FYLD

10 ways to improve field worker productivity

Key areas ripe for disruption in the 21st century

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Meeting the demands of a changing world

The pressure is on for utilities to reduce operating costs and improve productivity against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving landscape.

Today's utilities sector is being challenged on all sides. Continued price volatility, geopolitical instability, growing competition and changing performance and regulatory requirements are just some of the ongoing pressures currently impacting the industry.

In addition, the productivity gains afforded by successive waves of digitally led, increasingly sophisticated apps and services is raising expectations on all sides. Customers and businesses alike are growing used to better, smarter and more productive ways of working and living. Within the utilities industry, this 'new normal' has implications for the full spectrum of customer-facing and internal processes.

> ## 62% of organisations are expanding mobile technology to enterprise-wide use – reaching 97% by 2023
>
> The Future of Field Operations Vision Study, Zebra

For utilities field teams across gas, energy, water and telecommunications, the opportunities for mobile technology innovation to fundamentally reshape ways of working are growing increasingly apparent. More broadly, utilities are looking to technology to address many core business and operational issues.

But the truth is that utilities face genuine hurdles in adopting best practices and unlocking the true potential that the latest technologies can offer for key metrics like customer satisfaction, efficiency and worker productivity.

Engaging field teams in new ways of working

Technology alone can't solve everything. Improving productivity in field operations is as much of a people challenge as a technology one. But with the right solution, field teams can be empowered with new ways of working that not only enhance productivity, but also make the job easier, safer and ultimately more rewarding.

Two-thirds of workers within traditional utilities companies are field based. However, a recent study by SGN revealed that 22% of their time is taken up by paperwork. This admin burden is typically completed away from the site in team vehicles, sucking valuable time and resources unnecessarily.

Unfortunately, the first wave of digital innovation has failed to address this challenge properly, with many rudimentary systems in use which are essentially digitised versions of older processes, and which still involve a high degree of manual entry. The majority of field teams are still using rugged laptops located in trucks to complete admin.

This means that despite a slightly greater degree of integration and centralised data collection, first-generation digital products have failed to deliver on the true promise of digital transformation.

Realising the true potential of mobile innovation

By leveraging the capabilities of AI, machine learning and data analytics, utilities can adopt wholly new ways of working that are far superior from every perspective. Making the most of the built-in functionality in workers' personal devices such as geolocation, orientation, voice interaction, picture, video and fingerprint ID. And also bringing enterprise-level systems thinking to the level of the individual, with significant opportunities for productivity.

> ## By standardising and optimising their workforce management procedures, companies can increase workers' availability in the field by 50% and reduce by 25% the time needed for routine jobs
>
> Source: Boston Consulting Group

10 key areas for improving field work productivity

Mobile technology innovation is the catalyst for field operations as a whole to maximise productivity and performance. The latest available tools can transform on-the-job productivity in the following critical ways.

01 Routine Admin

Recording observations and assessments makes up a huge part of field work that has always historically involved significant levels of paperwork. New digital ways of working mean it's now possible to automatically log data with greater accuracy in real time.

02 Communication

Delays with completing admin can lead to delays between teams, as well as between companies and their customers and stakeholders. But with automatic processing of data, including text, video and forms, entire teams can have visibility of the information they need, enabling them to make more informed decisions immediately.

03 Time Management

Travel time can be a real drain on productivity. But effective journey planning can now be integrated into the overall scheduling process. Implementing time-tracking tools with GPS functionality saves considerable time by calculating the distance vs. travel time. This includes real-time information such as road closures and traffic congestion hotspots.

04 Scheduling

Whereas rostering has historically been used to determine shift patterns, it delivers few productivity gains. Scheduling tools enable companies to make sure everybody's doing the right thing at the right time. It also helps generate valuable time savings, for instance, by scheduling workers against the shortest route between jobs to minimise travel time and maximise productivity.

05 Unexpected Events

One of the main challenges for utilities field workers is dealing with unexpected events. Travel delays, cancelled appointments and tasks taking longer or shorter than expected can often seriously compromise productivity on a given day. Having an overview of events as they unfold in real time enables managers to make the quick decisions they need to ensure their teams can get on with the job.

