MAY 2015 VOL.1 NO.4

# FSB

# FIELD SERVICE BUSINESS

managing, resourcing & enabling your team in the field

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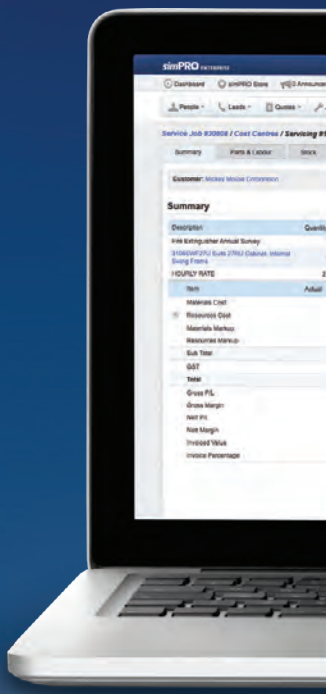

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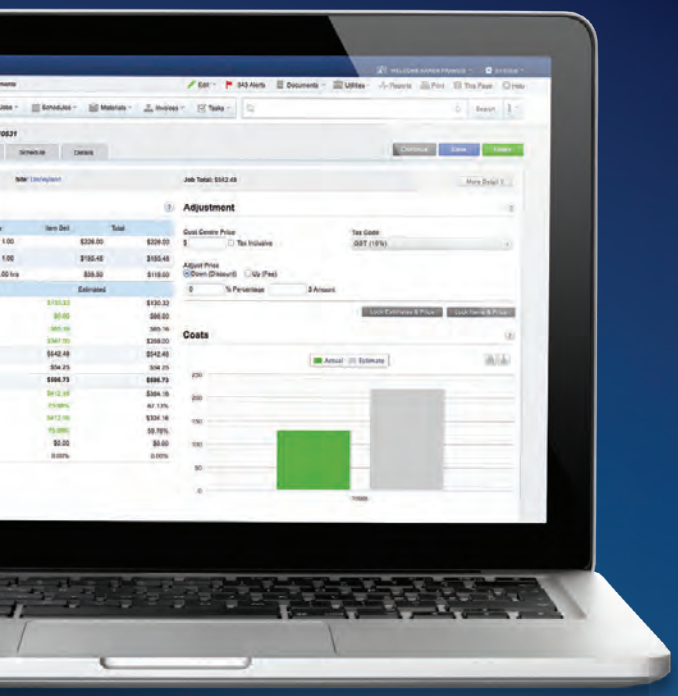

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# WORD FROM THE EDITOR

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Welcome to the second issue of *Field Service Business* magazine for 2015. We're serving up some great content for you on a range of topics I'm sure you'll find interesting.

The age of mobility is well and truly here, particularly in the field service sector. While 'untethered' working may be liberating, managing a mobile force can create complexities and demands that simply aren't a part of overseeing an office-bound staff. This issue features articles on mobility choices and managing teams that may go a little way to making that job easier.

I'm also pleased to introduce our brand new column, 'In Conversation'. Each issue of the magazine will feature a Q&A session with a prominent member of the field service industry. The session will cover professional challenges your peers face and how problems have been overcome, and it will also take a look at the future through their eyes. It's sure to be enlightening.

For more inspiration, our featured case studies provide an in-depth look at products and services in action and how simple solutions can deliver benefit to organisations of all sizes.

Happy reading!

Dannielle Furness

dfurness@fieldservicebusiness.com.au

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# MANAGING MOBILITY

*Dannielle Furness*

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Living in the age of mobility was supposed to make our lives easier and more flexible, but even with technology advances, running a mobile workforce creates a specific set of challenges for field service managers.

In the field service sector, there's no shortage of informational reports on current and future trends, particularly where technology is concerned. While it may have taken business a while to catch up with consumer adoption rates in terms of mobility and portable devices, the BYOD dust has settled and there's seemingly no going back now... and that's just the start.

Most companies in the service sector are looking for the same returns on mobility investment: improved customer satisfaction, reduced costs and increased productivity - no surprises there. The problem is that it can be difficult to pre-empt future mobile requirements and even harder to weigh up alternatives.

Earlier this year, Gartner Inc released a research paper titled 'Top 10 mobile technologies and capabilities for 2015 and 2016'. The report hypothesises that for organisations to realise the full potential of mobility, there is a wide range of skills and technologies that need to be mastered, many of which are potentially not even on the IT radar. The paper is primarily directed at developers of mobile solution elements including apps and websites, but it contains information that should be of interest to anyone deploying a field service team with respect to what the future holds.

## Wear and tear

Unsurprisingly, wearable devices are still on the radar. For all the talk though, development of wearable technology is still reasonably limited. This could be due to the fact that no-one is entirely sure what purpose it serves, particularly from a business perspective. Thus far, realisation of the technology has been limited to areas such as fitness and health care - look no further than the take-up of the wildly popular FitBit device - as well as a few less-than-stellar forays into what is termed 'ubiquitous computing', which includes the likes of Google Glass. Sales of that particular display were halted earlier this year, which Google asserts was to free up development teams to focus on future versions, rather than outright abandonment of the concept.

Regardless of the state of play today, the wearables sector is expected to be worth billions by 2016 as more devices make their way to market. According to Gartner, the smartphone will become the hub of a personal area network (PAN), which will consist of on-body healthcare sensors, smart jewellery and watches, display devices and clothing-embedded sensors. So far, none of this seems terribly relevant to business, but it is likely that organisations will utilise such functionality to monitor and communicate with staff, and as a channel for ensuring health and safety. On the other side of the coin will be the increase in privacy and security issues that arise from adoption of this technology.

## Wi-Fi wins out

New Wi-Fi standards are on the short-term horizon. 802.11ac, 11ad, 11aq and 11ah will deliver increased performance and vastly improve applications such as telemetry. The move from congested cellular networks to Wi-Fi has been steadily on the rise over the last few years, as evidenced by the increasing number of publicly available Wi-Fi hotspots.

Gartner suggests that demand on Wi-Fi infrastructure will increase substantially in the next few years as more enabled

# FEATURE

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devices appear in organisations and as applications that rely on location sensing require denser placement of access points. Ultimately, improvements in Wi-Fi technology may make life on the road a little easier, but will also impact on businesses with Wi-Fi networks as infrastructure is likely to require an upgrade or complete replacement.

## Mobile management

Back to the Gartner report, and there is a distinct emphasis on enterprise mobile management (EMM), which is the convergence of a number of current management, security and support technologies including: mobile device management (MDM), mobile application management (MAM), application wrapping and containerisation, and some elements of enterprise file synchronisation and sharing (EFSS). The research experts suggest that convergence in this market will see a dramatic decrease in the number of vendors offering management and security tools. With this in mind, they recommend treating purchases in the EMM arena as a two-year tactical decision.

## Connected cars

Cars and phones have not exactly shared a trouble-free history. Studies suggest that many emerging safety features developed by the automotive industry have been effectively hindered by the presence of phones in vehicles. We humans are easy to distract and our insatiable desire to stay connected has caused more than a bingle or two since the arrival of the mobile phone.

Nevertheless, car connectivity is a burgeoning industry. Some high-end car manufacturers have already released limited functionality in their vehicles, but now the likes of Apple and Google are poised to get their respective offerings into the Australian market.

Apple aims to release CarPlay locally this year, over 12 months after the official unveiling. Google followed up in June last year with an announcement of its own offering, Android Auto. Needless to say, they are not interchangeable, but there is overlap in partnerships with car manufacturers and electronics vendors.

> Cars and phones have not exactly shared a trouble-free history

The focus for this technology is voice control, although there are other operational options available, depending on existing hardware such as in-built touch screens and buttons, or the available aftermarket kits that accompany the technology.

Car connectivity is being touted as a safer alternative for mobile phone use. Users will have the ability to send and receive text messages via voice commands, among other things, and manufacturers assert that there is inherently less danger because it's a case of 'hands on the wheel and eyes on the road'. Detractors of the technology argue that the use of cognitive skills required to perform voice-to-text commands causes significant distraction. No doubt there will be consideration towards limited use legislation at some future point. Nevertheless, research company IHS Automotive predicts that 68 million vehicles worldwide will have voice control capability by 2020.

## A moving feast

The sands will keep shifting as new technology is released. When devising a mobility strategy, don't get caught up in the next best thing and forget the original aim; if it doesn't increase productivity, reduce costs or empower your team to service customers, do you really need it at all?

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# in the field

## SMALL BUSINESS FINDS BIG BENEFITS

For over 30 years, Pestrid has been providing pest control management to an extensive client base across the Sydney metropolitan area. As this small family business expands, owner and director Gary Eastwood is proud of the Pestrid team delivering on the foundation values of Pestrid - providing customers with professional, safe and effective pest control, as well as excellent customer service.

Imarda has been helping the team execute these values, providing Pestrid with field management software for over a decade and helping the company save time and reduce costs.

Imarda's platform i360 "well and truly pays for itself", according to Eastwood, referring to his ability to ensure that his workers have the right jobs at the right time. Using i360, he can easily locate and dispatch jobs to his nearest available workers, avoiding unnecessarily long travel time.

> **Workers can easily view job details**

With complete visibility of his entire workforce while out in the field, Eastwood has also curtailed workers using Pestrid's equipment and stock to complete personal cash jobs, eliminating stock shrinkage and lost revenue. "It completely eliminated all moonlighting," said Eastwood.

