

Mobile Workforce Management for Dummies



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Managing a mobile workforce isn't always easy. Whether your workforce is transporting goods, managing lengthy facility construction or providing a hard-to-reach service, challenges often occur that make running an efficient operation more difficult.

A mobile workforce management (MWM) solution gives companies the tools and technology needed to manage their work, people and assets in the field. This class of technology works to transform operations in two very significant ways:

by increasing revenue and decreasing costs.

In this white paper, you will read about the top challenges that managers face when overseeing mobile workers and how to minimize these challenges while improving overall efficiency.

Key Challenges

Issues that are commonly experienced across the industry affect the efficiency of a company's workers, as well as its operational processes. These are the key issues that most managers of mobile workers face today:

Manual Data Entry

Collecting accurate data from workers in the field is a daunting challenge which typically involves mountains of paperwork and data entry—all of which are vulnerable to human error. It also slows the billing, invoicing and payroll cycles. Getting accurate data is imperative to successfully evaluating operations.

Operator Safety

Operator safety is always a concern. Maintaining safety standards, as well as finding ways to improve safety – particularly for remote workers – is a critical challenge.

Driver Behavior Costs

Fuel consumption can really “drive up” operating costs, and poor driving habits contribute heavily to this. Whether a fleet has five vehicles or five thousand vehicles, being able to monitor speeding, idling, aggressive braking, acceleration and swerving can have a huge impact on your fuel budget.

Remote Communication

Inefficient communication leads to time wasted by both office staff and field operators. In fact, repeated contact attempts, waiting on hold and leaving messages all waste time. If you have field operators working in remote areas without network coverage, the situation becomes even more problematic.

Vehicle and Asset Tracking

It's often difficult to know exactly where field operators, vehicles and equipment are at all times and what they are doing. Knowing if field operators are starting work on time, or taking unauthorized breaks with company vehicles, can be crucial to improving efficiency.



A MWM solution is the most effective way to manage these challenges. This technology can be tailored to specific business needs and integrated with existing infrastructure to help any company deal with the unique issues they face.

About the Technology

A MWM solution includes a software program installed in the office. Typically this software will have fleet management, driver behavior and work order management modules included. This software can be integrated with existing back-end platforms such as billing, operations or maintenance.

Mobile devices such as mobile computers, tablets, smartphones and GPS trackers, are used in every vehicle and rely on a cellular or satellite connection to provide wireless communications and exchange data. Mobile applications which run on the mobile devices allow field operators to complete work orders, obtain job information, capture billing information, manage inventory, navigate to job sites and complete any other business processes required.

Automating Manual Processes

Automating manual processes is an effective way to free up time for both office staff and field operators. For example, a field operator typically fills out field tickets or work orders by hand, and submits them at the end of the week or month. A data entry clerk then has to input the data from the field ticket into the system. With MWM technology, work order data and job assignments are electronically dispatched to the mobile worker or vehicle automatically. As the worker does his job the captured work order information is sent back to the office in real-time.

The benefits of working this way include no paperwork for field operators to fill out, which eliminates the administrative overhead of manual data entry, as well as saving time for field operators.

Having one point of data entry means that office staff doesn't have to spend time doing manual data entry and interpreting hand-written work orders. Often data entry resources can be re-allocated, or if managed by a third party, eliminated altogether. Once a work order is completed on the mobile device, the back-office system is updated in real-time. This means customers can be billed the same day work is completed, speeding billing and payroll cycles. Field tickets can also be generated electronically and sent directly to the operator's mobile device to further increase efficiency.

Increasing Revenue

The reality is simple: more jobs will equal more money. A mobile workforce management solution increases efficiency and productivity so more jobs can be completed every day—leading to revenue increases.

Efficiency and productivity changes happen by:

- Automating manual processes
- Back office system integration
- Utilizing vehicle and asset tracking
- Improving communication between field operators and office staff

Back Office Integration

Going hand in hand with elimination of manual data entry processes, integration to existing or new back office system ensures that your organization is taking full advantage of the available technology today. With a wide range of integration methodologies, having a two-way integration with your field operations ensures the greatest level of efficiencies. All departments can benefit from access to the key data elements across your systems without time delays or errors.

Vehicle and Asset Tracking

Asset tracking allows the progress of any operator, vehicle or item (like a trailer) to be followed. With this technology, office staff know where all the operators are and can send the closest or most appropriate worker to a job, and field operators can complete more tickets per day. This allows companies to easily accommodate emergency and last-minute jobs to provide better customer service.

