MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

AND THE FIELD SERVICE WORKFORCE

How Field Service Teams Are Leveraging Mobile Solutions to Enhance Service Outcomes and Manage the Workforce More Effectively

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INSIGHTS
Worldwide Business Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Field service technicians are increasingly dependent on mobile technologies to diagnose problems quickly, access critical data, and deliver services above customer expectations.

Teams now need software that offers seamless functionality across mobile and desktop platforms, with a strong focus on customization and user-friendly interfaces.

This report explores the current state of mobile technology use in field service. It reveals key insights about how effectively field service teams are leveraging mobile technology, as well as what steps they can take in the future to improve on their mobile-first field service initiatives.
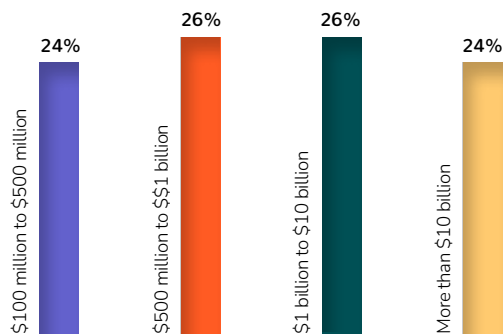
ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

The WBR Insights research team surveyed 100 field service, operations, IT, and finance leaders from across the U.S. and Canada to generate the results featured in this report.

What best describes the industries in which your organization provides service?

Industry	Percentage
Utilities	11%
Appliances & Electronics	9%
Enterprise Network Equipment	9%
Heavy Equipment	9%
Manufacturing	9%
Construction & Industrial	8%
Domestic Computers	8%
Information & Communication Technology	8%
Medical & Scientific Devices	8%
Semiconductors	8%
Transportation	8%
Commercial Computers	6%
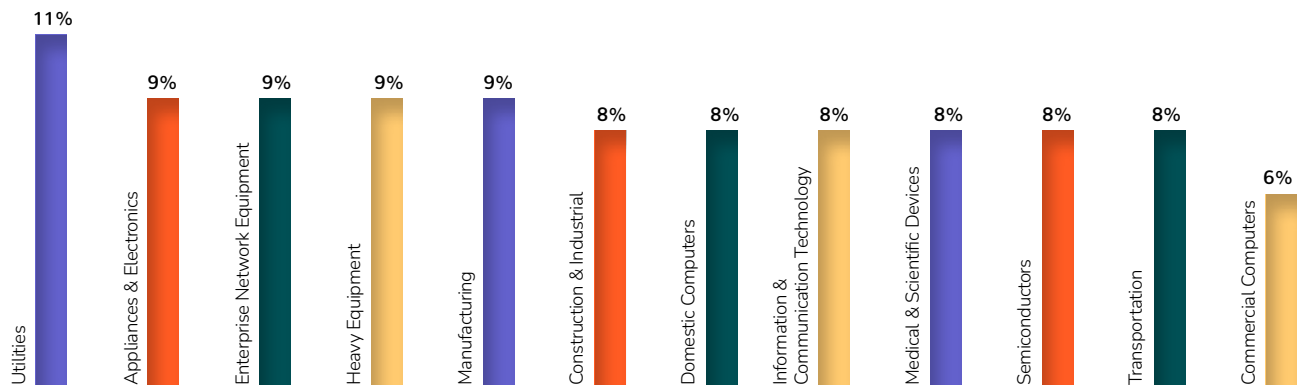
What is your company's annual revenue (USD)?

Revenue	Percentage
$100 million to $500 million	24%
$500 million to $$1 billion	26%
$1 billion to $10 billion	26%
More than $10 billion	24%

What is your role?

- **30%** Operations
- **25%** Field Service
- **23%** IT
- **22%** Finance

What is your seniority?

- **1%** C-Suite
- **1%** Senior Vice President
- **24%** Vice President
- **11%** Department Head
- **63%** Director

The companies represented in the report provide service to various industries, including utilities (11%), appliances and electronics (9%), enterprise network equipment (9%), heavy equipment (9%), and manufacturing (9%), among others.
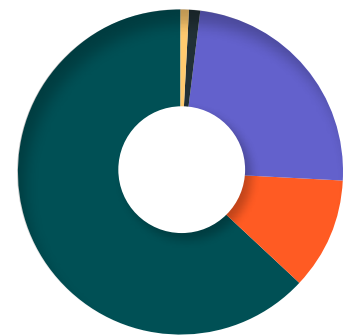
The companies represented in the report are almost evenly split in size, as measured by annual revenue. The respondents occupy roles in operations (30%), field service (25%), IT (23%), and finance (22%).