Eastwood has also found that by optimising route usage and dispatching jobs effectively to avoid long travel time, Pestrid has reduced its environmental impact and the amount of fuel his business uses.

With the help of i360, time management is vastly improved. Eastwood's workers now spend far less time on the phone to the back office and are spending more of their time on job sites completing the work required.

Eastwood initially expected his workers to feel as though i360 was "Big Brother". However, he soon found that his workers preferred having i360 because they were no longer required to complete time-consuming paperwork. "Workers can easily view job details and do not need to deal with paperwork [or] spend vast amounts of time on the phone to the office," he said.

Customer service is always a priority and Eastwood uses the reporting functionality within i360 to approach any customer complaint with ease. "In our business, any complaints we have don't occur immediately - by having historical data within the system, we can look back at when the job occurred to verify what's happened," he said. This ability to look back and verify the work his team completed has been vital.

When speaking to new customers about how Pestrid can provide the service levels they do, Eastwood explains the role i360 has within Pestrid, demonstrating how the technology enables him and his team to back up their promises and work with visible facts.

While Imarda continues to focus on creating innovative solutions in the fleet management sector, Pestrid is also looking to the future. With a planned hardware platform upgrade in the works, Pestrid is seeking additional ways to improve efficiencies using i360, so the two companies will continue to grow together. According to Eastwood, "we simply couldn't run the business effectively without it".

***Imarda***

***www.imarda.com***

# KCS TraceME

## LoRa ™ Internet of Things

KCS has extended their successful TraceME product line with an advanced module, targeted for worldwide mobility in the Internet of Things era. The latest development of the TraceME GPS/GPRS Track and Trace module will combine the RF location based positioning solution with the LoRa™ technology. This combination offers 'smart objects' being even smarter, since LoRa™ enables long range, battery friendly communication in a wide variety of (M2M) applications. Supporting GPRS/SMS and optional 3G, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth LE, ANT/ANT+ and iBeacon™ provides easy integration with existing wireless networks and mobile apps. Other variants in the high/mid-range and budget-line will follow soon.

## ANTI-THEFT module based on RF

KCS TraceME product line offers an intelligent location based positioning solution for indoor and anti-theft applications.The solution is based on RF with an intelligent algorithm of measuring the propagation time of transmitted (proprietary protocol) signals. Unique features are: minimum size (46x21x6.5mm), weight (7 grams for fully equipped PCB) and a standby battery lifespan of more than 10 years.'Listen before talk' algorithm makes it practically impossible to locate the module, which secures the valuable vehicle or asset. Supporting GPRS/SMS and optional 3G, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth LE, ANT/ANT+ and iBeacon provide easy integration with existing wireless networks and mobile apps.

**www.Trace.ME**

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# RUGGED COMPUTERS ARE MORE THAN JUST 'HARD SHELLS'

*Jerker Hellström*

Even professional users of rugged laptops, tablets and smartphones are sometimes unsure of what defines a 'rugged computer' and how the various tests to validate ruggedness are carried out. A truly rugged computer is so much more than just a normal computer wrapped in a tough outer case, as Handheld's CEO Jerker Hellström explains.

Firstly, let's distinguish between a 'rugged' computer and a 'ruggedised' computer (or tablet or smartphone). A rugged device is designed to operate reliably in very harsh environments and conditions. The term ruggedised gives the sense that fragile internal components are somehow protected, but truly rugged devices are not simply wrapped in a tough shell.

Tough and durable mobile devices are gaining in popularity as customers demand more durable products for use in harsh conditions. There are some mainstream devices that could be described as ruggedised and are advertised as such, without being truly rugged.

To meet the true definition:

- Devices should have passed MIL-STD tests, ie, the American military standard. 24 laboratory test methods ensure that equipment can handle low pressure at high altitudes; exposure to extreme temperatures; rain; humidity; sand and dust exposure; leakage; shock and vibration.
- They must be highly rated on the ingress protection (IP) scale for protection against dust and liquids. Ratings are displayed as a 2-digit number where the first digit reflects the level of protection against dust and the second against liquids (water).

Rugged computer tests should include:

### *Drop and shock testing*

This is one of the most important tests, simply because devices are dropped all the time. Drop a normal computer and you will break the display or the hard drive. Drop a rugged computer and nothing will happen - if it has passed all the relevant tests.

Rugged devices are tested to ensure they can survive falls as well as high-force impacts. Drop tests are certified by independent test laboratories and performed in accordance with MIL-STD-810G. There are eight different procedures to choose from that each use different ways to cause shock or impact. The 'transit drop test' is the most cited and requires items to survive a total of 26 drops from the height of 122 cm, on each face, edge and corner, onto a hard surface like concrete.

**Truly rugged devices are not simply wrapped in a tough shell.**

© smuki/Dollar Photo Club

*Liquid resistance testing*

Mobile field computers are inevitably exposed to rain, spills and splashes. The second number of the IP code describes the liquid ingress protection, ie, how well the unit is protected against water. The scale ranges from dripping water to continuous immersion in water. Water resistance tests are often carried out by the manufacturers of rugged computers by exposing the computer to powerful water jets from many directions. The test duration, water volume and water pressure vary depending on the rating.

*Vibration testing*

Ordinary mobile devices are sensitive to vibrations and hard drives are especially vulnerable. Rugged computers must be able to withstand vibrations as they are often used in vehicles that travel on bumpy and rough surfaces.

Vibration tests are performed in accordance with MIL-STD-810G. The tests use laboratory shakers set to different levels to simulate being on a vehicle or carried by a person, with variations in the vibrations' wave form, frequency and intensity depending on the type of device and the environment being simulated.

*Sand and dust testing*

A rugged computer must be able to keep out particles. Field workers are often exposed to dust and dirt that would slow key functions and damage components if not protected.

Dust resistance procedures test ingress of small particles. Flour and sand are projected onto the device at high wind speeds and high temperatures for several hours, while rotating the device and varying the temperature and wind speed.

*Extreme temperature testing*

Rugged computers must handle extreme temperatures and wild temperature swings. High- and low-temperature tests are conducted in accordance with MIL-STD-810G. When testing for high-temperature operability, the device is exposed while it is turned off (storage), while being turned on and used (operation) and how it works back at operational temperatures after high-temperature exposure (tactical-standby to operational).

Testing for low temperatures employs similar methodology, but in freezing conditions.

*Humidity testing*

In addition to liquid resistance testing for IP rating, many manufacturers test their devices in highly humid conditions as defined by MIL-STD-810G. Computers are exposed to humidity well over 90% for several days in tropical heat. Many of the same features that make mobile computers liquid resistant also help prevent damage from high humidity.

## How do manufacturers make devices tough enough?

- As opposed to normal computers, most rugged computers have no moving parts like fans or rotating hard drives. They generally have solid-state drives, which are more resistant to physical shock.
- Stiffeners, often made out of aluminium, prevent inside components and boards from flexing during an impact. The outer shell and bumpers are designed to absorb the energy from a drop to prevent internal damage.
- Non-rugged smartphones and computers feature a glass screen with coating that makes them sensitive to touch. Displays on rugged computers use chemically strengthened glass to protect against scratches and cracks and can be positioned lower than the surrounding case to decrease vulnerability.
- A display backlight is used to improve outdoor readability, even in direct sunlight.
- Some rugged computers are fitted with internal heaters in order to operate successfully in very cold environments. The heater warms components to an acceptable operating level and eliminates condensation arising from temperature swings.

In short, every simple detail and small part is researched, developed and chosen to make the computer as rugged as possible.

While it is important to know the ingress protection scale, it is also instrumental to check that the unit has undergone MIL-STD tests. Many devices boast good IP numbers but fail to inform customers that they have not gone through any MIL-STD tests, which basically makes them normal fragile computers that are somewhat dust and water resistant.

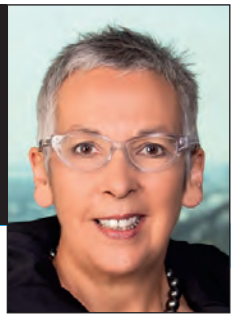
With a deeper understanding of the standards and the tests, it will be easier to choose the mobile rugged device that suits your unique needs. And if you want a rugged computer then do not buy a ruggedised computer. Rugged computers are built - inside and out - to be rugged. No fragile parts wrapped in a hard shell here.

***Handheld APAC Pty Ltd***

*www.handheldapac.com.au*

IN CONVERSATION

# URBAN, RURAL AND REMOTE



FSB editor Dannielle Furness spoke with Steffi Harbert, Field Force Automation Manager from Ergon Energy.

**Field Service Business: What are the primary responsibilities of your role at Ergon Energy?**

**Steffi Harbert:** Field Force Automation (FFA) is a cornerstone project within the Ergon Energy strategic enablement program. FFA is considered to be the single most important initiative to improve field performance and reduce cost. My role is Quality Manager for FFA in Ergon Energy. A key responsibility is to plan the mobility roadmap to optimise the investment and support achievement of the strategic objectives. This involves framing up deployment phases to enable the business with systems and technologies that enhance performance through centralising dispatch and automating field force operations by using smart devices.

