

Is Your Enterprise Ready for Mobile Field Service?

An in-depth look at hardware devices for mobile field service software solutions. Featuring hardware and software considerations when implementing a mobile field service solution.



Field Service Industry Profile

The field service industry includes a vast range of businesses. Examples of service businesses that are part of the field service industry would include utilities, telecommunications, HVAC and Refrigeration, Plumbing, Oil and Gas Petroleum, Landscape Maintenance, and Specialty Contractors such as Overhead Door, Locksmiths, etc. Any company or division that sends service technicians into the field using service vehicles are part of the field service industry.

Field Service Hardware and Software Challenges

The challenges faced in implementing a mobile field service solution will vary depending on your business focus. For simplicity, let's break down business focus for mobile solutions into three categories.

- **Simple Mobile Solution –** A simple mobile solution would include businesses that are focused on providing the least amount of effort on the service technician. This would include software functions like job status, SMS or text messaging, and time stamping.

Solution Overview

There are three basic steps to determine a mobile field service hardware solution. The first is to list the primary key factors provided by the mobile solution. The second is to determine the mobile technician's needs and abilities. The third and final consideration is of course the cost. The costs would include the devices, personnel training, replacement costs, implementation costs.

In addressing the primary focus of the mobile solution, make a prioritized list of the key factors the mobile solution must provide. Here is an example of a prioritized list of key factors in a mobile solution:

1. Time Stamping and Time Tracking
2. Customer Signature Capture Electronically
3. Real Time Job Status
4. In-field Printing of Completed Work Order

Once the key factors have been determined and the focus selected, the next consideration is the field service technician's needs and abilities. A key factor to consider here is the technician's work environment.

Field Service

Hardware Considerations

AT A GLANCE:

Industry Profile:

Field Services

Industries Affected:

Utilities
Telecom
HVAC and Refrigeration
Plumbing
Landscape
Oil and Gas Petroleum
Specialty Contractors

Business Challenge:

Combining the right hardware and software products to create an economical solution to provide mobile field service automation.

Solution:

Solutions will vary by industry and even by companies within each industry. The purpose of this article is to provide insights and considerations for businesses looking to implement a mobile field service hardware solution.





- **Median Mobile Solution** – A median mobile solution would include a business focus of providing key information to field technicians with Real Time interaction between the service technician and the back office or dispatch center. This would include more in-depth software functions like providing detailed equipment information, service history, job-site mapping, and customer electronic signature with the key ingredient being to allow real time updating and interaction for the mobile service tech.
- **Robust Mobile Solution** – A business that is focusing on a robust mobile service solution would include Real Time interaction and full technician enablement. A robust mobile solution would allow the field technician the ability to handle all aspects of the job. This would include enterprise-level software functions such as GPS vehicle tracking, Barcode scanning, RFID, Inventory management, Enterprise Asset Management, In-field creation of work orders, In-field printing, etc.

Hardware needs are going to vary depending on the business focus of the company, as it relates to field services. Enterprises looking to implement a mobile field service solution must give serious consideration to the primary focus of the mobile solution.

If the work environment is often outdoors or rooftops, such as in HVAC and refrigeration, consideration must be given to the hardware's ability to withstand this environment. The next consideration would be the technician's technology abilities. Asking simple questions like the following can provide valuable information: "Can the service technician work on a small keyboard, or do they need a full size device?" or "Have our technicians ever used a computer?"

The final consideration in implementing a field service solution is cost. The cost of the devices, are only one consideration. Other equally important considerations would include:

- Replacement cost of the mobile unit
- Training costs for the mobile devices
- Monthly fees associated with the device
- Supplemental hardware costs, such as printers, ink, barcode scanners, RFID scanners, credit card readers, etc.
- Other implementation costs

Mobile devices can range in costs from a simple free mobile phone to a \$5000.00 ruggedized laptop.

Determining the best hardware for a field service solution is no easy task. Businesses within the same industry have different priorities which can affect the hardware choice for a mobile field service solution.

Key Considerations in Implementing a Mobile Field Service Hardware Solution

- 1. Primary Business Focus – Determine software needs**
- 2. Determine Technician Needs and Abilities**
- 3. Evaluate All Costs Associated With the Hardware Implementation**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

DeFNiC Software and Consulting
www.dispatchedsoftware.com

Quick Books
<http://www.quickbooks.com>

Our product and QuickBooks Financial Software work together to help simplify your business management. QuickBooks 2006 Financial Software helps you get more done faster, with a new Home page, simplified Customer and Vendor Centers, and sophisticated business planning tools.

QuickBooks and the QuickBooks logo are trademarks of Intuit Inc., displayed with permission.