Leveraging Interactive Tools **for Field Service Success**

How New Solutions Are Helping Organizations Improve Service Effectiveness and the Customer Experience

INSIGHTS Worldwide Business Research FIELD SERVICE IFS

Leveraging Interactive Tools for Field Service Success

How New Solutions Are Helping Organizations Improve Service Effectiveness and the Customer Experience

Conference Contact:
Maureen Azzato
Senior Conference Producer, Field Service
Maureen.Azzato@wbresearch.com

Research Contact:
Chris Rand
Research Manager, WBR Insights
Chris.Rand@wbresearch.com

INSIGHTS
Worldwide Business Research

Contents

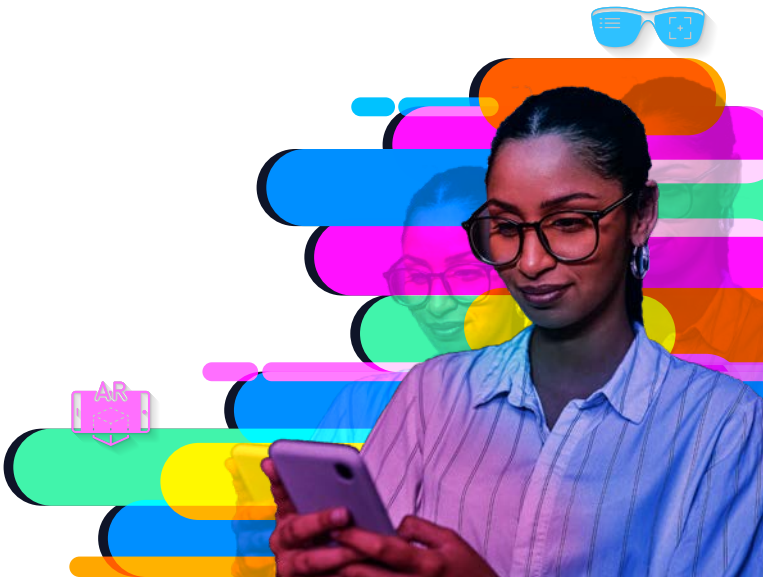
Executive Summary

Thanks to mobile apps, scheduling and dispatching tools, automation, and enterprise management solutions, the field service industry can improve upon customer satisfaction and profitability and better utilize field technicians' time. But it's how companies implement and use these tools that determine the success of their strategies.

For example, by combining technicians' expertise and creativity with solutions like augmented reality and remote assistance technology, field service organizations can drive field productivity and customer success while increasing field technician satisfaction. According to *Future of Field Service*, organizations "have leveraged the tools at their disposal to not only master first-time fix but also evolve service delivery and expand service offerings."[1]

This report explores how field service organizations are currently using interactive tools to reduce costs, become more efficient, and improve fix rates. It will also provide readers with insights into how they can draw more value from their technology deployments and use their tools to improve customer relationships.

[1] "If We Don't Master First-Time Fix in 2022, We Never Will." Future of Field Service. January 10th, 2022. https://futureoffieldservice.com/2022/01/10/if-we-dont-master-first-time-fix-in-2022-we-never-will/

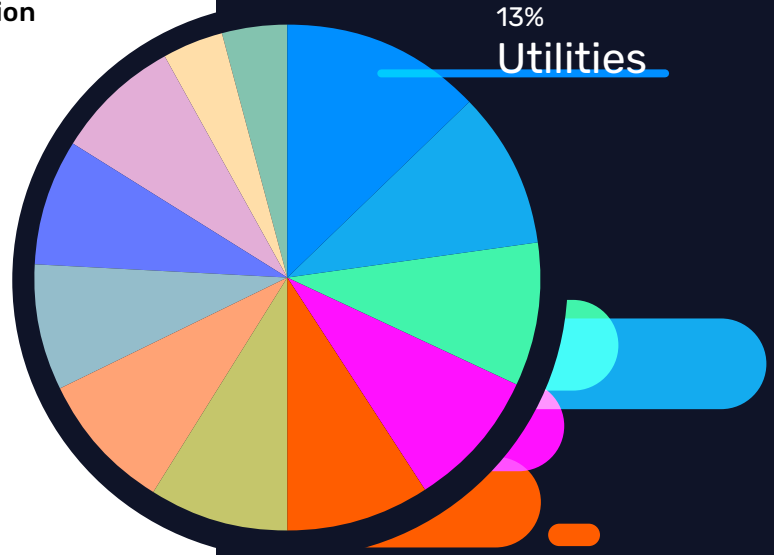


About the Respondents

The WBR Insights research team surveyed 100 field service leaders from across the U.S. and Canada to generate the results featured in this report. The respondents represent a variety of company types and occupy roles in IT, operations, service, and support.

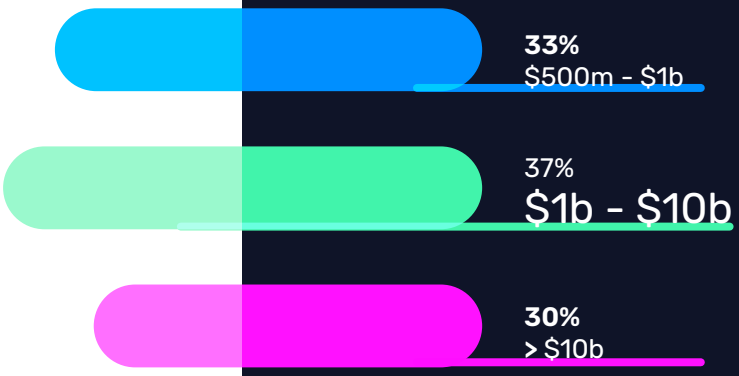
What best describes the area in which your organization provides service?