**FSB: How many field staff does Ergon employ and what geographical region do they cover?**

**SH:** With over 2000 field staff, Ergon Energy services regional Queensland from coastal and rural areas to the remote communities of outback Queensland and the Torres Strait, which extends across 97% of Queensland. We operate across a diverse, inspiring landscape, from the harshest, most demanding terrains to the most sensitive.

**FSB: What challenges does the spread of the region present?**

**SH:** Ergon Energy supplies electricity to over 720,000 customers across a vast operating area of around 1.7 million square kilometres - 1 million poles. We are all about providing safe, reliable, efficient and sustainable energy solutions to support our customers and the Queensland economy. Around 70% of our electricity network runs through rural Queensland with large distances between communities. Customer density on the network is the second lowest in the national electricity market; the Eastern Network is 12 customers/km of line and the Western Network is 1 customer/km of line.

We have 33 stand-alone power stations supplying communities isolated from the main grid. Our retailer has a gas-fired power station at Barcaldine, which supplies the main grid. From a field services perspective, there are three dimensions to consider - urban, rural and remote. There are diverse and unique geographic, cultural and environmental factors to be considered - as well as connectivity challenges.

**FSB: What extra considerations and resources are required when preparing for a weather event such as a cyclone?**

**SH:** The primary consideration when preparing for a large-scale event is safety - both community and staff safety. Understanding the potential impact of the event helps to identify the field service and mobile generation requirements. Dispatching crews to conduct a diagnosis of the network and make it safe is critical - as is fatigue management of the field force and the support staff.

**FSB: Did Cyclone Marcia present additional challenges not previously experienced in your career?**

**SH:** Cyclone Marcia was Category 5 when it crossed the Central Queensland coast on 20 February 2015 - causing massive destruction and disrupting the community. The majority of the 65,000 affected customers were progressively reinstated over a seven-day period - a credit to the contingent of almost 900 field staff on the ground and a small army of support staff.

Cyclone Yasi, the most powerful cyclone to hit Australia in a century, packed winds of 290 km/h across a front that was hundreds of kilometres wide. Yasi crossed in February 2011 - more than 220,000 customers lost power. In the biggest deployment of electrical workers in Australia's history, my responsibility was to manage travel and accommodation services for the recovery effort - given that many of the accommodation providers were out of action this was a significant challenge!

**FSB: What field service innovation do you predict will bring the greatest value to Ergon Energy's operation within the next 12 months and why?**

**SH:** Providing a geospatial view of the network with current asset data will deliver significant benefits to Ergon Energy. From a productivity perspective it will provide field crews with the ability to raise defects and relay geotagged photos to evaluators - improving the speed and accuracy of evaluation and response. From an asset management perspective, the flow of data to and from the field will assist the investment decision-making process.

**FSB: What do you see as the biggest challenge being faced by field service managers, now and in the short- to medium-term future?**

**SH:** The rapid pace of technology and the changing nature of the business environment requires field service managers to be agile and progressive towards emerging trends and to develop a positive and dynamic team culture. Key to success is a strong network of benefit owners focused on a shared vision.

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## ULTRA-RUGGED SMARTPHONE

Australian mobile brand Aspera has announced its new ruggedised 4G flagship: the Aspera R6. Fast, powerful and tough, the company claims the R6 makes no compromise on outright smartphone performance in adding IP68 certification for total dust protection and water protection at more than 1 m for 30 min. The R6 comes with Gorilla Glass 3 for ultimate screen durability and a ruggedised, shock-resistant outer body. Supercharged with a 1.7 GHz Octa-core processor, dual-band Wi-Fi and fast 4G data speeds, the R6 runs Google's Android OS (v4.4.4 KitKat). The R6 also packs a 3300 mAh battery, high-resolution 13 MP rear camera, 1200 x 720 HD display and dual-SIM functionality.

The R6 follows the Aspera 3G R5 model, which was launched in November 2013.

**Aspera**
**www.asperamobile.com**

## M2M COMMUNICATIONS MODULE

KCS has extended its TraceME product line with an advanced module, targeted for worldwide mobility in the Internet of Things era.

The latest development of the TraceME GPS/GPRS Track and Trace module will combine the RF location-based positioning solution with the LoRa technology. This combination helps make 'smart objects' even smarter, since LoRa enables long-range, battery-friendly communication in a wide variety of (M2M) applications.

Supporting GPRS/SMS and optional 3G, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth LE, ANT/ANT+ and iBeacon provides easy integration with existing wireless networks and mobile apps. The module will be available in Q2/2015 and other variants in the high/mid range and budget line will follow shortly after.

**KCS Trade Pty Limited**
**www.trace.me**

## DUAL-PURPOSE SERVICE BODY

Ridgeback Service Bodies has released a dual-purpose camper and service body in one. The CX 2400 Camper Crossover model is designed to work as a fully functional service body for work during the week and then convert into a camper for weekends.

The CX 2400 is a lift off/removable type body and is clamped to the aluminium or steel tray of the vehicle. The Ridgeback clamping system and lifting jacks rated at 1000 kg each are all included as standard.

The CX 2400 is suitable for tradesmen working in remote locations as the CX 2400 provides a home away from home. The camper function has a queen size bed with a full zip-style canvas and mesh enclosure that operates while the side doors are open. There are six sliding drawers for camping essentials and a large rear trundle drawer for long and/or flat items.

Switching from camper mode to service body mode is as simple as unzipping the canvas and mesh enclosure, removing the mattress and camping items, and replacing with tools and equipment. When using as a service body work vehicle, the six sliding drawers can be used for tools and the large open section for storage of larger items and ladder racks.

**Ridgeback Service Bodies**
**www.ridgebackbodies.com.au**

## RUGGED SLIM TABLET PC

Backplane Systems Technology has launched RuggON's 10.1″ IP65 Rugged Slim-Line Tablet PC with Intel Atom Bay Trail E3827 Dual Core Processor supporting Windows 7 and 8 operating systems, the PM-521 designed for field applications.

The PM-521 meets the MIL-STD-810G rating for shock and vibration and can be dropped from 1.5 m onto plywood on a concrete surface. This slim rugged tablet PC is fully sealed against the ingress of liquid and dust damage (IP65) and has an operating temperature rating of -20 to +50°C.

The 10.1″ LED backlit screen with integrated 10-point capacitive multitouch screen supports glove touch, water rejection, palm rejection and 2 mm hard tip stylus. The rugged Gorilla Glass3 screen features a display brightness of 1000 nits offering sunlight-readable functionality for outdoor applications.

The tablet PC is based on Intel's Atom E3827 1.75 GHz Dual Core CPU and includes 4 GB of DDR3 SODIMM (8 GB by request) and 120 GB of upgradeable mSATA solid-state disk. The hot-swappable dual batteries offer up to 12 h of battery life in the extended version and 6 h in the standard version.

A 5 MP webcam with an LED flash and auto-focus is embedded in the rear bezel and a 2 MP camera with audio input is in the front panel. Seamless communication is available via the onboard Wi-Fi 802.11 ac/a/b/g/n, Bluetooth 4.0 and GPS plus optional 3.5G or 4G TLE modules. Additionally, GNSS (GPS/Glonass/BelDou) is a standard feature of the PM-521.

The tablet is available with a range of optional data capture options including NFC, 1D/2D barcode scanner, smart card reader (CAC) and magnetic stripe reader (MSR) suitable for portable inventory and asset management.

Multiple connectivity interfaces include 1x USB3.0, 1x USB2.0, 1x audio jack, 1x Micro SIM slot, 1x Micro SD slot, 1x Micro HDMI port and 1x Gigabit Ethernet port. Plus, for user flexibility, three programmable function buttons are located on the front panel along with power, volume and Windows controls.

Vehicle and desktop docking stations are available as an optional accessory and provide additional recharge and connectivity interfaces for users working in the field, at their desk or both.

The PM-521's slim design, functionality and user-friendly interface ensure it can meet the requirements of a wide variety of field and vehicle applications.

**Backplane Systems Technology Pty Ltd**
**www.backplane.com.au**

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# DEFYING DISTANCE

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) has selected the Polycom RealPresence One video collaboration solution to enable seamless, real-time communication between 900 staff across the state and thousands of volunteer members.

The NSW RFS is the world's largest volunteer fire service, responsible for 95% of the 800,000 square kilometres of the state's fire and emergency services. Headquartered in Lidcombe, it has 87 offices and more than 70,000 members, including volunteers, firefighters, operational and managerial staff, located across New South Wales. As an existing Polycom customer, the NSW RFS previously used traditional, hardware-based video solutions to communicate and collaborate across the state. To further enhance these solutions, the decision was made to take advantage of the flexibility and scalability of the virtualised Polycom RealPresence One solution, a comprehensive offering that combines the complete platform on a subscription-based model.

The subscription-based video solution provides uninterrupted communication in life-critical situations, enabling the NSW RFS to make faster decisions in planning and emergency situations and drive increased preparedness around disaster recovery. The deployment has also brought significant reductions in travel time and cost, helping the volunteer organisation save tens of thousands of dollars in transport allowances and accommodation.

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"We were attracted to the Polycom RealPresence One solution because of its scalability, high availability and redundancy. Given the highly critical nature of our organisation and what we do, we need to have 100% uptime, 24/7. If the system goes down, people could be stranded and lives could be at risk," said Ashley Van Amstel, manager, information technology at the NSW RFS. "The virtual nature of the solution increases agility and resilience, providing us with better disaster recovery and easier backups for business continuity in the instance something was to go wrong. This provides us with the assurance that we will always have real-time visual communications between our teams, no matter what emergency situation that we face."

