



Remote workforce management in utilities during COVID-19

How technology enables collaboration in critical moments

www.fyld.ai

Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented companies in all sectors of the global economy with unprecedented challenges. Unlike countless businesses forced to cease operations to slow the spread of the virus, many utility operators provide essential infrastructure work that must continue.

Sustaining services

For utility companies providing essential services like gas, water and electricity, the key focus is maintaining supply lines and keeping critical services running, whilst protecting workers and the public.

Essential infrastructure work requires staff on site, that's why companies need to provide scalable remote assistance — thus helping staff and members of the public maintain social distancing and avoid unnecessary exposure to the risk of infection.

To continue their important work whilst reducing human contact, these companies need to embed effective remote working technologies into their operational models. This, coupled with a communications strategy and revised processes can help ensure operations maintain momentum during this crisis.

In March, 81% of UK businesses reported that COVID-19 was one of the top three sources of uncertainty for their business

The economic impact of coronavirus on UK businesses: Early evidence from the Decision Maker Panel, voxeu.org

Strain on supply and staff

For utilities, COVID-19 put resource management in focus. Operations can expect increased strain when accounting for the possibility that many team members may fall ill. Adding to this squeeze, some services can expect to see increased demand due to the crisis. For example, water demand is experiencing an inevitable spike in usage during this pandemic resulting from the increase in hand washing. Managing reduced teams requires a reevaluation of how operations can be re-organised.

Process is paramount

With the possibility of a reduced workforce and hyper-vigilance from the public, clear and dependable crisis-management processes that offer reassurance for workers in the field are of prime importance.



Utilities have historically done a great job of preparing for all types of events, and, while pandemic plans have existed for some time, COVID-19 is a driver to review plans, communicate internally and respond accordingly

Jim Nowak, Senior Director of Operations,
Product and Services, ARCOS LLC



that allow for remote collaboration between geographically dispersed teams can equip managers to increase the number of teams they are overseeing.

This communication can also flow the other way, with digital tools enabling teams to share job progress or site conditions with managers remotely. Similarly, the process of handovers in the case of illness can be eased through centralising vital information on a digital platform and removing the burden of paperwork.

Turn to technology

Digital solutions already play a key role in utility operations management, but during this pandemic, technology has revealed itself as a lynchpin solution to maintaining productivity and safeguarding workers and stakeholders.

Technology can be used to manage resourcing requirements dynamically in the face of a reduced workforce, adapt job scheduling to changing circumstances, and keep a common thread of centralised communication.

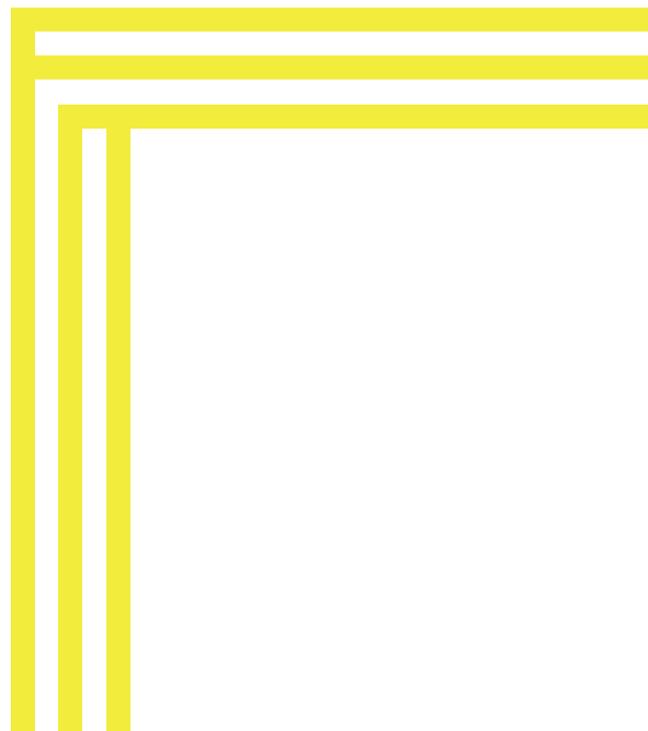
Now is the time to review your technology plan to ensure your business is doing all it can to facilitate a low-friction transition to remote field team management.

Determine what's critical

Beyond governments determining which services should continue to work through the pandemic, organisations next need to establish which internal functions are essential at this time. Many utility companies are responding by focusing all operatives on dealing with emergency situations such as outages, gas escapes and water leaks and putting a pause on new connections or a replacement programme. Depending on the size of an organisation, appointed crisis team members leading the response may comprise a subset of the senior management team with the clearest view of overall operations.

Facilitate remote collaboration

Prioritisation can be a powerful mitigation strategy, but it's also important to explore shifts in ways of working that can enable workers to maintain social distancing whilst still collaborating effectively. Conference call solutions have already become a highly relied upon technology to replace face-to-face meetings across a breadth of industries. In the case of field workers, tools



Dependable digital tools are key

In the face of the radical changes to working practices brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, utility companies may be forced to explore solutions that enable remote collaboration whilst prioritising operational efficiency. To maximise adoption and minimise delay, systems that require low integration

effort can ease this process.

Fyld is a newly-created platform designed to enable communication and collaboration between geographically dispersed teams, as well as capturing site data to understand how jobs are progressing.



Depending on the severity of the COVID-19 spread, utilities may have to ramp up coordination efforts to accommodate numerous and simultaneous health emergencies impacting their workforce, especially field workers

Price Waterhouse Cooper



Resource responsively

In a rapidly changing situation like a pandemic, resourcing supply and requirements can change at a moments' notice — workers can be taken ill and job scheduling can change. Fyld's capabilities enable utilities organisations to adapt to changing circumstances and reorganise quickly. With Fyld, managers can:

- Increase or decrease a manager's span of control to account for absences
- Reschedule jobs based on accurate site information informed by data and insights
- Leverage data and insight to inform team performance management
- Minimise unnecessary journeys and therefore risk of exposure
- Help teams prioritise more critical work
- Utilise data to establish staffing scenarios based on resource availability

Clearer communication with customers

When transitioning to a remote-ready operation, maintaining a clear line of communication not only within a utility organisation, but with its end users is imperative for a smooth process. Fyld provides managers with real-time updates on how a job is progressing and enables more detailed and timely information regarding the timeline of a job, and when an issue might be resolved. This data can then be utilised by the organisation to update customers, keeping them informed of any changing circumstances.

Timely updates on any evolving situations can help reduce misinformation, minimise disruption and remove any unnecessary risks for teams or the public.



Embrace lasting change

Thankfully, the coronavirus pandemic won't last forever, but by installing and adhering to mitigating functions now, organisations can remain better prepared for other disruptive incidents in the future.

Future-proofing your operation

Utility companies can take this opportunity to implement change that can safeguard their operation for the future. Clarifying what are essential and non-essential functions, installing crisis teams and establishing robust crisis response protocols are all important outputs from this adversity.

The remote revolution

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working practices were already revolutionising the way many organisations operate. In the post-pandemic landscape, both 'back-office' and field workers will anticipate and expect digital and remote tools to be ingrained into a utility company's processes. This expectation will not only be in anticipation of strain in a critical moment, but in the interest of installing forward-looking working practices that increase efficiency and flexibility for the entire organisation.



Like any crisis, though, this one has new elements. They may yet bring about lasting changes in how companies manage their workers, and how those people work

Andrew Hill and Emma Jacobs, Financial Times





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.**

www.fyld.ai