06 Actionable Insights

Generating timely and relevant insights that are accessible and easy to understand enables managers to review and refine their processes and be more effective. Data is only useful if it's actionable and can be put to immediate practical use in all areas of field work, from resourcing to scheduling and beyond.

07 Standardising Processes

Individual ways of working make it difficult for managers to easily work with all of the insight that's being generated or have full sight of it, for example when workers use popular messaging apps to communicate and record evidence. Standardising processes organisation-wide can reduce errors and ensure that all vital data is captured for later analysis and optimisation.

09 Worker Engagement

Like most of us, field workers tend to enjoy using their smartphones and other mobile devices. By enabling them to conduct assessments easily and quickly on their own devices, utilities companies can boost worker engagement with the task at hand and make their job more rewarding, which in turn can boost productivity.

08 Time In The Field

Outmoded and inconsistent data capture methods tend to limit the amount of time workers spend on site, as much of the admin work is done once the worker is back in the vehicle. By empowering them to capture the data needed for assessments as soon as they see it, field workers can spend less time on admin and more time addressing issues as they happen.

10 The Bigger Picture

With multiple workers being based across multiple locations, functions and workstreams, overall productivity can suffer if the whole operation isn't approached in an end to end, holistic way. New technologies can effortlessly join up all of the dots, identifying inefficiencies and bringing teams closer together in the process.

> Underpinned by sophisticated analytics, the extended application of mobile technology throughout the utility industry can help employees make decisions and perform tasks in highly coordinated and collaborative ways, regardless of location

Source:IBM Institute for Business Value

The time to act is now

As new market entrants continue to emerge, all with deeply embedded agile approaches to technology, it's time for traditional utilities to seize the opportunity to become digital leaders themselves and chart a new course for field work productivity.

A new generation of digitally led competitors
is taking greater advantage of mobile technology to deepen customer insight to unlock new services. For larger, more traditional utilities, confronting this competitive edge head-on means addressing internal productivity in a root-and-branch way. that the latest technologies can offer for key metrics like customer satisfaction, efficiency and worker productivity.

According to IBM, innovation has never been more important for the industry. Analysis carried out by IBM's Institute for Business Value shows that utilities that embrace innovation outpace the industry in overall value creation. Over a three-year period, innovative utilities reported a 37% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), whereas the S&P 500 utilities index showed a more modest growth of 9% for the same period.

The good news is that mobile technology goes hand-in-hand with remote utilities work. When combined with the right solution, this can rapidly accelerate operational efficiency, product and service improvement and business development. Making field teams across the board more satisfied, engaged and most importantly more productive.
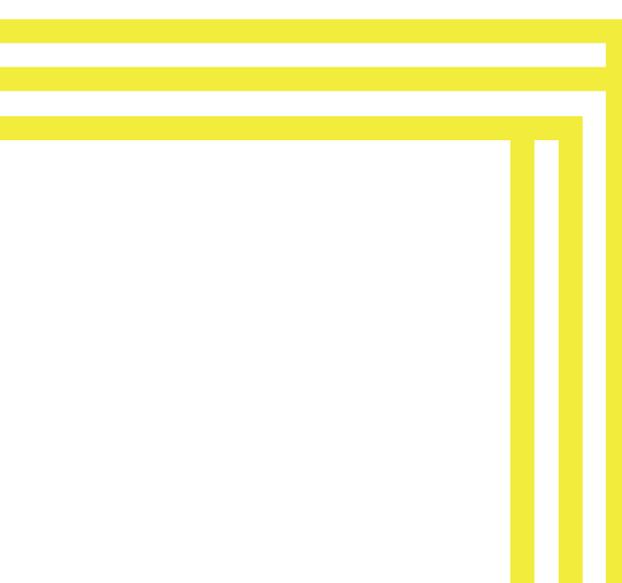
FYLD

Fyld improves productivity and safety for field operations via effortless data capture and analytics. Enabling real-time visibility of site conditions and actionable insights through a simple and intuitive smartphone interface.

Fyld makes use of innovative technology such as natural language processing and machine learning to truly eliminate the burden of paperwork and surface critical information at the right time and place.

More than just another paperwork replacement solution, Fyld completely transforms existing ways of working. It is a solution that every utility company needs.

Track everything.
Focus on what matters.

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