At 63%, most of the respondents are directors. The remaining respondents are vice presidents (24%), department heads (11%), senior vice presidents (1%), and C-suite executives (1%).

KEY INSIGHTS

Among the respondents:

64% only somewhat agree that their field service technicians are well-equipped with mobile technology.

80% have adopted a mobile-first approach to empowering technicians, but 75% of these respondents are only somewhat satisfied with their current mobile technologies.

56% are very satisfied with their ability to leverage work order management.

51% are very satisfied with their ability to leverage mobile invoice management.

69% are at least somewhat satisfied with their mobile customer management capabilities.

75% are at least somewhat satisfied with their scheduling and dispatch automation capabilities.

15% are not very satisfied with the user interfaces of their field service management systems. Among these respondents, 81% say the mobile version of their system lacks capabilities.

Their top mobile technologies include field service management apps **(74%)**, mobile parts/inventory access **(59%)**, mobile payment solutions **(57%)**, and GPS tracking **(53%)**.

Only 38% regularly poll their technicians for feedback on mobile technology.

The most valued upgrades in field service management technology, rated as very important, are a modern user interface **(79%)**, user-defined data elements **(71%)**, customer portals **(60%)**, and customizable dashboards **(57%)**.

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"
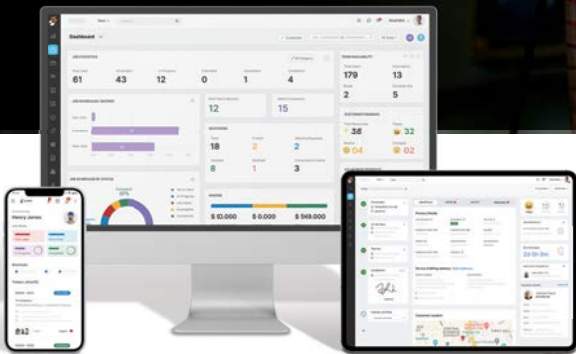
"We were drowning in paperwork and had no way to effectively track job progress or performance data. Implementing Zuper's field service management software was our only hope of scaling our business."

George Ginis,
CTO, Sail Internet

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Field Service, Your Way

Zuper is the most adaptable field service management solution for fast-growing and forward-thinking service businesses. The platform enables seamless collaboration between back-office teams, field service technicians and customers, maximizing operational efficiency to drive revenue and improve the overall customer experience.

Benefits
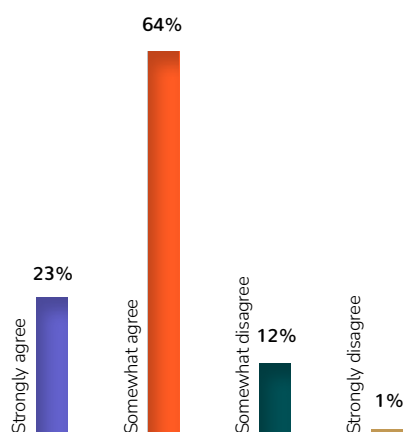
✓ User-driven configurations empower easy adaptability

✓ Offers more than 60 best-in-class integrations

✓ Grows and scales with your business

✓ Provides no-code workflows and intelligent automation

✓ Delivers industry-leading customer service

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY MOVES TO THE FOREFRONT OF FIELD SERVICE OPERATIONS

The advent of mobile technology has ushered in a new era for field service operations, significantly impacting both efficiency and customer satisfaction. Despite some significant progress, a look at the current state of mobile technology in field service reveals areas where further improvements and adoption of advanced solutions are necessary.
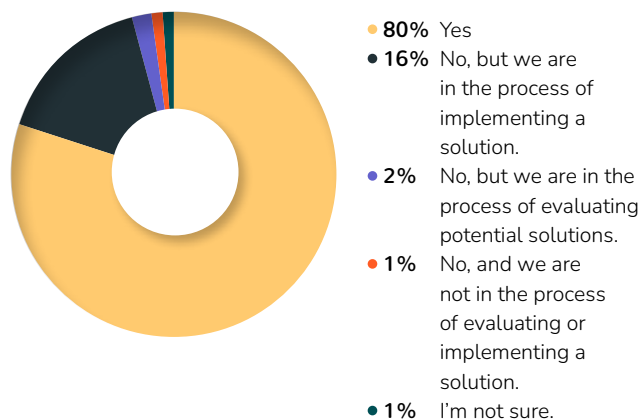
How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "Our field service technicians are empowered with mobile technology, enabling them to access the solutions they need directly from their mobile devices."

