

EBOOK

Five Major Trends Impacting Field Service

Introduction

- Trend #1 | Challenges in field technician performance
- Trend #2 | Pressures from compliance requirements and SLAs
- Trend #3 | Assets are increasingly becoming more complex
- Trend #4 | Business software has its limits
- Trend #5 | Equipment uptime as a service business model

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation goals focused on driving growth and reducing operations costs have been accelerating year over year during the past decade. Recent events have prompted many organizations to engage in activities to rapidly advance their objectives. The amount of change that has come from internal and external forces outside of everyone's control is like nothing we've ever seen before. It's time to buckle up rather than back down because it's not likely to let up.

To help you be one step ahead of the competition and achieve your business and operational goals, we have created this eBook to help you prepare for what we see as the future of field service. It results from the many conversations we've had with our global customers, leading field service executives, and our internal experts.

These trends have placed increased demands on the already strained shoulders of field technicians. Performing mission-critical tasks effectively and safely has become more difficult than ever. What's shocking is knowing these workers are the tip of the spear of multi-billion-dollar industries, yet not enabled to succeed —and sometimes even hindered —by their systems and support organizations.

“Bain research shows more than 60% of field techs grappled with significant change in their working environment the last three to five years, and 93% believe change will continue at the same rapid clip or increase in the next three to five years.”

Source: [Bain & Company](#)

Read on to discover the five major macroeconomic trends we believe are having an impact on field service today.

TREND #1

Challenges in field technician performance

One thing is certain, field service technicians and field service engineers are central in ensuring your organization is successful. Both your company and your field workers face an increased number of challenges that have serious effects on performance and success.

Let's take a deeper look at the challenges field technicians face.

INCREASED EXPECTATIONS FOR FIELD SERVICE WORKERS

Not a single person would dare to disagree with the following statement.

Field service is extremely demanding work.

Beyond the grueling schedule and backbreaking, finger-numbing, head-scratching tasks, techs often work in some of the most dangerous conditions. Often isolated, they may lack a direct connection with their field teams and the essential information housed in their company's business systems. This situation can cause a great degree of frustration, hindering their performance.

On top of these challenges, technicians are burdened with increased expectations from many stakeholders. Priority number one for them is to ensure they meet their customers' expectations. As the face of your company, techs take this responsibility to heart and aim to please. Arriving on time, answering the customer's questions, and getting the job done right during the first visit is all in a day's work for these wrench-wielding superheroes.

→ **28%**

of field service engineers say the worst part of their day-to-day work is the pressure they face from customers and management to work faster.

→ **70%**

of field service engineers said both customer and management demands have intensified.

Source: [2021 Voice of the Field Service Engineer \(VoFSE\) Survey](#)

In recent years, a new responsibility has been added to the field worker's plate, given their proximity to the customer and deep knowledge of products and services. Perceived by customers as trusted advisors and experts, technicians are now becoming involved in upselling and cross-selling. According to Salesforce's State of Service report, 76% of decision-makers say their field service workers secure new revenue streams for their company.

Now not every field service technician is a natural-born salesperson. You will need to pepper in some incentives to encourage them as well as ensure you equip them with proper training. Mobile tools like TrueContext can go a long way to ensure technicians immediately have the contextual information they need to make timely and appropriate recommendations for additional product or service offerings.

NAVIGATING TODAY'S EVERCHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

You have likely heard mention of the “graying of the workforce,” the “[Silver Tsunami](#)” that is just around the corner. These terms relate to the considerable number of older field service workers who are now just a few years shy of retirement age.

Research from The Service Council supports this trend, with [70% of service organizations](#) saying that they will become burdened by a retiring workforce over the next five to ten years. In the manufacturing industry alone, the number of aging service employees set to retire is posing a shortage of [two million workers](#).

→ **73%**

of service organizations identified the aging workforce as a potential threat

Source: [Field Service News](#)

These changes in workforce demographics are further exacerbated by how hard it is to attract new hires to join a company's ranks. Individuals who possess the interest, aptitude, and stamina to perform work of this nature are far too rare. [A survey](#) of field service organizations revealed that 47% of respondents believe one of the biggest challenges they face is attracting quality technicians.

Estimates are that by 2028 there will be a shortage of three million jobs across the skilled trades.

