WHITE PAPER



LEVERAGING THE BENEFITS OF MOBILIZATION IN THE FIELD SERVICES INDUSTRY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As service organizations re-evaluate their operations strategies to adapt to changes in the economy and business landscape, they are increasingly focused on ways to improve the accuracy of data, reduce the frequency of disputes, enhance payment collection and scheduling efficiency, speed up the billing cycle, and improve technician productivity in the field. All of these strategies empower and engage frontline technicians with the ultimate goal of driving business growth and realizing cost savings.

Leveraging the latest technologies in handheld computing and mobilization is a critical step in supporting this evolution and realizing these goals.

A 2011 Aberdeen Group study reveals that, overwhelmingly, respondents in the field services industry feel that mobility is a "very" to "extremely" important technology that will significantly improve efficiencies and reduce costs in their businesses. Specific areas where these improvements will be realized include:

- **Improving customer satisfaction**
- **Driving field worker productivity**
- **Reducing errors**
- **Increasing workforce utilization**
- **Improving service standardization and consistency**
- **Enhancing service efficiency**
- **Growing service profitability**

There should be no doubt that mobility is an essential tool for field service enterprise.

But in recognizing this fundamental reality, organizations must now position themselves with the right support infrastructure to optimize their mobilization capabilities and adhere to best-practice standards.

THE UNIQUE NEEDS & INTERESTS OF FIELD SERVICES

While companies across all industries are realizing enhanced efficiencies and cost savings from mobility, there are considerations of specific importance and value to field service enterprises.

Technicians in the field are dealing with circumstances that force them to juggle several balls at once, if they are to deliver on all fronts.

In fact, field technicians are often the only physical touch point a company has with its customers. Therefore, it is important to ensure that these technicians are not only able to fix the problem for which they've been dispatched, but that they are also able to respond to additional issues or questions that may arise while they are on site.

But field service workers are removed from their "home base," often not aware of the customer's needs in addition to the core task they have to resolve. Since they have little-to-no access to accurate real-time data, the technician can compromise his or her capacity to respond seamlessly, which can lead to poor customer service.

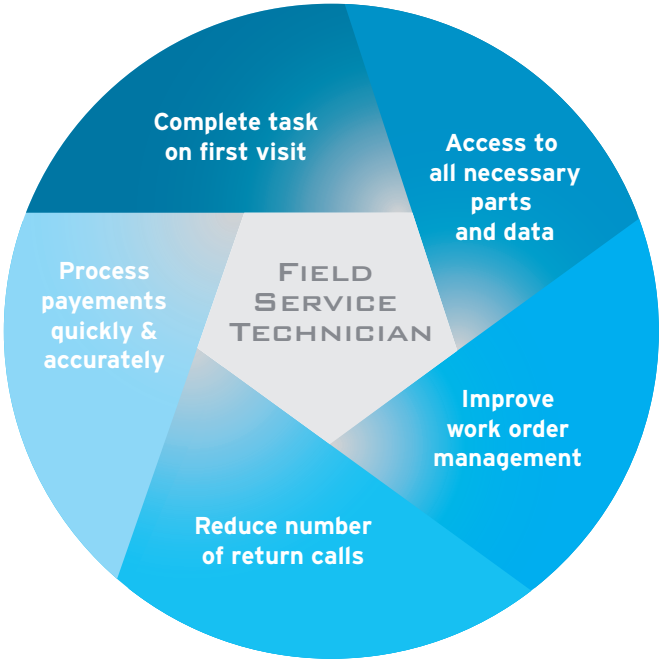


Figure 1 - The competing responsibilities of a field service worker

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Too often, technicians are simply not armed with the right tools and technological support to overcome these obstacles and they fail to deliver on the multiple service requirement. As a result, they are unable to complete work on a first visit, or they struggle to draw on existing data to address problems strategically and insightfully. Because of these limitations, service organizations can experience:

- **Unnecessarily high numbers of return calls**
- **Costs resulting from technician error**
- **Compromised worker productivity**
- **Decreased job satisfaction – which can lead to turnover**
- **Decreased customer satisfaction – which can lead to customer churn**



Figure 2 - External rationale for mobility or "key considerations"

But it's not just the needs and interests of the field technician driving the rationale for mobilization. External pressures in field services – customer demands, competition, a growing market and shrinking per-customer revenues – also support the case for mobility.