The introduction of Polycom's virtual solution has meant more members of the NSW RFS can have access to video solutions, significantly reducing travel time and boosting efficiency. The Polycom RealPresence One solution has also enabled the NSW RFS to extend its video capabilities to mobile devices, such as tablets and smartphones. This significantly increases the organisation's ability to offer video to its entire member base. NSW is an expansive region, with often hundreds of kilometres between regional offices. With video available on a range of devices, it allows emergency workers to more easily connect despite their location or time.

Further, the availability of Polycom RealPresence One 'bursting packages' allows the NSW RFS to easily scale up its number of licences as required, particularly during emergency situations when more people require video capability.

"Polycom RealPresence One enables us to enjoy the full benefits of the solution on an annual subscription fee. This means we can upgrade our package based on demand, reducing total cost of ownership, which is always important for volunteer organisations like ours," said Van Amstel.

The interoperability of Polycom's solution also means the NSW RFS can seamlessly interact with other emergency services that may have different unified communication solutions in the organisation such as the State Emergency Service (SES) and NSW Fire, to ensure coordinated efforts across the state.

In addition to emergency planning and response, the NSW RFS actively uses video to provide members with training. Instead of members being required to travel to the company's headquarters in Lidcombe, which can prove extremely difficult for those based remotely, video extends training beyond the physical classroom. This ensures members are able to be out in the field, ready to take action if needed in the event of an emergency, saving valuable time which would have otherwise been spent travelling long distances.

***Polycom Global Pty Ltd***
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# THE 'NEW' FIELD SERVICE WORKER

*John Cameron, General Manager, Trimble Field Service Management*

The field service industry has long been concerned about an aging workforce. This has huge implications as those with great knowledge and experience now reach retirement age. As the industry continues to evolve, we've seen the emergency of young, tech-savvy and collaborative workers.

Indeed, according to Aberdeen Group's latest report, Emerging Workforce in the field: Tech-savvy to technician, approximately one-fifth of the current workforce is under 30, with the average age of a field service technician being 32 years old.

Field service organisations must therefore recognise what the needs and motivations of this new, up-and-coming workforce are in order to keep them for the long haul as well as to attract the next pool of young talent.

## Flexibility and mobility

Technology is overwhelmingly recognised as an aid to achieving key strategic objectives. It is therefore important for organisations to understand how the influx of young workers use, process and engage with technology.

A key factor to consider is flexibility and mobility. Tech-savvy workers do not want to be tied down by old, legacy technologies. They want the freedom to engage with the latest advances and utilise technologies they use in their personal lives. As a result, the mobile landscape for field service organisations is evolving and the 'emerging worker' is helping to speed up this transformation.

There has been much debate in the sector around 'bring your own device' (BYOD) strategies, where employees have the ability to connect their own technical devices, such as smartphones, laptops and tablets, to their company's network instead of using a device owned by the company.

BYOD is considered by many as being the only way forward for businesses

**One-fifth of the current workforce is under 30.**

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looking to compete effectively and offer the most efficient customer service and increased employee satisfaction.

Aberdeen Group's report found that 62% of the top-performing field service organisations have incorporated a BYOD strategy as a result of a more tech-savvy workforce and 43% are more likely to give technicians access to social media and collaborative tools to facilitate knowledge transfer.

## Visibility and collaboration

A major characteristic that the emerging field service workforce encompasses is the ability to be collaborative, and this is a trait that will help transform service and the relationship with the customer. Organisations must therefore capitalise on this by developing the collaborative tools needed to help the workforce perform as experts in the field and resolve customer needs as quickly as possible.

Collaborative tools, such as smartphones, tablets and laptops, offer users the chance to take advantage of mobile apps. There are a number of bespoke mobile apps on the market today that are tailored to help manage a field service operation and simplify business processes.

Indeed, mobile apps offer technicians the ability to share, store and view job data while out in the field, providing them with a virtual link to the back office. Critical information such as daily tasks, customer histories and billing can be accessed on demand. Furthermore, locations of nearby teammates can be retrieved on a mobile device and a real-time connection provided through social networking, enabling them to seek assistance or help resolving a problem, if needed.

Having the tools and capabilities to work more collaboratively, and having access to real-time insight, empowers the workforce to make more strategic decisions. The speed of communication via social and mobile allows them to solve problems more quickly and ensures resolution is not delayed because of lack of information. They can easily recruit help from peers and are better enabled to reach appointments on time and achieve first-time case resolution, leading to increased customer satisfaction and worker productivity while reducing operational costs.

An additional advantage of recruiting workers that are already well equipped to use mobility solutions, such as smartphones and social networking, is that they are well placed to provide teach-and-learn sessions for other workers. The adoption of mobility solutions can then be replicated throughout the entire workforce.

## Customer service excellence evolves with the emerging worker

According to the Aberdeen Group, the next generation of workers will be different, and when it comes to the evolution of excellent service, they may just be what is needed to wow future customers.

It is now widely regarded that customers of today are much more demanding, expecting a quick fix on the first visit and a valued experience as standard. For the field service technician, who is often the only contact a customer will have with the business, their role is therefore more than one of just operational necessity; it is a role of strategic significance. Ultimately, it is they who are regarded as being the hero when job resolution is reached.

As a result, field service organisations seek field workers who have desirable attitudes and attributes for customer service. In particular, there is a strong focus on the importance of emotional intelligence as an enabler to deal with the wide variety of changing customer service relationships and interactions. Aberdeen Group found that the top-performing field service organisations outperform their peers in regard to retaining the field heroes that they have, but almost as importantly, they are able to find, hire and train the next field service heroes.

These top organisations achieve this by capturing as much knowledge from seasoned workers before they retire so that they can pass it on to the up-and-coming youths of the industry. Indeed, 70% of top-performing field service organisations are more likely to provide technicians with a knowledge base of recorded training videos and images. Furthermore, they understand what values/skill sets are required to be a great service technician. 50% have competency profiles in place for service worker categories most impacted by retirement in order to improve the future recruitment and training of the next wave of field service workers.

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# in the field

## MOBILISING THE GRID

Government-owned corporation Ergon Energy supplies electricity to around 700,000 homes and businesses across nearly 97% of Queensland. The electricity network comprises 150,000 km of power lines across diverse and harsh environments - from the coast to the outback. Field crews are responsible for establishing and maintaining the network, as well as restoring power after disasters, cyclones and floods.

For many years, Ergon Energy has conducted its field operations through manually intensive paper based methods. Work was distributed through a process involving many people and culminating in work dockets being printed out at depots around the state and then handed over to the field crews.

The field crews then travelled to grid locations to fix faults and captured new information from the site on paper. Once the work was completed, paper records were returned to the depot staff to be updated in the central system. The process was time-consuming, and because it was paper based with multiple people involved, it was easier for information to be lost or recorded incorrectly.

Jason Ledbury, Program Director for Field Force Automation, Ergon Energy, said, "As an energy provider we have a responsibility to provide the most efficient services to the community. We also realised there is going to be much more competition in the retail electricity market, driving more customer service work, and with our old processes it would have been difficult for us to scale up without requiring more resources. Therefore, we identified the need to revamp our processes by empowering our workforce with technology."

Ergon Energy opted to deploy over 500 Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 tablets mounted in vehicles and carried to sites. The Toughpads are already saving workers as much as 45 minutes per day, with the company expecting further efficiencies from the next project phase.

After an extensive field trial, the Toughpad was chosen for both form factor and functionality. The MIL-STD-810G and IP65 certified device is easily vehicle mounted and is light enough to be carried on the field. In some remote areas, Ergon Energy has also adopted the Toughpad's extended battery which provides up to 20 hours of battery life.

A critical selection factor for Ergon was the ability to safely and securely mount devices in a wide array of vehicles. SPARQ Solutions worked with partners Data#3, Advanced Mobile IT (AMIT) and field crews to develop a mounting solution for each configuration that met strict government safety standards. AMIT delivered nine accredited vehicle configurations and subsequently fitted out around 400 vehicles.

Using 3G and 4G network capabilities, field crews access information from live data to manuals, with improved information flow to and from the field. The adoption has been smooth and the field crews have embraced the Toughpads.

"We have noticed a greater efficiency through optimised processes and are now in a position to cope with a greater volume of work," added Ledbury.

With the first phase now coming to an end, Ergon Energy will issue more work to the field in line with their Mobility Roadmap over the next five years, and plans to expand its Toughpad fleet accordingly.

***Panasonic Australia Pty Limited***
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## VEHICLE FIT-OUTS

Motexion Australia offers a range of lining and bulkhead van fit-out options to improve durability and driver comfort.

High-grade 9 or 12 mm birch plywood flooring is provided pre-cut for a good fit. The flooring is water-, oil-, light acid and fuel-resistant and the diamond deck antislip surface protects cargo by ensuring that the load stays in one place when the van is in transit.

Wall lining kits prevent damage to the outside skin of the vehicle, reducing the requirement for repairs - which often means expensive off-road time for fleet vehicles.