Source: [Field Service News](#)

The exodus of older, experienced field service technicians and engineers brings with it a monumental loss of deep pockets of knowledge. Whether it's information about a valued customer, highly complex asset, process, or workflow, field service is losing a generation of experts.

Backfilling the roles held by technicians who have retired or left the profession is difficult, especially during one of the most competitive hiring markets in decades. We will now turn our attention to the increased training needs that have come about because of the loss of skilled and knowledgeable technicians.

ENSURING ONBOARDING AND TRAINING NEEDS ARE MET

Finding new and innovative ways to onboard, train, motivate, and retain technicians comes as a result of many of the trends in this eBook. The growing volume and complexity of service work and understaffed field service teams, combined with labor constraints are straining many organizations' ability to cultivate the next generation of technicians properly.

Having fewer hours available to acquire new knowledge and skills means many technicians feel they lack the necessary training to do their job correctly. This shortcoming impacts their morale and is another contributing factor to workers leaving a company and even the profession.

Jessie Schott, Power Generation Field Service Technician at [Cummins](#) says, “If there wasn't going to be a way for me to get training or to learn to be able to promote or to progress then, I feel like for me, and I've seen it with other techs, they go onto something else. Companies lose techs because they couldn't get the training they wanted, so they go for somebody else that's giving them what they want.”



A TECHNICIAN & EXECUTIVE SIT-DOWN

Fostering technician loyalty, retention, and satisfaction

WATCH WEBINAR

Many organizations are building knowledge transfer programs to reduce the impact of the departure of knowledgeable techs and the skills shortage that is causing a diminished number of candidates to fill their shoes. [Deloitte notes](#) that 32% of companies they surveyed said they were developing such programs, with one in four manufacturers investing in productivity-enhancing technologies.

[Gartner believes](#), “aging workforces will transition to workforces with less experience but more autonomy. This will require better digital service support techniques, especially for training, safety, collaboration, and democratization of distributed knowledge.”

You do not need to take your techs out of the field to help them upskill. TrueContext facilitates real-world, [on-the-job training](#). Your field team can use our product to easily build guided mobile forms that provide new technicians with information on procedure documentation and workflow support.



Our customers believe that using our platform has made it easier for new technicians to start their work off on the right foot.

→ **72%**

of our customers reduced their onboarding time

→ **73%**

experienced technician independence by day 6

Source: [TrueContext Customer Impact Report](#)

TECHNICIAN MORALE AND LOYALTY ARE IN SEVERE DECLINE

Technician morale and loyalty to their organization is at an all-time low. In [a survey](#) conducted by the Service Council, an astonishing 60% of field service engineers replied no or do not know when asked if field service will be their career.

Here is a bit of surprising news from the same survey. Regarding loyalty, 33% of field engineers say they would not recommend their company as a great place to work. 11% say they are not proud to work for their company.

These are some startling numbers.

Many of the factors causing field workers to feel this way correlate directly to the trends we have covered in this eBook. They include feeling pressure to achieve high first-time fix rates, upsell products/services, complete more detailed reporting, and perform work with more complex compliance requirements.

One bright spot comes from the Service Council's survey which found 6 out of 10 technicians saying they recognize that the technology tools available to them today help them do their job more easily, efficiently, quickly, and better. To some degree, this offsets the pressures weighing upon them from customers and management.

Did you know that handling administrative tasks and paperwork is one of the main dislikes cited by technicians? According to The Service Council's Voice of the Field Service Engineer survey, 73% of techs feel they spend too much time on paperwork in their day-to-day work.

→ **89%**
of TrueContext's
customers have reduced
their administrative burden

Source: [TrueContext Customer Impact Report](#)



TREND #2

Pressures from compliance requirements & SLAs

The increased demand for proof of compliance is placing a significant strain on your entire organization. Everyone from customers, manufacturers, regulatory authorities, and suppliers, among others is seeking reports on the exact work performed in the field. The added pressure to provide accurate and comprehensive documentation of the complete details of all completed work to multiple stakeholders promptly can feel like it's next to impossible to achieve.