Bar chart:
- Strongly agree: 23%
- Somewhat agree: 64%
- Somewhat disagree: 12%
- Strongly disagree: 1%

In your view, has your field service department implemented a mobile-first strategy to empower technicians in the field?

- **80%** Yes
- **16%** No, but we are in the process of implementing a solution.
- **2%** No, but we are in the process of evaluating potential solutions.
- **1%** No, and we are not in the process of evaluating or implementing a solution.
- **1%** I'm not sure.

A significant majority of the respondents either somewhat (64%) or strongly (23%) agree that their field service technicians are empowered with mobile technology, enabling them to access the solutions they need directly from their mobile devices. This high level of mobile technology adoption suggests an optimistic trajectory toward fully digital and efficient field service operations.

The ability for technicians to access solutions instantly not only increases productivity but also significantly enhances customer satisfaction by reducing wait times and improving service accuracy. For field service leaders aiming to further empower their technicians, a focus on implementing advanced mobile solutions that offer real-time data access, remote support capabilities, and enhanced communication channels is essential.

A majority of field service departments (80%) have also adopted a mobile-first strategy, with an additional 16% in the process of implementation.

Since you said, "Yes," how satisfied are you with your current mobile technologies and their ability to empower your field service technicians?

75%

17%

Very satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Not very satisfied

7%
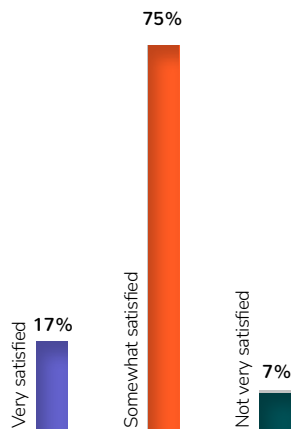
However, among those who have adopted this strategy, satisfaction levels are moderate, with 75% feeling only somewhat satisfied and 7% not very satisfied with their mobile technology solutions and the empowerment of their field service technicians.

This data suggests that while the shift towards a mobile-first approach in field service operations is gaining momentum, current technologies may not be sufficient. Field service leaders have an opportunity for improvement and innovation within the sector, as the future of mobile workforces in field service will likely hinge on addressing these dissatisfaction areas.

Field service and operations leaders should work with their IT departments to identify better solutions. Ideally, new mobile field service technologies should enhance the functionality, user experience, and integration of their tools.

Moving forward, it will be critical to involve technicians in the decision-making process. This includes selecting technologies that not only meet current needs but are also scalable and adaptable to future requirements.

By empowering technicians with the right tools and support, field service departments can improve efficiency, reduce downtime, and ultimately enhance customer satisfaction.

FIELD SERVICE LEADERS FACE MOBILE TECHNOLOGY GAPS AND A LACK OF TECHNICIAN INPUT

Today, field service organizations compete by prioritizing customer satisfaction and leveraging technology to enhance efficiency and service quality. Successful companies focus on putting customers at the center of their business strategy, using field service management (FSM) software to keep customers informed in real-time, provide tailored solutions, and ensure optimal quality of service.

Which of the following mobile technologies are you currently leveraging in your field service operations?

Field service management platforms with mobile apps
74%

Mobile access to parts and inventory
59%

Mobile payment solutions
57%

GPS tracking systems
53%

Mobile-based problem diagnostic and resolution guides/checklists
50%

Remote diagnostic tools
46%

Route optimization software
38%

Offline capabilities with automatic synchronization to host system
34%

Mobile-based training solutions or manuals
33%

Virtual/augmented reality (e.g., for remote assistance and coaching)
19%

Often, it is companies' technology, and their ability to use that technology, that differentiates their service. Nowhere is this more apparent than in today's mobile field service technology, which is now critical to fast, effective service delivery, as well as first-time fixes.

The study reveals a clear trend towards the integration of mobile technologies in field service operations, with a notable preference for field service management platforms with mobile apps (74%) leading the way. This is followed by mobile access to parts and inventory (59%), mobile payment solutions (57%), and GPS tracking systems (53%).