Separating the cab from the load area with a bulkhead provides a safe work environment, allows the cabin to be air-conditioned effectively and reduces pollutant and noise ingress.

Motexion bulkheads are moulded as one piece from 2-3 mm ABS in original factory colours and meet with German DIN standards. A wide safety glass window provides the driver with an enhanced view into the cargo area.

The installation of flooring, wall lining and a bulkhead provides an organised workspace and the flat surfaces allow for easy cleaning.

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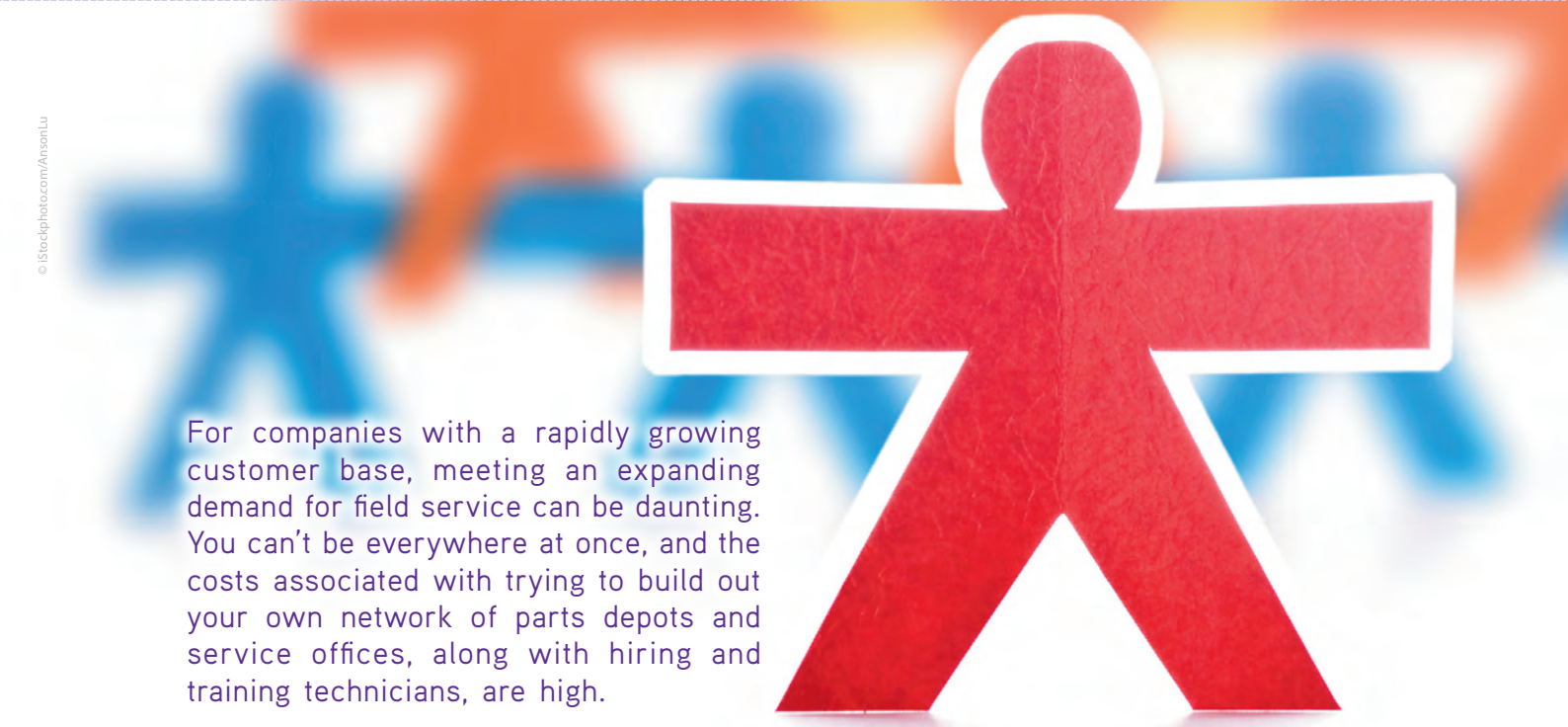
# MANAGING THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDERS



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For companies with a rapidly growing customer base, meeting an expanding demand for field service can be daunting. You can't be everywhere at once, and the costs associated with trying to build out your own network of parts depots and service offices, along with hiring and training technicians, are high.

Increasingly, field service organisations with a widely dispersed and growing customer base, or those that experience significant swings in demand because of seasonality or other factors, are outsourcing some portion of their work to third-party service contractors.

Doing so can provide wider geographic coverage, scalability, improved efficiency, enhanced service offerings and a more cost-effective solution in the face of escalating costs and increased profitability pressure.

Aberdeen Group's Field Service 2013 study found that 21% of best-in-class companies cited outsourcing as a top strategy. 64% of respondents reported using third-party technicians to complete at least some field service tasks.

According to Aberdeen: "The value driven from a blended workforce who incorporates third-party technicians isn't solely a cost-cutting exercise. Field service ... must never be viewed as merely the cost of doing business; technicians, whether internal or outsourced, must be able to deliver value and resolution to customers."

Whether partially outsourcing work or handing over a service business in its entirety, selecting the right partners is critical to maintaining customer satisfaction and meeting service level agreement (SLA) requirements. Hiring third-party providers (3PPs) requires total accountability and the ability to monitor and manage performance, but maintaining visibility into other operations can be difficult.

## The benefits and challenges

Effective outsourcing can provide a number of benefits, including reductions in call centre and contract/warranty administration costs, labour reduction and lower costs of logistics network and spare parts management.

3PPs can help meet fluctuating service needs, expand a company's service footprint and improve response times by flexibly expanding the technician force.

According to Aberdeen, more than half of respondents reported positive impacts from outsourcing relative to geographic service area coverage, cost of service delivery, customer service response times and service differentiation.

Outsourcing service operations can be challenging, however, and those challenges can manifest themselves on multiple fronts. According to Aberdeen, 42% of respondents cited service parts planning/forecasting as the most difficult element to outsource, followed by logistics network management (20%) and field labour (18%).

Maintaining the overall quality of customer service is critical, but service delivery can be inconsistent if the right controls are not put into place. Accountability and performance management can be

> **Maintaining visibility into other operations can be difficult.**

especially challenging when multiple tiers of contractors and subcontractors participate. Using 3PPs means establishing ways to track processes and controls across the network.

Monitoring these processes means connectivity becomes even more important. Service organisations must be able to quickly communicate information electronically to their partners and receive data back in real time or near real time in order to ensure customer service levels are maintained and to provide valuable data to other segments of the business.

A key component of managing 3PPs is the ability to measure and manage KPIs, such as SLA compliance, service costs, first-call resolution rate, mean time of repair and profitability. To gather this, workers must be able to capture customer, product, equipment and technician data, and transfer that information to stakeholders across the network.

## Connecting third-party providers

According to Aberdeen, companies are: investing in mobile tools that provide technicians with better access (55%), developing standardised scheduling processes (49%), improving forecasting and planning for service demand (44%), making captured service information available across the enterprise (38%) and developing real-time visibility into field assets (35%).

Third-party vendors also need a window into operations in order to schedule jobs efficiently, retrieve critical customer/asset data and effectively communicate back to the primary vendor. Using field service automation software with 3PP management capability ensures real-time, two-way communication with 3PPs that provides that visibility.

Using an automated vendor and third-party management platform, service companies can send service requests directly into a 3PP's dispatching system. These solutions include portal and mobile functionality that serves as a single point of information for all full-time and outsourced stakeholders. Companies can then gain the necessary level of up- and downstream visibility and accountability critical to service network automation and optimisation.

This type of software solution provides all parties with parts and equipment tracking and management capability. Proper connectivity means service organisations can allow partners to use consigned parts inventories, their own inventory or the service organisation's inventory, and to track the usage of those parts.

A 3PP can access additional information so that technicians are armed with the most complete information available about the asset or customer. They can tap into troubleshooting guides and repair statistics, and call centre staff can use the same technology to access scripts and questions and predefined answers, to better service customers during the initial call.

In the field, technicians can view all of the notes related to the customer or asset and have full visibility into equipment history, service notes and other data. They can update service orders in real time, open new orders and view upcoming jobs.

Service agents can accept calls and provide status updates so that both the 3PP and the primary service organisation are kept informed. They can also be alerted if a call risks slipping out of compliance with the SLA.

Third-party management solutions help service organisations respond faster to service calls using local resources; automate access to dispatch, repair and other information; automate administrative tasks such as documenting failures, noting corrective actions, enabling parts returns and initiating inventory replenishment; and help provide more uniform service delivery.

Outsourcing service activities to third-party providers can provide service organisations with greater geographic reach, reduced costs, a wider range of service capabilities and a more flexible technician workforce that can be expanded or contracted based on demand levels. However, doing so requires careful partner selection and rigorous control over processes, procedures and data, in order to ensure SLA compliance and uniform service delivery.

Deploying a mobile technology and field service management solution that combines vendor and third-party management capabilities can provide the visibility and management tools necessary to a successful service outsourcing program. Using these tools allows the third-party providers greater access to customer and asset data in order to provide optimal service, while giving the primary service organisation the ability to track work orders and inventory in real time, improve parts and service demand forecasting, and ensure quality service for each client.

