



Advanced Field Services Mobility

A total Gamechanger for your Business

Digital disruption is the game of the decade. Every day we see traditional business models give way to digital automation. We do our banking through the web, buy on line through Amazon, travel the country with Uber and rest overnight with Airbnb.

Most of us scarcely noticed the advent of the digital era until office automation brought on by the arrival of fax machines, affordable printers and the now commonplace IBM PC rocked our offices. Spreadsheets, Word Processors and Accounting systems have delivered redundancy slips to whole departments and changed our workplace for ever.

This is all about driving down the cost of doing business through labour efficiency. The trend took off in the mid 80's and delivered massive returns on company's technology investments. But the low hanging fruit has gone.

We now spend millions of dollars on enterprise software systems with fancy names like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Asset Management (AM), Facilities Management (FM) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). These are expensive investments chasing small improvements in already well automated business systems.

Sometimes we forget that 30% of the world's workforce spends at least part of their working day outside the four walls of an office or workshop. Surprisingly, most of our Field Services personnel work with paper based or at best semi structured processes reminiscent of the pre PC era. Potential efficiency gains are enormous.

Few of today's mobile workers are bound into the end-to-end electronic workflow that drives most businesses. The disconnect between office and field operations burns man hours and slows workflows.

The arrival of the modern smart phone is the big game changer. Not only do we have fabulous new devices, but we have an educated public that is happy to use them. So why has business been so slow to embrace the technology.

Part of the answer lies with the heritage of our IT departments. IT Managers, like everyone else, are under pressure to deliver more for less. For some time the mantra has been to drive down costs by standardizing operating environments and centralising services. For the last decades IT departments have been replacing local data storage with network and cloud drives and replacing those programs installed on our local PC systems with browser delivered business systems.

Mobile computing is an unwelcome break-out. It is sometimes easier to postpone the inevitable than embrace the bold new world. The tendency is to ignore field services teams or to supply laptops that replicate the office services.

Unfortunately traditional IT solutions just don't cut it for field services crews. Their design heritage of screen, keyboard and mouse does not always translate to the field. Beefy laptops may work for managers on the move, but are just not practical for field services crews to lug to worksites along with their tools and supplies.

Web delivered business systems are great but not for Field Services personnel who may well be dispatched to field sites at the edge of the network. Every neighbourhood has its communications blackspots so a solution that needs constant web connectivity won't suffice.

Modern smart phone and tablets with their abundant local data storage are the obvious answer, but software expectations are demanding. A viable business solution needs to work on whatever device the individual might be carrying. It needs to store data locally so it can work outside network range. It does need all the geek stuff like GPS, Cameras and maps to locate worksites. But that is only part of the story.

App development is a relatively immature sector, a magnet for start-up companies. Our smart phone screens are cluttered with lots of cool single-purpose App. Dynamic stuff, but is this what we need to run a business?

In enterprise software, fitness for purpose is king. Businesses need an end-to-end solution that has robustness, maturity and a proper understanding of business processes. To claim the title of an Advanced Field Services Mobility solution, we need not only a mobile App that understands field operations but also a package of communications, databases, configuration tools and support services honed to deliver the right business outcome.

Mature business systems don't spring up overnight, and are certainly not available from the many fledgling App developers that pop up daily on the web.

Fortunately a few vendors have been around the mill long enough to get it right. Global GBM, for example has been delivering map enabled field services solutions for over 15 years and has just finished a complete technology refresh of their product line. Konect, the company's Advanced Field Services Mobile Solution, combines deep operating experience with the very latest technology.

Whatever supplier a business selects, there is benefit in considering mobility as a core part of their enterprise suite. The economics are compelling. For any organisation with personnel who work outside the office, an investment in Advanced Field Services Mobility is likely to deliver a return on investment many times higher than spending a similar sum on traditional Information systems.

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