These findings underscore the pivotal role that mobile technologies play in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of field service operations.

Field service teams are shifting towards more agile, responsive, and customer-centric service delivery models. The reliance on mobile access to parts and inventory, as well as payment solutions, suggests that speed and convenience are becoming crucial competitive differentiators.

GPS tracking, on the other hand, highlights an emphasis on operational efficiency and resource optimization, as well as security. Moving forward, field service leaders should continue to invest in comprehensive mobile solutions that not only streamline operational processes but also elevate the customer experience.

How satisfied are you with your ability to leverage the following capabilities given your current field service software and mobile technology?

- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Not Satisfied
- We don't have this capability

Work order management: Very Satisfied 56%, Somewhat Satisfied 35%, Not Satisfied 4%, We don't have this capability 5%

Mobile invoice management: Very Satisfied 51%, Somewhat Satisfied 19%, Not Satisfied 5%, We don't have this capability 25%

Mobile customer management: Very Satisfied 38%, Somewhat Satisfied 31%, Not Satisfied 15%, We don't have this capability 16%

Scheduling and dispatch automation: Very Satisfied 32%, Somewhat Satisfied 43%, Not Satisfied 8%, We don't have this capability 17%

Mobile timesheet management: Very Satisfied 27%, Somewhat Satisfied 50%, Not Satisfied 15%, We don't have this capability 8%

Optimal route automation: Very Satisfied 26%, Somewhat Satisfied 34%, Not Satisfied 13%, We don't have this capability 27%

Mobile field service asset management (e.g., maintenance records): Very Satisfied 23%, Somewhat Satisfied 55%, Not Satisfied 15%, We don't have this capability 7%

Mobile contract management: Very Satisfied 19%, Somewhat Satisfied 52%, Not Satisfied 10%, We don't have this capability 19%

Mobile troubleshooting and problem resolution assist: Very Satisfied 19%, Somewhat Satisfied 46%, Not Satisfied 26%, We don't have this capability 9%

Mobile job estimate management (e.g., estimates for the cost of repair jobs): Very Satisfied 16%, Somewhat Satisfied 38%, Not Satisfied 29%, We don't have this capability 17%

Currently, the respondents are satisfied with their ability to leverage some remote and mobile capabilities, but they either aren't satisfied or cannot leverage others.

A majority of participants are very satisfied with the work order management (56%) and mobile invoice management (51%) capabilities facilitated by their existing field service software and mobile technologies.

Similarly, in each case, a majority of respondents are either 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with their ability to leverage mobile customer management (38% and 31%, respectively) and scheduling and dispatch automation (32% and 43%, respectively) given their current field service software and mobile technology.

However, there appears to be a gap in satisfaction when it comes to utilizing mobile estimate management, mobile troubleshooting and problem resolution, and optimal route automation, with fewer respondents feeling content with these aspects.

Robust mobile estimate management capabilities could enable field service technicians to create and adjust estimates on the spot, allowing for more efficient collaboration with customers and quicker invoice processing. Similarly, streamlined mobile troubleshooting and problem-resolution tools could significantly improve customer satisfaction by minimizing downtime and reducing repair costs.

Optimal route automation can save time and resources by providing real-time guidance to technicians en route to a job site, helping them avoid traffic and save on fuel costs.

Based on these results, there is untapped potential to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the mobile workforce through advanced and sophisticated features. Field service leaders should prioritize the evaluation and adoption of robust mobile technologies that offer a more holistic suite of services.

Investing in training programs to enhance the digital literacy of their technicians and conducting regular assessments to understand the evolving needs of their workforce can also drive better adoption and satisfaction.

Do you regularly survey your technicians to understand their needs and challenges as they relate to your mobile field service technology?

- **38%** Yes
- **49%** No
- **13%** I'm not sure.
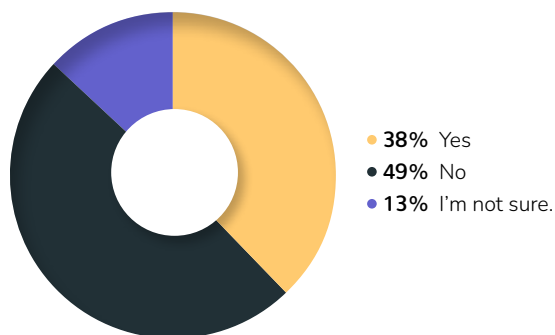
Leaders can also gain a better understanding of what needs to change in their mobile workforce strategy by speaking to technicians themselves. Employees and contractors who use the company's mobile systems will have the best insight into how easy the tools are to use and how effective they are at improving productivity and customer satisfaction.