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# WHY THE CLOUD IS THE FUTURE OF FIELD SERVICES

*Brad Halcrow, PR & Communications Manager*
*simPRO Software*

When people think of industries being revolutionised by cloud computing they might consider banking and finance, telecommunications or online entertainment, but what about plumbing, landscaping, electrical contracting or air-conditioning repairs?

While hands-on trades may seem a world away from the desk jockeys with computers who are often portrayed using the cloud, the truth is that cloud computing is having a much bigger impact on the $15 billion worldwide field services sector than many people realise.

Around the world, field service contractors like plumbers, electricians, maintenance technicians and even security guards are using the cloud to make their businesses far more efficient and profitable.

They are using it to schedule their jobs and be scheduled, to check their service history for a particular client before a site visit, to access important information such as technical manuals and parts catalogues, to order parts, to invoice clients, to prove their bills are accurate and to schedule the next site visit; all while they are supplying crucial information back to headquarters. Instant provision of site-specific information is invaluable, as companies can then use it to improve business efficiencies, streamline accounting and tailor marketing campaigns to meet the individual needs of clients.

Most importantly, all of this activity can be carried out in the field using a lightweight, robust and low-cost smart device such as a phone or tablet.

With benefits such as these, it is obvious why more and more CEOs and company owners are switching over to cloud-based enterprise systems.

Of course, many of these benefits could be realised using a tablet or smartphone linked via the internet to an enterprise server in the more traditional way. So, why the shift to the cloud?

While the experts can't seem to agree on exactly what the cloud is by definition, the best description I have seen is that cloud computing is a fundamental shift of the IT industry from a product-based one - where IT infrastructure and software is bought and held in-house, to a service-based industry - where most of this capability is rented from off-site providers in the same way that we purchase the services of utilities such as power and water.

This significant change isn't based on any particular piece of technology but represents a major cultural shift by IT consumers. As with most noteworthy industry transformations, it took a while for the concept to gel with end users. Long used to a culture of physical 'ownership' when it came to IT, business owners and managers found the intangible nature of cloud computing at best unsettling and, at worst, an avenue that potentially left businesses open to cyber-attack.

Fast forward a few years and the uptake of cloud solutions including software as a service (SaaS) is finally gaining serious traction. And it's no wonder - the advantages of the cloud are many and perhaps the greatest of these is vastly reduced costs. Cloud-based solutions save money for a number of reasons: they require little capital outlay for equipment and take no space on the company's property, yet they offer access to massive data storage and computing power.

Similar to power, water or telecommunications company charges, cloud services are priced by usage. The pay-as-you-go model effectively turns computing from a risky, front-loaded capital expense to a measurable ongoing operating expense, which greatly simplifies budgeting and ties it to revenues.

It spares companies the major expense and inevitable disruption caused by company-wide software updates and the costs associated with maintaining secure servers in a corporate data room on company premises. In most cases, cloud-based software updates automatically at little or no charge to users and with minimum downtime.

Cloud computing makes it easier than ever for field services companies to easily access the benefit of a comprehensive enterprise software system. The shift away from a product-based IT business model towards the cloud guarantees that the days of handwritten invoices and scheduling by whiteboard are all but over.

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# SMARTER SERVICES DELIVERS INSIGHTS

*Sumair Dutta - Chief Customer Officer, The Service Council*

The Service Council hosted the 4th edition of our Smarter Services Symposium in San Diego in March, featuring presentations led by organisations such as Zappos, HP, Safelite Autoglass, KONE Elevator, Ingersoll-Rand, Xerox, Vivint and more. We were fortunate to welcome senior executives from the San Francisco Giants and the San Diego Padres to share perspectives on service as it ties to the fan experience in hospitality and sports.

There was so much important information shared over the three days, which we are making available through a library of resources available from www.servicecouncil.com/symposium2015, and following is my attempt to summarise the top five takeaways.

1. A talent challenge awaits - We've documented the mounting challenge when it comes to a retiring service workforce. 70% of organisations are expecting an exodus of workers due to retirement in the next 10 years. While increasing efficiency and investment in automation may eliminate some service-related vacancies on the front-lines, there will still be a major shortage felt in supporting service demand. In addition, organisations are changing the hiring and training protocols of their front-line service agents to focus on broader customer management. We also hear a lot from organisations around the redistribution of skilled workers to higher-level support functions to assist front-line agents and customers in times of service recovery.

2. A crisis of information - Organisations have spent a lot of time over the last three to five years building listening platforms. These range from Voice of Customer (VoC) initiatives, social media investments or even remote monitoring. While companies have become very good at gathering information, very few have been able to consistently drive insight from that data. The areas of analytics and business intelligence will continue to see a surge in investment, both as it relates to technology solutions as well as the search for talent.

3. Customer value communication is a major struggle - The Internet of Things (IoT) and remote monitoring was a consistent theme of discussion across the event. Organisations that have invested in IoT have seen tremendous returns in terms of service business results. Yet, these haven't necessarily translated into better customer results and increased customer loyalty scores. The issue is that while IoT enables predictive service and/or more effective reactive service, it reduces the visibility of the service organisation in the eyes of the customer. It presents a communication challenge to servicing organisations to continue to make customers aware of the value presented in a service relationship. Does this value take the form of loss aversion, higher service performance or customised offerings? That's yet to be determined as different customers align with different messages.

4. Collaboration: a long way to go - There is still a basic lack of process in linking service with other business groups. While there is maturity in linking service and sales to promote revenue opportunities, there is a big gap in connecting service with IT, product design, engineering and marketing. The first step to enhancing collaboration is in building a process that links various groups. The next step is to build alignment tied to the customers' needs and the third is to use data as the grounds of collaboration.

5. Service and customer experience design is an underappreciated discipline - Organisations have gone back to the drawing board to build new services for customer value and revenue generation. Yet, very few actually take a further step back and re-evaluate the design of their service offerings and, more importantly, the design of the experience that their customers go through when seeking service or information. Design is an underappreciated discipline, one that can really help maximise effectiveness.

We're at an interesting juncture in the transformation of service organisations. Leaders are looking to find the appropriate mix between automation with human interaction, self-service with assisted service, customer satisfaction with profitability. These are all themes that we will look to dive into over the coming year of research and collaboration.

## MOBILE SCANNERS

Honeywell has unveiled an innovative suite of mobile barcode scanners, designed to empower retailers to better connect with customers and minimise checkout time.

Extending Honeywell's leadership in engineering scanning solutions for the world's leading retailers, the four new Voyager scanners are designed with the future of retail in mind, helping to reduce checkout time, speed up loyalty program enrolment and age verification, and unlock the full potential of the customer's mobile shopping experience.

The Voyager 1202G is Honeywell's first of many battery-free wireless laser scanners, and provides the same aggressive linear barcode scanning performance as a wired scanner but without the long recharge time, maintenance or environmental disposal issues associated with traditional batteries.

The Voyager 1602g pocket 2D Bluetooth scanner packs high-performance area-imaging technology into an elegant and compact form factor, making it a suitable scanning companion to tablet-based retail POS systems.

For retailers that anticipate the need for area imaging in the future, such as scanning coupons from customers' smartphone screens, the Voyager 1450g tethered scanner and Voyager 1452g wireless scanner deliver powerful linear barcode scanning out of the box. Both scanners are available for upgrade at a competitive price to enable QR code and 2D barcode reading at the initial time of purchase or at any point in the future.

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CASE STUDY

# CLOUD TECHNOLOGY HELPS TRIPLE VOLUME OF WORK

Through funding made available via the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, a well-known national charity's Gold Coast brand is providing basic support services to qualifying clients and their carers to assist them to continue living independently at home. One of the key services provided is garden maintenance. In June 2014, the Australian Care & Support Network won the tender to provide Lawn Mow and Yard Tidy services to clients of the charity.

Nicki and Tony Hale founded ACSN after selling their 120 employee-strong communications company in the UK and moving to Australia. Despite the ACSN team having minimal gardening experience, their background in running high-volume, field-based work management operations was the key to their success. Importantly, they also presented a strong technical capability in the form of Fleetmatics WORK, aimed at streamlining administration and field-worker communication.

A newly formed business, ACSN needed to find and deploy a capable job management system that would handle tracking, booking, scheduling and then invoicing a large number of jobs for a multiple-user base.

"We needed a platform that would handle high volumes of enquiries, but that could also incorporate custom processes and criteria," said Tony. "There are strict reporting and audit requirements, so we had to make sure we could accommodate this."

To therefore further support ACSN's data capabilities, they engaged IT consultant Steve Voegt of Central Business Data after an introduction from Fleetmatics WORK support. The flexible Fleetmatics WORK API meant Steve was able to develop a custom portal through which Tony and his team could quickly perform repetitive functions.

An example is the one-click quality audit job creator, which presents admin staff with a list of relevant fields of finished jobs that they can quickly review and then click to have their status changed to completed. The creator can also add an invoice item (based on field workers' timestamps and start/finish questions) and automatically create and dispatch a new job populated with all the information required for an auditor to attend a site and review and report on the work done.

Using the API and some custom development enabled ACSN to scale up its operations with only a minor increase in administrative overheads. CB Data also provide ACSN with dynamic financial reporting and tracking.