So now that the need for mobility has been established, the next step is determining what type of device best supports the interests of the field service enterprise.

RUGGED VS. CONSUMER-GRADE — CHOOSING THE RIGHT ENTERPRISE DEVICE

Not every mobile device is equal, particularly when it comes to meeting the needs of field service workers with unique requirements. There are several questions that every organization should ask before deciding which enterprise device will best meet their needs. For instance:



- **What are the durability requirements?**
- **Is there a requirement for multiple item scans with a barcode reader?**
- **What about a phone or GPS?**
- **Does it support on-site billing or signature capture?**
- **What are the display and data entry requirements in terms of keyboard ergonomics?**
- **Is the battery life sufficient?**
- **Is the device scalable? Can it add newer technology post deployment?**
- **Does it have printing and bar code scanning functionality?**
- **Is printing a field requirement?**

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For the majority of customers, consumer-grade, non-rugged devices tend not to fit the bill for field service technicians. Consider that, according to the 2011 Aberdeen Group research, the most important feature in an enterprise device is durability, according to field service technicians.

With this in mind, a rugged device is far better equipped to sustain the rigors of field service work. Furthermore, rugged devices are typically more capable and feature rich, which enhance the end user's experience.

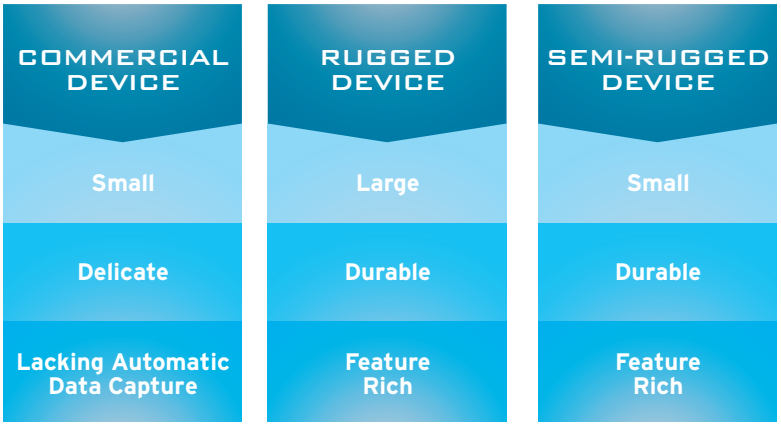


Figure 3 - Comparison of devices

In fact, a semi-rugged device may provide the ideal sweet spot as it offers a compact design that is both durable and feature rich. Ultimately, whether you choose a semi-rugged or a rugged device, a field service organization is embracing the modularity, performance and durability required to drive business results.

> **"According to VDC's report on Total Cost of Ownership, higher ruggedness provides significantly less lost productivity, lower device failure rates and wireless transmission failures, and a significantly higher percentage of maintenance covered by warranty."**
>
> - Venture Development Corporation (VDC) Report, 2010

AN INTEGRATED, CUSTOMIZED, END-TO-END SOLUTION

Ideally, field services organizations should seek a rugged device that provides:

- **Customization**
- **Agility & scalability**
- **Flexibility**
- **Potential for integration with value-added services and solutions**

From selection through to deployment, a commercial device requires certain fundamental software features to optimize its functionality. However, in many cases, these consumer devices simply lack the hardware features that truly allow for an optimized computing platform suitable for the field services.

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Customization
Devices should provide a user-friendly, embedded interface, as well as administrative tools for low-level operations, dedicated buttons to automate tasks and customizable key configuration. Every industry has unique needs, and each field service organization requires a mobile solution that can be modified to address its specific circumstances.