Unfortunately, only 38% of the respondents regularly survey their technicians to understand their needs and challenges as they relate to their mobile field service technology. Almost half of the respondents (49%) don't survey their technicians, while 13% aren't sure if they do.

Researchers sought to gain a better understanding of which mobile technologies or capabilities technicians value most in their day-to-day work, so they asked the respondents who get input from their technicians

to identify them. The responses suggest that there is a strong demand for technologies that enhance mobility, real-time communication, and advanced diagnostics.

Multiple respondents say that advanced Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools and mobile diagnostic applications that interface directly with operational systems are in high demand. These requests underscore the technicians' desire for tools that not only facilitate precise location tracking and mapping but also ensure efficient diagnosis and troubleshooting of issues in the field.

Another critical area of technology that has been requested is related to real-time tracking and monitoring capabilities, notably through IoT devices and advanced GPS tracking software. This emphasis on real-time data acquisition points to a growing need for technologies that can provide immediate insights into asset performance, vehicle health, and environmental conditions.

The interest in IoT devices, coupled with a significant demand for cloud-based service management platforms, reveals a broader trend towards a connected, data-driven approach to field service management.

These technologies are valued for their potential to improve the accuracy of diagnostics, streamline communication between technicians and their home base, and ultimately enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of field operations.

TEAMS STRUGGLE WITH A LACK OF CAPABILITIES ON MOBILE VERSIONS OF PLATFORMS

Many of the mobile solutions field service teams now work with are not standalone mobile products. Instead, they are mobile extensions of other SaaS products that were initially designed to be operated using a desktop or laptop computer.

Often, mobile technologies are only as useful as they are intuitive to use. A poorly designed user interface can lead to mistakes or even technicians forgoing using the product in the first place.
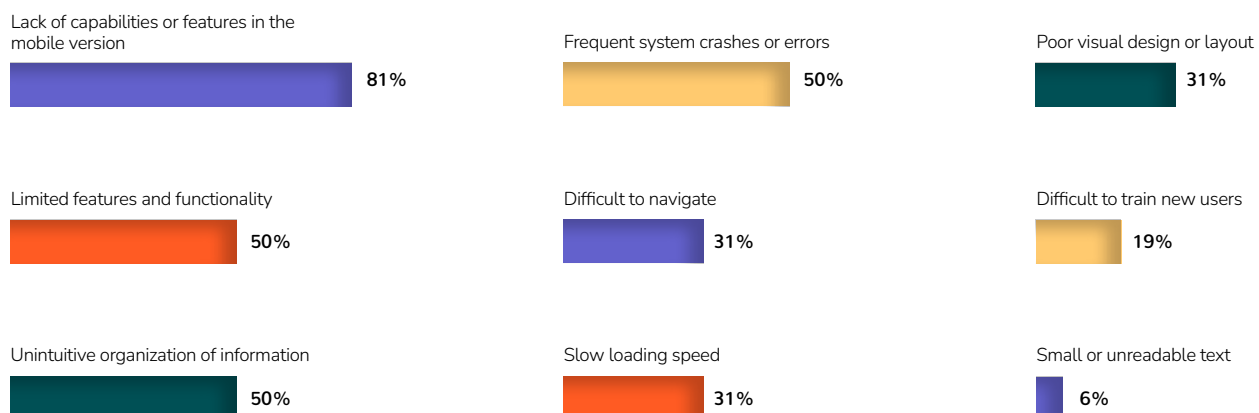
How satisfied are you with the user interface of your current field service management system, considering both its web portal and mobile portal, if available?