Agility is needed to keep pace with the constant changes to requirements, as well as to maintain a high level of accountability when completing and reporting on highly complex work that must be performed in a compliant manner. Having instant access to documented work strengthens business relationships, drives better brand value, increases CSAT, and ensures you're well-positioned to respond to audits in a rapid and accurate manner.

Unfortunately, many technicians are sent out to worksites to complete tasks without documentation tools that fully support them in performing highly complex work in a reliable manner. Without information and guided step-by-step directions, service can suffer, mistakes can occur, and customers can become disenchanted with your company based on easily avoidable misunderstandings.

Field technicians feel stressed out from having to work without guidance and background data. Their efficiency is curtailed, contributing to a decreased sense of belonging and diminished morale. On your side of the boardroom table, you lie awake at night worried about being caught up in a lengthy and costly lawsuit or the shutdown of a worksite on account of improper record-keeping or missed steps.

Service Level Agreements (SLA) are another complexity many companies struggle to keep up with. The increased amount of documentation that is needed to account for and track activity is extensive and requires extreme discipline from the field to your back office. Attaining the work outlined in SLAs, on time and on budget requires a motivated and well-informed field service technician.

Since customer management and the delivery of service commitments are at the core of SLAs, there is a lot riding on having documented and easily accessible proof of the work your technicians have performed. Being able to guarantee and deliver a record of the performance of field techs as well as the assets themselves is an absolute must.

→ **90%**

compliance rate for “top performing” companies

Source: [Aberdeen](#)

The cost of failure is significant. Not being able to ensure service is delivered on time can result in severe financial penalties for your organization, damages to your reputation, as well as customer dissatisfaction, lost referrals, and sign on for additional products or services. Decreased profitability is a steep cost to pay for a lack of proper documentation.

TREND #3

Assets are increasingly becoming more complex

Technology is advancing at breakneck speed, making a marked impact on equipment and assets. Even the most basic machinery is becoming increasingly sophisticated and complex, with additional functionality being added every day. As well, there are many different standards for these assets that shift when a new capability is added, or reconfiguration required.

The impact these complex assets have upon an organization and its field team is great. Complex assets mean there are complementary complex installation, maintenance, and service tasks to be done.

“Dumb” products have become “smart” now that technology is tossed into the mix. Whether it's IoT, sensors, interconnected assets, robotics, and the like, this period of innovation is everchanging and can be challenging to stay informed on to deliver service excellence.

Organizations are strained by the decreased volume of seasoned and tenured technicians within their ranks equipped with the extensive and precise knowledge needed to repair and inspect these highly complex pieces of machinery. Ramping up newer, less skilled field workers takes time that is not always available given their increased workload.

In [an article](#) from Industry Week titled, “The Rise of Machines and the Evolution of Industrial Work,” they noted a [PWC's 2016 Global Industry 4.0 Survey](#) which says “... the biggest challenge to the successful transformation and execution of Industry 4.0 is not the technology - it's the people. We are dependent upon the digital qualifications of the employees who we need to roll out digital processes and services.”

There is a massive leap in knowledge required to work with elaborate, complex machinery. Information is power when it's used to augment and accelerate the learning curve for sophisticated equipment. It's now essential for you to equip field service technicians with a powerful digital tool to help them service these highly intricate assets. What works for the back office isn't going to cut it in the field. You need something designed with their exact needs in mind to give them the essential information they require.

→ **91%**
improved complex
field work execution

A whopping 91% of customers agree that our platform has made handling complex fieldwork easier for everyone involved—including an impressive 47% who agree strongly.

Source: [TrueContext Customer Impact Report](#)

TREND #4

Business software has its limits

Business software and apps have helped companies make significant strides towards greater efficiency. But while these tools support organizations to some extent, they aren't designed with field service teams in mind. Field service operations is a different beast entirely, with unique and growing requirements that off-the-shelf software is no match for.