Seamless Deployment
Mobilization is a process that can be complicated, time consuming and costly. Data needs to be transferred and integrated into back-end business systems and employees must be trained. The software supporting an organization's commercial device should provide an automatic backup and restore utility and should also have the ability to create device-side "disaster recovery" or a clone profile, duplicated across devices, to replicate device settings and embedded data to ensure that deployment is smooth and seamless.

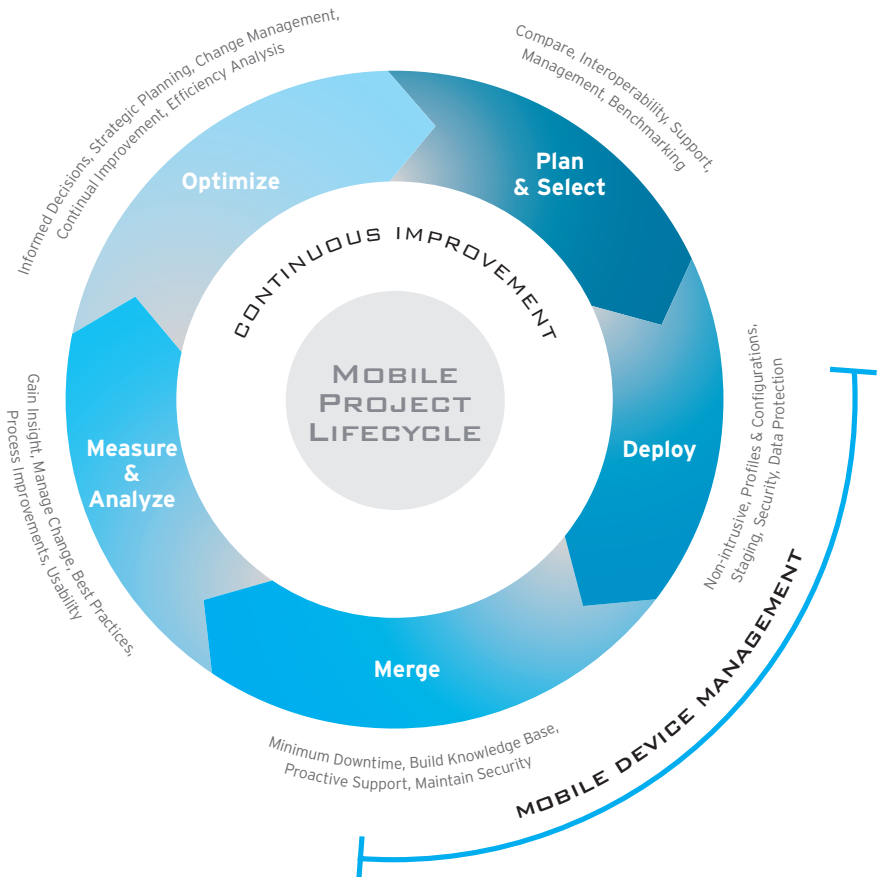


Figure 4 - Seamless deployment of mobile devices

Optimized Productivity
A device is only as robust as the software that supports it. Sensor features, a battery health-check system, data capture solutions and a connectivity manager all enhance productivity and arm the field service technician with the tools required to perform the job well, affordably and efficiently.

For instance, having the capability to automatically move from a cellular carrier to Wi-Fi/docking to LAN lowers the cost of a data plan dramatically. Similarly, being able to anticipate a low battery charge preemptively can better prepare a field service technician to budget time strategically.

Beyond these fundamental software supports, a rugged device should also offer seamless integration through software and hardware development tools that allow solutions to extend their functionality and customization across verticals and for all field service enterprises.

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TOWARD MOBILIZATION — A FIELD SERVICES IMPERATIVE

At a time when cost reduction and technician efficiency are top field service priorities, mobilization offers perhaps the highest return on investment in the shortest amount of time.

Eliminating errors due to manual processes in the field, lowering the number of return visits, and minimizing disputes all serve to improve productivity and increase revenues. Of course, one of the most important considerations in mobilizing a field service organization is quality customer service. The company supplying the device must offer end-to-end support, from pre-sale, through the rollout and post deployment.

By choosing the right solution, field service organizations can streamline processes and realize immediate returns on their investment.



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