- **2%** Very satisfied
- **80%** Somewhat satisfied
- **15%** Not very satisfied
- **3%** This does not apply.
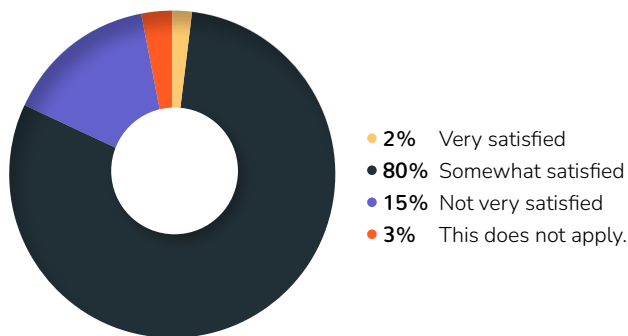
Currently, 80% of the respondents are only somewhat satisfied with the user interfaces of their current field service management systems. Another 15% are not very satisfied.
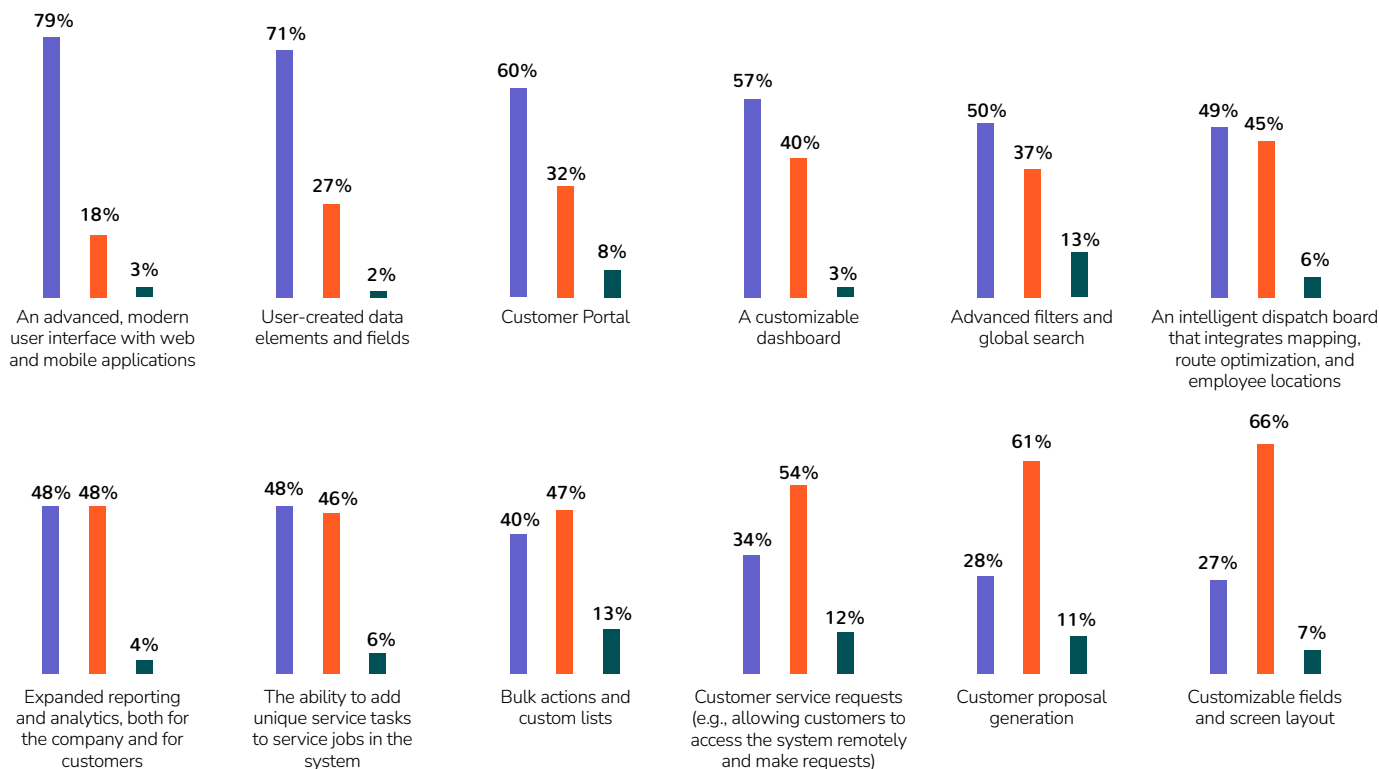
Among only those respondents who are 'not very satisfied' with the user interface of their current field service management system, 81% claim they lack certain capabilities or features in the mobile version of their field service management system's user interface.

Since you said you aren't satisfied with your field service management system's user interface, which of the following are challenges you've experienced while using it?

Lack of capabilities or features in the mobile version
81%

Frequent system crashes or errors
50%

Poor visual design or layout
31%

Limited features and functionality
50%

Difficult to navigate
31%

Difficult to train new users
19%

Unintuitive organization of information
50%

Slow loading speed
31%

Small or unreadable text
6%

How important would the following upgrades be for your field service management software, or how important have they been if your software provider has already rolled them out?

