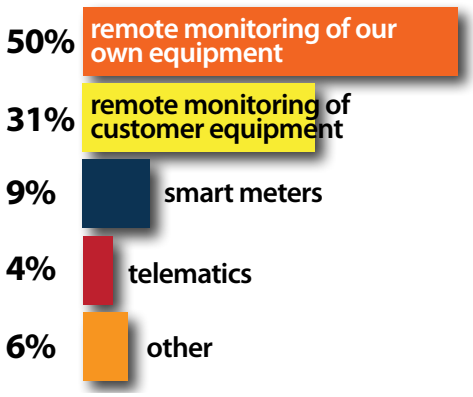
42% currently use an IoT solution

49% plan to deploy an IoT solution soon

Top 3 criteria for solution selection:

1. Simple to deploy
2. Ability to integrate with other applications
3. Partner with experience in our industry

What is your M2M/IoT application?



IoT Is A Key Field Service Enabler

"GE is a diverse company with significantly different service models across the industries we participate in. For instance, the technology drivers across turbines services, jet engines services, healthcare equipment services, and industrial automation services are very different. Amongst all these differences, there is one common thread, and that is the need to support the field engineers with solutions that allow them to do their best in support of our customers. Mobile app ecosystems and responsive web environments and solutions are key to accelerating informed decision making in the field, saving time and resources, and in getting the customer to "yes" faster.

One of our key areas of investment to enble our mobile ecosystem is what we call GE Predix — a cloud platform for the industrial internet (IoT). This is a scalable, elastic, reusable platform that will provide a 360-degree context of the asset or customer and the task at hand to the field engineer." •

Bobby George,
CIO, field services,
GE

Field Mobility Trends To Watch In 2016

By Sarah Nicastro
publisher/editor in chief

There is a lot of exciting progress being made in the field service industry. The landscape looks far different today than it did when I joined the publication seven and a half years ago. The technology advancements and emerging solutions have been very interesting to watch, as has the evolution of service from a cost center to a profit center.

It goes without saying that I'm looking forward to what 2016 holds in terms of technology advancements and industry trends. I wanted to see what folks like you are most interested in, so we included a question in our survey about what technology or topic related to field mobility our respondents are most excited to learn more about in 2016. You'll see the results of that question in the table on this page, ranked in order: predictive software, IoT, maximizing employee engagement, total cost of ownership, and mobile security.

I also wanted to share some anecdotal insight from the people you see quoted in this report on what technologies and trends they are most interested in for 2016 and why.

"I am excited about the possibility of integrating field robotics into day-to-day field services activities," says Bobby George, CIO, field services at GE. "These have the opportunity to improve operating efficiency, perform dirty and dangerous tasks without putting humans at risk, and promise a quality improvement (human errors, waste/breakage, maximize speed/capacity)."

Top 5 technologies/ topics of interest for 2016:

1. Predictive software
2. IoT
3. Maximizing employee engagement
4. Total cost of ownership
5. Mobile security

The Role Of Virtual Reality In Field Service Training

"I am interested in virtual and augmented reality training for industrial equipment," says Sasha Ilyukhin, cluster director, field service operations, North, Central, and South America, Tetra Pak. "Virtual reality training can help to reduce equipment downtime required for training, while augmented reality can be instrumental in modular training for specific parts of the machine. We are actively pursuing these concepts and have recently demonstrated virtual reality training for machine operators at the Fispal exhibition in Brazil."

"I continue to be interested in the ability of technology to feed information back to us electronically via IoT to know what the issues are and eventually to self diagnose problems," says Chris Lynch, VP of global service and logistics at Acelity. "We're finding more ways to leverage this and in turn make our customer experience better."

"IoT is and has been much talked about, so I am curious to see how it continues to evolve in the future," says Ed Alencewicz, director of retail excellence, Post Consumer Brands. "I think there are both business and personal applications on the horizon beyond what we've currently conceived."

"Two of the biggest trends I'm excited to learn more about are 3D printing and NFC [near field communication]," says Nathan Nighbert, network and PC administrator, Eaton County Technology Services. "Users of NFC devices love the capabilities, and it's only a matter of time until more people trust in the technology. Apple Pay is fantastic, as is Nokia's wireless charging. Before long, these technologies will become common both at home and in the field."