THE ISSUES

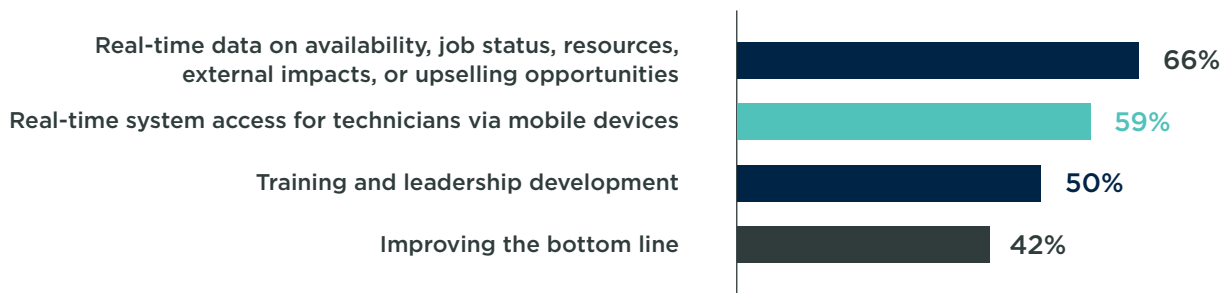
FSM, CRM, EAM, ERP platforms, as well as business analytics and general business service platforms all have their place and are specialized in their domains. The issue is that technology needs to streamline people, processes, and information.

These crucial business operating systems have valuable data that sits in isolation. If it could be freed and leveraged for field workflows, this information would provide powerful enablement to field technicians delivering significant ROI to the organization.

Furthermore, EAM and FSM platforms have not improved their reach into the field to offer technicians the much-needed support they need to complete complex work. These platforms fail to provide the essential context and intelligence required to complete work safely and efficiently on the first visit.

Without context and intelligence, field workers are ill-equipped, lack vital information, and are set up to fail. The negative impact on asset performance and customer satisfaction does little to advance their job satisfaction nor help you achieve your business goals.

A [Field Service USA 2020 report](#) surveying field service professionals noted that half of the respondents say, “they have either fully integrated (27%) or mostly integrated (23%) their technology infrastructure, the other half say they are not yet there with disparate solutions leaving gaps in their ability to consolidate information.” In the same report, 45% of service professionals said their current FSM technology does not meet their current field service management goals.



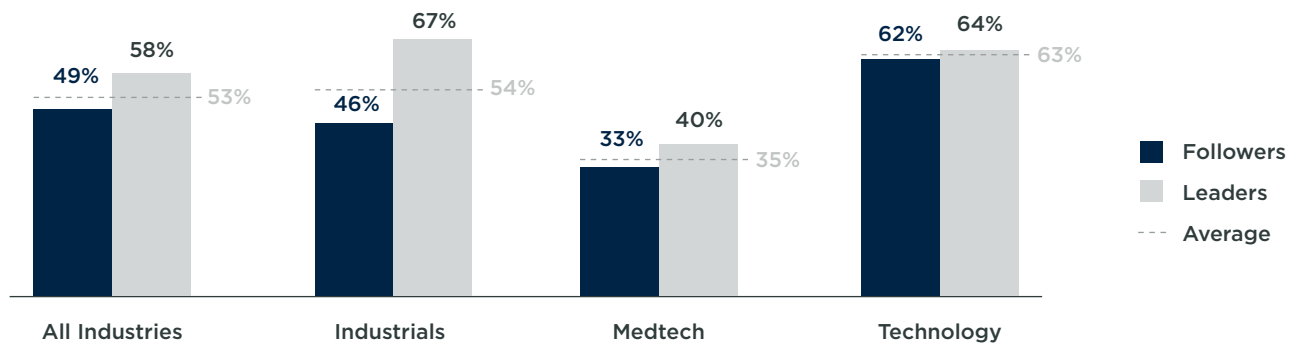
Source: [Field Service USA 2020 report](#)

When it comes to data collection, mobile apps that are ill-suited for the unique challenges of field work are often put in the hands of technicians. These tools under-serve and impede the technician’s performance. Why? They can be cumbersome to use, sometimes forcing the tech to change apps or devices. Occasionally, they may need to rely on archaic processes like pen and paper

to capture vital information like customer signatures. Speed and quality of work are hindered, resulting in lost time, errors, and a negative customer experience. They are unable to deliver quality results, especially in remote locations.

Many technicians say the tools and technology they use are not simple

Percentage of responses that agree with the statement “The digital tools and technology we use are simple to learn and use”



Source: [Bain & Company](#)

In addition, business-critical systems have a vast amount of data sitting in isolation from where it matters most –with service technicians. Freeing and leveraging this information as part of field workflows provides powerful enablement for field technicians and delivers a significant ROI for the organization. It’s vital to build a culture

of service excellence. To do so means connecting the dots between your data and making it work as hard as you need it to. Not connecting the apps technicians use in the field to your systems of record results in a lack of real-time visibility into this information.