The quality audit process ensures every job is essential for minimising fraud, which is a risk wherever a government subsidy or funding is provided. It also enables ACSN to collect rebooking requests on behalf of their client, taking pressure off their call centres, which ultimately resulted in a large increase in sales. Since ACSN has taken on the management of the business and implemented Fleetmatics WORK, the work volume has increased by over 350%.

But the benefits don't just stop there. All resources can work remotely, resulting in the company being able to expand into a wider geographical area, and Tony can forecast jobs in advance and, thus, work schedules and revenue pipelines.

"An online system and capturing live data has multiple advantages," said Tony. "We save in admin costs, we have OHS visibility and, most importantly, we can log job sheets, review schedules, and upload job documentation and job progress from the field. Additionally, we eliminate paperwork, ensuring important information isn't left on scrap pieces of paper to be lost!"

Fleetmatics WORK assists Australian businesses to mobilise their field and job management. The platform gives you the tools and insights to better manage jobs from the office to the field. With real-time updates, customisable schedulers and more, Fleetmatics WORK goes one step further, making your business operations easy to understand so you can put your business intelligence to work.

***Fleetmatics***

***www.fleetmatics.com.au***

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*Rob Stummer, Managing Director ANZ, IFS Australia*

# 4 STEPS TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT MOBILE DEVICE

Choosing the right mobile device is more than just product selection. Here are four simple steps to guide you to a better final outcome.

Laptops, ultrabooks, handhelds, smartphones and tablets; there is no one device appropriate for every type of service organisation, but each has specific features that might make it more suitable than other options.

## Define the problem

It's critical to start the process with a clear definition.

A common mistake at this stage is to involve the wrong people. Include the team who will actually use the devices, which may seem like obvious advice, but not to everyone. Conversely, you'll never satisfy everybody so it's best to consider limiting participation only to areas where value can be provided.

Common requirements that impact on device choice:

- What conditions will the user be working under? Will they be working with gloves on, in the rain or up a pole with an electrical box? Wearing gloves requires a larger device and working at height requires a rugged device that can take a fall and must be attached to the user. Working on a pole means using the device one-handed, meaning smartphones may be preferable.

- What do your service level agreements look like? Do you guarantee a one-hour response time, regardless of technician availability? SLAs require devices that are always connected. Immediate notification of time-sensitive events helps prioritise projects and can affect whether you meet commitments.

- Who schedules the work? Do field service staff plan their own, are they scheduled automatically or controlled by a dispatch

team, or is it a mix of the two? Do you want to take advantage of GPS in your schedule optimisation? When field staff are controlling their own schedule, they need a larger screen to view the totality of their workload. Companies relying on automated scheduling or a dispatch team may want the GPS capabilities of a smartphone so they can determine where each field service worker is and schedule them accordingly.

- Will your field service staff have to enter a lot of text or read large documents? If so, a smartphone may be less suitable than a tablet or laptop.

- Is it critical to take pictures, capture customer signatures or scan barcodes? Photos requirements generally mean a smartphone or tablet. Customer signatures and barcode scanning both require an external device for non-touch-enabled devices.

- How much access to data do you need to give your users? Is their customer list in the hundreds or the thousands? Do they need to access 100,000 spare parts? Consider wisely, as the total scale of the solution may push hardware capability.

## Understand the costs

When conducting a cost/benefit analysis on various options, consider that some may include costs you're already incurring. For example, upgrading mobile phones to smartphones can be less expensive than acquiring additional hardware such as laptops or tablets. Many smartphones are subsidised by carriers in exchange for voice and data plans, so additional hardware costs may be negligible.

Regardless of whether you currently have mobile devices in the field, the biggest financial consideration should be choosing the device that makes the field force as efficient as possible, lowering costs and increasing revenue. For example, while rugged devices require a higher initial investment in hardware, if the field force is working under inclement conditions, the cost savings associated with device uptime might more than make up the difference.

Efficiency gains are subject to economies of scale based on the size of the workforce and costs scale in similar fashion. If choosing a particular device enables field service staff to complete more jobs with higher first-time fix rates and improved customer satisfaction, those gains will offset any additional hardware costs.

## Consider non-tangibles

Perception matters and human beings don't always make decisions purely on reason. Service organisations must leave a good impression with customers, and field service staff arriving on time and behaving professionally, while treating clients with respect, will go a long way towards ensuring customer retention and referral.

> **A common mistake at this stage is to involve the wrong people.**

Customers develop an emotional impression of a company based on that company's representatives, including the processes and tools that they utilise. The ability to quickly draw up account information and service history can assure the customer that you are able to provide the service they require.

## Assess operational readiness

In the end, while customer perception, cost and hardware requirements are all very important in choosing a device, if your organisation isn't prepared or able to efficiently support a device, it might not be the right one for you.

The first thing to consider is the skill sets of employees and relevant third parties. If corporate IT is standardised on PC platforms, introducing an Apple-based solution may bring difficulties or increased costs. This is especially important if using internal resources to manage, develop or maintain software. Having 10 iOS programmers on staff won't provide a great benefit if you choose Android phones over iPads. If your IT department maintains Linux servers, the Java platform implemented by Android would be a much better fit for the corporate ecosystem.

It is equally important to take into account the offerings of your software vendors. If you have been using a Windows mobile VPN package for years to provide secure data transmission between field staff and the home office, choosing a non-Windows mobile device will mean finding a different vendor and absorbing the associated costs.

Additionally, the software vendor providing your field service software might not support all devices. Vendors, like end-user organisations, typically make the choice to optimise for certain devices or platforms. Even with web-based software, the reality is that there is a wide gap in the level of support for web technologies on mobile devices. While the browser on a cutting-edge smartphone might match most of the features supported by desktop browsers, it may lag far behind.

Choosing the right device isn't that straightforward. There are a lot of things to consider: how it will fit within your organisation's technology outlook, how customer perceptions might be affected and how it can increase efficiencies. Take yourself through these four steps and you'll probably have a better idea.

***IFS Australia***

*www.ifsworld.com/au*

## WATERPROOF IPHONE CASE

Rugged and stylish, the new waterproof iPhone 6 case from Catalyst is one of the slimmest profile protective cases on the market. The Catalyst signature clear front and back design showcases and complements the aesthetic of the iPhone. It also features Catalyst's patented rotating crown dial to quickly toggle mute, on and off. At 11.4 mm thick, every Catalyst case is tested IP68 waterproof to a depth of 5 m, designed to meet or exceed Military Standard 810G for drops and shocks of up to 6.6′ and confirmed to be fully dust, dirt and snow proof.

The integrated touch screen film allows full functionality of the touchscreen including all Control Center and notification swipe functions. The Touch ID membrane also allows full fingerprint biometric scan. The hard-coated optical lens transforms the phone into an underwater camera providing access to features such as slow motion video, time-lapse video and high definition footage. Since the camera lens is not recessed it will not trap dirt, snow or water, which might otherwise impede photography. Catalyst cases encourage users to dive deeper and climb higher while capturing every minute of every adventure.

**Catalyst Lifestyle**
**www.catalystlifestyle.com**

## AUDIO CONFERENCING

BT Global Services and Dolby Laboratories have expanded availability of the BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice service and of the innovative Dolby Conference Phone. BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice combines Dolby's nearly 50 years of audio expertise with BT's communications capabilities to deliver clear, natural and productive meetings.

BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice transforms conference calls by delivering an in-person experience. The users get high audio quality, free from background noise. They also hear each person from a distinct virtual location so it is easy to identify who is speaking and to hear everyone on the call - even those with soft voices. Conversation flows more naturally and everyone can contribute better.

BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice also offers significant cost savings over traditional audio conferencing services. Because users can join conference calls over data networks, the service helps lower transport and access fees.

BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice can be accessed anywhere - via the desktop, mobile devices and in meeting rooms using the Dolby Conference Phone. It provides the ability to not only pick up all the voices in the room but also to separate and clearly present them to remote participants. In addition to being an endpoint for BT MeetMe with Dolby Voice service, the phone can be used for traditional IP telephony calls.

**BT Global Services**
**www.globalservices.bt.com/uk/en/home**

## LEVEL 3 ENCRYPTED USB FLASH DRIVE

Kingston has released a pair of next-generation encrypted USB Flash drives designed to safeguard valuable data. The DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 and DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 Management Ready protect sensitive information with high-level encryption.

DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 is FIPS 140-2 Level 3 certified so it provides a tamper-evident seal for physical security to detect and respond to attempts to access, use or modify the cryptographic module. Data is protected by hardware-based 256-bit AES encryption in XTS mode and the drive casing is made of titanium-coated stainless steel. The drive is designed to reduce the possibility of successful brute force attacks as it locks down and reformats after 10 failed password attempts.

DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 Management Ready features the same security and features as DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 but also offers optional SafeConsole management from BlockMaster. SafeConsole gives organisations powerful tools including the ability to remotely reset passwords, configure password and device policies and activate audit for compliance. DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 Management Ready gives companies the flexibility to initially deploy the drive as a stand-alone, secure device, and then have the option of adding a central management solution later.

Both drives offer USB 3.0 data transfer rates and are available in 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64 GB capacities. DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 and DataTraveler 4000 Gen. 2 Management Ready utilise industry-leading NAND and controller design that allows the NAND to be interchanged without requalification and certification. They are backed by a five-year warranty and free technical support.