Each of these technologies and trends has exciting potential for the field service industry in 2016 and beyond. And as field service operations continue to become increasingly tech savvy, it will be interesting to see some of the cutting-edge ways these technologies will be used to further advance the industry.

Experienced Field Mobility Peers Share Their Words Of Wisdom

By Sarah Nicastro
publisher/editor in chief

We can all agree that there is a lot of benefit to leveraging today's technologies in field service. So if we know technology can help us overcome common field service challenges, why aren't all field service organizations successfully leveraging all of today's top tools? Because it isn't that easy. Here are our respondents' top three barriers to investment:

1. Justification of expenditure
2. Limited resources for evaluation, deployment, and support
3. Concerns of training employees and adoption.

Even after the barriers to investment have been moved past, companies can struggle with solution success. Some of the most valuable advice for technology success is that of your peers, so I've asked some of our participants to share with you their best piece of advice for field mobility based on their first-hand experience.

Due Diligence Is Crucial

Technology investment is something that you should research and select wisely. "Know exactly what you expect to accomplish with your solution. You can't expect any solution to do it all, so it's important to look at many before deciding," says Richard Swartz, fleet manager, D.H. Griffin Companies. "There's nothing worse than locking in and finding that another solution out there is better."

To successfully evaluate solutions, you must first clearly outline your needs. "Align your needs with the solution that most satisfies them, and don't get distracted," says Ed Alencewicz, director of retail excellence at Post Consumer Brands. "We explored several options, many of which had features and functionality that were attractive but not necessarily suited to our needs."

Due diligence doesn't end with solution selection — then comes the pilot. "Don't be afraid to test the equipment; it's a crucial part of the process," says Nathan Nighbert, network and PC administrator, Eaton County Technology Services. Oftentimes companies want to rush to the benefits of field mobility, and eliminating the pilot can be seen as a shortcut. Take heed — it is not a shortcut that pays off.

You Can't Rush Perfection

Expanding on the point above, rushing in general will get you nowhere fast. "Know that the process may take you more time than you originally planned or hoped, especially if you're replacing a legacy solution," says Chris Lynch, VP, global service and logistics, Acelity. "Give yourself extra time in the development/business requirements phase up front to really define what you need from the solution. It will pay dividends when you reach the development and testing phases of the implementation. Also, spend time thinking about the business processes that will change beyond the technology change, and make sure to optimize those prior to rolling out the technology."

> **"Always architect your solution to accommodate the next disruptive technology."**
>
> Bobby George, GE

Along the journey, communication is a key aspect of your success. "You must be clearly communicating the 'why' along the way with any technology deployment," says Steve Meyers, field service director of central U.S. at Vivint.

Keep Your Focus On The Customer

There are a lot of moving parts to technology research, selection, and deployment. Your best bet? Keep your eye on the prize: your customers. "Learn what your industry is doing, and try to get ahead by working closely with your customers and capturing their current and future needs," suggests Sasha Ilyukhin, cluster director, field service operations, North, Central, and South America, Tetra Pak. "This is a very dynamic process, so don't be afraid to alter the course of implementation as long as you have only one goal in mind — the highest satisfaction of your customers."

In addition to keeping the focus on your customers, you want to be thinking ahead. "Always put the solution in the context of the field engineer and customer first," says Bobby George, CIO, field services, at GE. "Focus on the customer experience and the working conditions of the field service technician. Think about scalability and incremental deployments using the cloud. And always architect your solution to accommodate the next disruptive technology." ●

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Which Technology Will You Invest In Next?

"We are performing experiments with emerging technology areas such as augmented reality, wearables, iBeacons, and field robotics."
— Bobby George, GE

"With the completion of our global CRM project, we are now focusing our investments on smartphones and tablets for our field workers."
— Sasha Ilyukhin, Tetra Pak

"The next area we are planning to invest in will be to implement a telematics solution to assist with our scheduling, reporting, and so on."
— Steve Meyers, Vivint

"Our next investment will most likely be in in-cab communication as the hands-free rules are very clear and stringent and our business needs demand real-time communication."
— Richard Swartz, D.H. Griffin Companies

"We are going to be investing in mobile printers for our patrol cars to finally be able to do e-citations." — Nathan Nighbert, Eaton County

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