Other negative impacts that follow due to the limited reach that business software has into the field are:

- Wasted time, slower completion of work orders, and fewer jobs performed during a shift
- Reduced efficiency and/or lack of productivity due to outdated data
- Decreased first-time fix rate leading to repeat visits
- Hindered data capture resulting in greater errors
- Obstacles in finding real-time information to guide techs through complex work
- Slowed revenue growth, hindered profitability and loss of potential sales from new business generation, upselling, or cross-selling
- Poorer quality customer service
- Increased pressure on technicians resulting in decreased morale

→ **65%**
of TrueContext's customers improved their first-time fix rate

→ **85%**
increased their technician productivity

Source: [TrueContext Customer Impact Report](#)

TREND #5

The Asset as a Service business model

In the past few years, which pitfalls have you encountered due to reactive last-minute repairs?



Source: "[Preventing Unplanned Downtime Through Predictive Maintenance](#)" ServiceMax & Argyle CFO Webcast Brief

Relying solely on the traditional break-fix service delivery model is no longer sustainable for many companies. They are leaving money on the table and plagued by reacting to outages and downtime.

Analysts have determined poor maintenance strategies can reduce a plant's overall productive capacity [between 5 and 20 percent](#). Furthermore, recent studies indicate unplanned downtime is costing industrial manufacturers roughly [\\$50 billion every year](#).

To counter these pitfalls, manufacturers have shifted their business model to a service model. The result is a greater emphasis on selling uptime and asset performance versus time-based maintenance plans.

Widespread adoption of Asset as a Service is driving significant growth in preventative maintenance as part of the asset service lifecycle. Installation, maintenance, service/repair, decommission, and replace is now the standard way of operating.

Companies who are moving towards adopting this business model are facing several challenges as they pivot. Issues such as ensuring techs are performing consistently, the increased complexity of assets, and the failure of business software to fully support field operations loom large in the picture. In addition, this business model places increased pressure on an organization to provide documentation showing completion of work and conformity to compliance requirements and SLAs.

Close to [60% of respondents](#) in a study conducted by Forrester Consulting replied that as-a-service offerings will be worth more to them than traditional equipment sales in the next five years. In that same study, 33% of those who identify as a product company believe they will be a service company in five years.

Field organizations in companies that have embraced this approach need to react accordingly and pivot their service operations towards a more proactive rather than reactive approach. Objectives such as working towards increased service revenue growth, expanded scalability, further cost reductions, increased customer satisfaction, and delivery of service excellence place additional demands on organizations moving into this area of field service operations.

→ **60%**

of respondents said as-a-service offerings will be worth more to them than traditional equipment sales in the next five years

Source: [Forrester Consulting](#)



It's understandable that you may be feeling overwhelmed by the rapid pace of change, as well as wondering what this period of significant transition means for you and your company.

Take a deep breath. There is a way forward from here.

TrueContext aims to help empower field teams to meet increasing demands. Our field team platform delivers the context and intelligence needed to overcome the challenges of modern field service.

TrueContext Field Team Platform empowers your team to:

Build

Rapidly create apps with bi-directional data connections with business systems. Design workflows that share context with other apps, systems, or technicians, and generate custom documents to external systems and stakeholders. All without a line of code.

Execute

Empower field teams to be safer and more effective with easy-to-use interconnected apps that work offline. Deliver intelligent work guidance, providing the appropriate data in context based on information inputted into the app, ensuring work is done safely and correctly the first time — every time.

Optimize

Gain the real-time insights needed to make well-informed business decisions. Monitor trends, work compliance, incidents and more to adjust and improve processes.

With TrueContext you:

- ✔ Reduce the administrative burden placed on field technicians
- ✔ Decrease compliance incidents
- ✔ Improve the execution of complex field work
- ✔ Increase first time fix rate and technician productivity
- ✔ Gain the ability to pivot to the asset-as-a-service model



See TrueContext in action

[BOOK YOUR DEMO](#)