**Kingston Technology Company, Inc**
**www.kingston.com**

# FROM OPERATOR TO OPTIMISER

## 9 STEPS TO ENHANCE FIELD SERVICE CAPABILITY

*Jared Haube*

As the tech market reaches new heights and efficiency becomes ever more scoped as a crucial objective, the challenge is on to take field service management capability to the next level.

Field service mobility solutions have become a staple business tool - whether improving workforce productivity or meeting customer demand, many organisations have made an important step by implementing these systems, but many mobility programs are now under pressure to undergo enhancements from both a technology and process perspective.

### Mobility toolbox

Service delivery organisations specify and select products and services using a range of requirements and methodologies. Some will be based on current supply and technical standards; others are new or disruptive to existing arrangements.

Crucial to a successful solution is how the various technology elements perform separate functions as part of an integrated tool. Ideally, field hardware, communications, client functions, security and support services will 'just work'. One clumsy or unreliable element can spoil the entire solution.

Mobility solution should be seen as modular, with capability to change elements easily while maintaining client functionality and supporting the overall business process.

### Software and hardware

A mobility solution isn't just an app, it feeds into existing business systems, so many elements need to be addressed: software, hardware, deployment and integration into the backend. Properly resourcing the project, understanding trends and deciding whether to outsource or insource depends on the existing IT architecture and what support contracts and processes are in place.

Software decisions involve the analysis of required functionality and data management processes and hardware selection should be based on physical and practical dimensions. These include expected environmental operating conditions, required service life, additional computing functionality and collaborative tools.

Simultaneous implementation of hardware and software is likely to be more challenging than separate execution, so it's worth treating the exercise as a two-stage process, lessening transitional difficulties and increasing likelihood of a successful outcome.

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## Intelligent scheduling and dispatch

Scheduling and dispatch tools are critical to efficient delivery of field services. Field staff work autonomously and are the 'last mile' and direct point of contact with customers. They are not directly engaged in the process back at the office, so scheduling tools should be flexible and adaptable to manage workload evenly.

Viability in service person availability due to illness, leave or unexpected complications requires constant attention. Scheduling tools are truly intelligent when they identify the closest, most cost-effective appropriately skilled person. Dispatch decisions effectively balance priority, existing workload, skill set and distance to client.

## Connectivity

Connectivity is directly related to capability. It's important to address where devices will be deployed and in what type of environments, as it's not feasible to store endless amounts of information.

Field staff should be kept connected and transacting. Telco services improve over time, but remote locations will always present issues. Mobility platforms must be flexible and support multiple communication methods, as well as manage disconnected states so work can continue without disruption.

## GPS and real-time positioning

Real-time GPS location services are a powerful tool, as spatial awareness of available skills and resources supports the efficient technician deployment.

Spatial awareness drives efficiency through reduction of unproductive travel time, better customer communication and improved field force coordination.

There are several questions when considering GPS applications:

1. Where does real-time positioning fit? What issues are you trying to address?
2. Is it possible to get the same process outcome using other locational data?
3. Are there safety benefits which can be realised, such as mandown/SOS alerting?
4. Can GPS-/GIS-enabled services add value to field working practice?
5. What efficiency savings are you looking for through the use of spatial location services?
6. What is the IR situation? Are you ready/prepared to have the conversation about GPS location tracking?
7. Where are the win-win scenarios?

## Communication between software, hardware and corporate systems

Information stores, service databases, field clients, reporting systems and associated business rules are all key aspects of efficient delivery, but they deliver no benefit in isolation. Service managers need information systems to integrate and be flexible.

The choice to build, buy, modify or replace system components over their respective life cycles is an ongoing exercise - identifying new opportunities to streamline and centralise data and workflow management.

Centralised systems, single sources of 'truth', common data interchange frameworks and transport mechanisms which enable efficient technology interoperability are the goals.

## Add-ons and advanced systems

Solutions that integrate with an existing mobility system must support processes via an intuitive and logical flow. Field staff should transact quickly with minimal distraction and technology elements must support working practice.

The life cycle of synchronisation should be accounted for, as certain products or technical functions might not be capable of interoperability. Consider hardware, software and functionality in real-world usage scenarios.

## Trials and pilots

Well-planned implementation includes process trials to unearth anomalies or reveal inaccurate assumptions made at the planning stage. Trials will reveal the degree of alignment with vision, as well as utility of the technology platform to its application in working practice.

Trials are also an excellent mechanism for establishing a collaborative environment and relationship between the field workforce and corporate teams.

## Implementation and sustainability

The best mobility solution can be rendered useless through poor implementation. The goal is to introduce a new technology within existing processes, so the end result is an overall improvement. This requires an engaged and collaborative approach and the scale of change needs to be sensitively managed.

People will adapt to change over time if they are not burdened with too much at once. Introducing new tools and capability over time gives people a chance to adapt to change and gain confidence with the new tools.

Work on the premise that something better will be around the corner - two or three years are the ideal timeframes for changeover - and also think beyond the users and involve everyone who will play a role in successful implementation and use.

Field service mobility is rapidly becoming far more than a strategy or program for companies; it's transforming into a key business enabler. The amount of new technology accessible is an exciting prospect; but that's only half the story. Business processes and organisational agility have equally important roles to play. Together, these elements can pave the way for companies to move from operators to optimisers.

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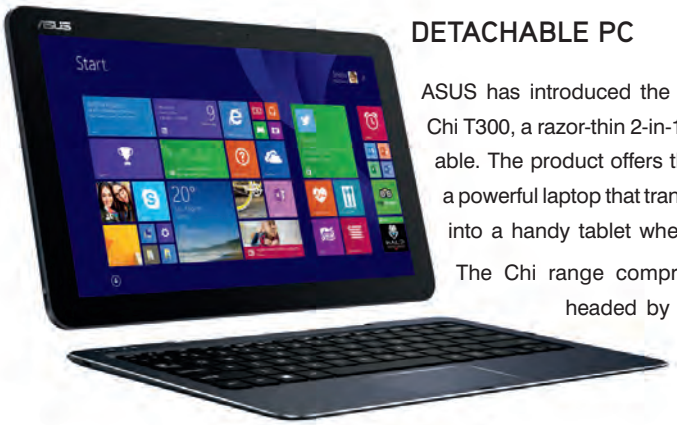


## DETACHABLE PC

ASUS has introduced the Transformer Book Chi T300, a razor-thin 2-in-1 Windows detachable. The product offers the convenience of a powerful laptop that transforms seamlessly into a handy tablet whenever needed.

The Chi range comprises two models, headed by the flagship 12.5″ T300 Chi that is powered by the Intel Core M processor for good performance and power efficiency. The T100 Chi is a compact 10.1″ model, echoing the design and functionality of the original Transformer Book T100 with an updated metallic chassis.

The series uses in-plane switching (IPS) displays enhanced with ASUS TruVivid technology, giving wide viewing angles. With up to WQHD (2560 x 1440) resolution and a pixel density of 235 ppi in the T300 Chi, users will experience crisp and detailed visuals.

The flexibility and power of the range means users can work and play efficiently, with no need to carry multiple bulky devices.

**ASUSTek Computer Australia Pty Ltd**
**www.asus.com.au**

## SMART GLASSES

Epson's Moverio BT-200 Smart Glasses are now available in Australia. The binocular, transparent smart glasses feature a display on each lens, right in the field of vision, projected into the user's surroundings. The BT-200 also boasts 2x the virtual screen size and works out of the box with common connectivity technologies such as Wi-Fi and Bluetooth plus Android apps that have been certified by the Moverio App Store. With a front-facing camera and motion tracker, the BT-200 delivers large 2D or 3D images and is suitable for hands-free applications.

**Epson**
**www.epson.com.au**

# TALK FROM THE TOP

It's hard work finding the right employees to represent your field service business. This isn't a new problem; the headache has been very real for the past couple of decades. Finding good workers is just like any other problem that you face when you own a field service business - large or small. If you've tried all the traditional avenues and haven't had success, here are some simple tips to help you find the best people for your business.

Start searching early - Finding good workers always takes time. If you feel like your company will require new employees sometime in the future, you should start the search right away. A great option is to create a year-long employment strategy. This way when your company desperately needs workers you'll have a variety of prospects to choose from, saving you from scrambling at the last minute when need is high.

Get on social media - Attract great potential employees through those you already have. Encouraging your current workers to utilise their social groups is a great way to find individuals that share similar interests who may be interested in working for your company. Good old-fashioned word-of-mouth can go a long way, especially with social media. It's not hard to get a message out to hundreds of acquaintances of just one employee through the use of Facebook alone.

Incentives for referrals - Giving your workers incentives for new hires is a great way to encourage all of your employees to get involved in the hiring process. Referral bonuses or gift cards will encourage current employees to go the extra mile when recommending your company to someone they know.

Go where potential workers are - As a business owner, you need to have a common understanding of who your employees are. Get to know the kind of places where potential candidates would spend their time and go there. This is a very proactive approach but a very to-the-point one. Don't go there empty handed though, it's easy to create a simple flyer with your business and contact information. A great upside of this method is that you won't waste time with an hour-long interview if the candidate isn't the right fit, you can just walk away.

*Daniela Bia'h is a graduate of Western University in Ontario, Canada. She is a Brand Journalist for Jobber software, the go-to solution for small field service business organisations.*

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# Get Organized

## With The New XL-LSB

### The New XL-LSB

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