In addition, office staff know where all assets are and can move the closest asset to a new job site. This allows companies to track asset utilization, reduce transportation and time costs and eliminate rental costs that may arise from not knowing where assets are or if they are available.

This technology can also be used to enhance a company's journey management program. Vehicle and operator tracking is a simple way to reduce the risk to employees and assets while they are on the road.

Improved Communication

Office and call center staff can end up spending a lot of time trying to relay information to field workers, which is time that could be better spent helping customers.

A MWM solution makes communication between field operators and office staff instant. There is no more phone tag: if office staff need to get information to a field operator, they can easily do that by sending messages in real-time directly to the mobile device. Even if the worker isn't answering, office staff can be confident knowing he will get the message, which allows them to move on to other tasks.



Decreasing Costs

The other way a mobile workforce management solution can help operations is by decreasing costs. Implementing a MWM solution can significantly reduce costs in five critical areas:

Payroll

Technology can significantly reduce the time and costs associated with payroll processes. Payroll data is automatically collected and time-stamped as the field operator goes through his day, so payroll data is accurate as it comes in. Hours worked are automatically calculated and tracked by the system which can minimize unnecessary overtime hours.

Billing

As this paper has established, billing is always precise as the exact amount of time field operators spend at the job is recorded automatically.

Capturing real-time data and hours leads to much faster billing and invoicing. Same day billing can speed up payment cycles by up to three months for most operations. In addition, fast-tracking the billing cycle also reduces the cost of carrying payroll. Generally, a company will need to pay a field operator's salary well in advance of being able to invoice their customers. As a result, automating their work force can help companies close this gap.

Data Entry

In a mobile workforce operation, there are two areas where data is collected: in the field and in the office. Using a traditional system means that there are two places where manual data entry has to happen. Manual data entry not only eats up a lot of time and money, but is error-prone and inefficient.

An MWM solution provides a single point of data entry which means information doesn't need to be entered in two separate locations. Automating manual data entry in the field optimizes workflows to save time, and time saving translates into money saved as well. Also, staffing requirements are minimized and business can expand without the need to hire data entry staff or third party data

entry organizations.

Driver Behavior

In addition to managing the work order and data collection processes more efficiently, a mobile workforce management solution also includes standard driver behavior functionality, such as monitoring fuel consumption.

When fuel costs account for a significant portion of most fleet budgets, finding ways of reducing consumption can make a big difference. MWM technology allows companies to monitor driver behavior in order to track how much fuel is being wasted when field operators speed or idle unnecessarily.

For example, often when summer rolls around and the temperatures rise, drivers like to turn up the air conditioning. This in and of itself isn't a big issue, but when field operators go to jobs and leave the engine running to keep the vehicle cool, it can become expensive and drive up operating costs.

When it comes to speeding, studies have shown that reducing driving speed can lower fuel consumption substantially. Driving even a small amount over the speed limit for a prolonged period of time can drastically reduce fuel efficiency. Also, speeding puts field operators in danger and increases a company's liability in the event of an accident. Speeding on a leased or private road can also negatively impact a company's ability to do business.

With an MWM solution, real-time audible and visual feedback can be provided to the driver to stop the costly behaviors before they happen, rather than after the fact.

Conclusion

A mobile workforce management solution is the most effective way to manage the challenges of a mobile workforce and streamline operations. No matter what type of mobile workforce you manage, chances are you could benefit from greater efficiency.

Mobile workforce management technology gives you the tools to decrease operating costs and grow your revenue. Without it, you're leaving money on the table.

If you want to see a powerful mobile workforce management solution in action, **request a custom demo of AssetWorks Field Service Solution at assetworks.com/fss.**

Vehicle Wear and Tear

A mobile workforce management solution also makes certain that vehicles are being driven properly, which results in longer vehicle lifespans and lower maintenance costs.

Vehicle diagnostic information can be pulled directly from fleet vehicles and integrated with maintenance programs to ensure that vehicles are being serviced when needed to avoid downtime and costly repairs, as well as preventing expensive maintenance work.

Scheduled vehicle maintenance can also be tracked and automated maintenance reminders can be generated for fleet maintenance personnel. This can ensure that vehicles are not being under- or over-maintained, and wear and tear is reduced.



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