● Very Important   ● Somewhat Important   ● Not That Important

An advanced, modern user interface with web and mobile applications — 79%, 18%, 3%

User-created data elements and fields — 71%, 27%, 2%

Customer Portal — 60%, 32%, 8%

A customizable dashboard — 57%, 40%, 3%

Advanced filters and global search — 50%, 37%, 13%

An intelligent dispatch board that integrates mapping, route optimization, and employee locations — 49%, 45%, 6%

Expanded reporting and analytics, both for the company and for customers — 48%, 48%, 4%

The ability to add unique service tasks to service jobs in the system — 48%, 46%, 6%

Bulk actions and custom lists — 40%, 47%, 13%

Customer service requests (e.g., allowing customers to access the system remotely and make requests) — 34%, 54%, 12%

Customer proposal generation — 28%, 61%, 11%

Customizable fields and screen layout — 27%, 66%, 7%

Depending on the product, technicians may experience a loss in capabilities when accessing these products through their mobile devices. "Mobile versions" of some solutions simply don't always have the same capabilities as the standard versions.

This loss in functionality can be a major pain point for field service technicians, who rely on these tools to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. As such, there is a growing demand for mobile-first solutions that not only provide convenient access to data but also offer the same capabilities as desktop or laptop versions. Software providers that provide mobile-first technologies—solutions initially designed with mobile use in mind—are likely ideal for field service teams that are prioritizing mobile empowerment.

Finally, respondents were told that many field service management technologies are receiving upgrades thanks to innovations like artificial intelligence, user research, and user feedback. They were asked how important they considered 12 upgrades for their field service management software, or how important they would have been if their software provider had already rolled them out.

In each case, most respondents identified as 'very important': an advanced, modern user interface with web and mobile applications (79%), user-created data elements and fields (71%), a customer portal (60%), and a customizable dashboard (57%) in response.

These results highlight the paramount importance of user-centric design and functionality in field service management software. The emphasis on customization also points toward a future where mobile workforces require tools that are not only functional but also tailor-made to fit their unique operational needs.

In essence, the data suggests that the effectiveness of field service technicians can be significantly enhanced by software that supports a high degree of personalization and instant access to relevant information. To empower their technicians, field service leaders should prioritize investing in technologies that offer robust mobile functionality, user customization, and seamless access to data.

This approach will not only improve the efficiency of technicians but also elevate the overall customer service experience, positioning companies to better meet the evolving demands of their clientele.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE-PROOFING FIELD SERVICE OPERATIONS WITH BETTER MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Field technicians express a growing demand for tools that are not just mobile but intuitively designed, emphasizing the importance of real-time communication, advanced diagnostic capabilities, and seamless access to cloud-based platforms.

The findings underscore a critical shift towards a more connected, data-driven approach to field service management, highlighting the need for software that supports these capabilities as standard, not optional, features.

The dissatisfaction with the user interfaces of current field service management systems points to a broader issue in the industry—the need for user-centric design and functionality that mirrors the sophistication and versatility of modern consumer technology.

Field service organizations must analyze their technological investments, prioritizing solutions that are not only mobile-first but also highly customizable and intuitive. By focusing on software that offers comprehensive functionalities across both desktop and mobile platforms, these organizations can significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their field service operations.

Such a strategic approach not only caters to the immediate needs of technicians but also aligns with the long-term objectives of delivering superior customer service. Investing in these technologies is not merely an operational upgrade; it is a critical step toward future-proofing a field service organization in an increasingly competitive and technologically advanced landscape.

KEY SUGGESTIONS

Prioritize investing in mobile-first technologies. Mobile-first solutions are essential because they ensure that the full range of functionalities available on desktop versions is accessible on mobile devices, catering to the primary tools used by field technicians.

Focus on user-centric designs for all technology investments. Implementing technologies with user-friendly interfaces across devices improves usability and reduces the learning curve, leading to better adoption rates and fewer errors in the field.

Incorporate user feedback in the technology investment and integration process. Continuously integrate feedback from field technicians to identify solutions that meet their needs.

Use customizable and tailor-fit mobile technology. Customization options allow for a more personalized approach to data management and interface layout, which can significantly enhance productivity by aligning the tool's functionality with the technicians' specific workflows and preferences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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