- **13%** Utilities
- **10%** Heavy Equipment
- **9%** Appliances & Electronics
- **9%** Construction & Industrial
- **9%** Enterprise Network Equipment
- **9%** Medical & Scientific Devices
- **9%** Semiconductors
- **8%** Information & Communication Technology
- **8%** Manufacturing
- **8%** Transportation
- **4%** Commercial Computers
- **4%** Domestic Computers



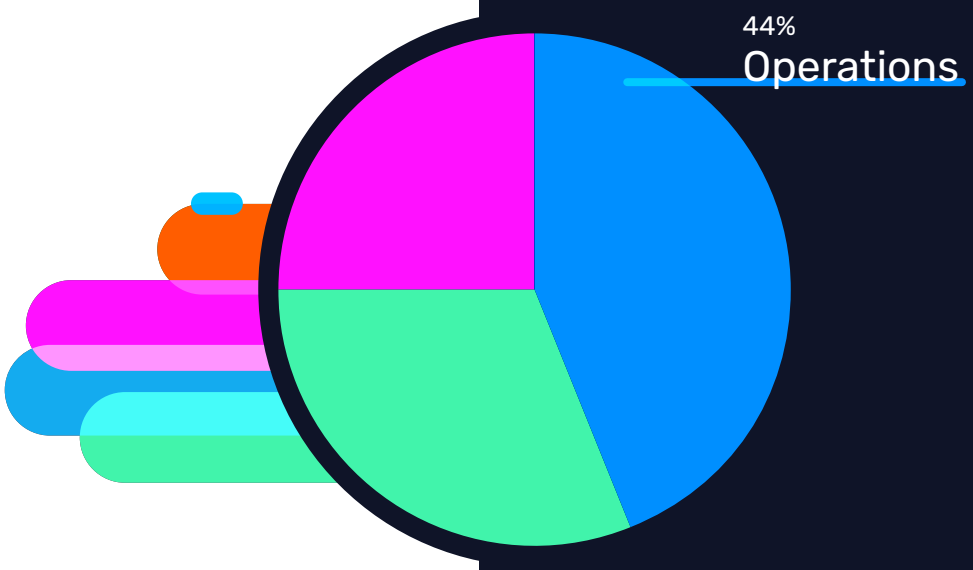
What is your company's annual revenue?

- **33%** $500 million to $1 billion
- **37%** $1 billion to $10 billion
- **30%** More than $10 billion



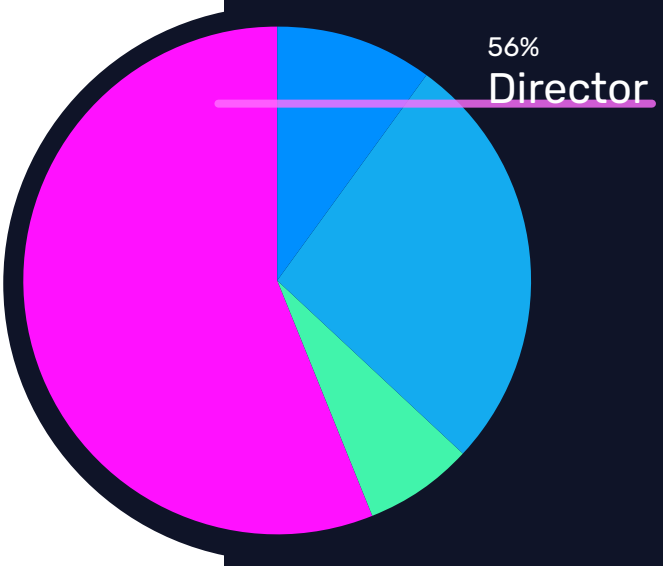
What is your role?

- **44%** Operations
- **31%** IT
- **25%** Service & Support



What is your seniority?

- **10%** C-Suite
- **27%** Vice President
- **7%** Department Head
- **56%** Director



Key Insights

Among the respondents:

58%
are using remote collaboration and assistance technology.

53%
are using enterprise management platforms.

50%
are using digital work order management solutions

49%
are using scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools.

69%
say interactive tools have helped increase customer engagement.

56%
say their technology investments improved their first-time fix rates over the past 12 months. Within only this group, 34% identify scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools as the investment that has helped in improving first-time fix rates.

56%
say they are currently using augmented reality (AR) within their service organizations.

73%
say they currently use a customer experience management solution to drive customer engagement and feedback. However, 68% plan to adopt a new solution in the next 12 months whether they already use one or not.

72%
agree at least somewhat that their interactive technology solutions keep their employees engaged and allow them to delight customers.

The respondents' two most important criteria when choosing a new technology vendor are customer references or ratings (40%) and their anticipated value of operational savings (38%).

Interactive Field Service Tools

Top Ways to Maintain Skilled Employees

Attracting and maintaining high quality talent during a global skills shortage is no easy task. Discover how interactive tools such as planning and scheduling optimization, remote assistance, digital work order management, and mobile apps for technicians can help overcome an organization's biggest hiring challenges.

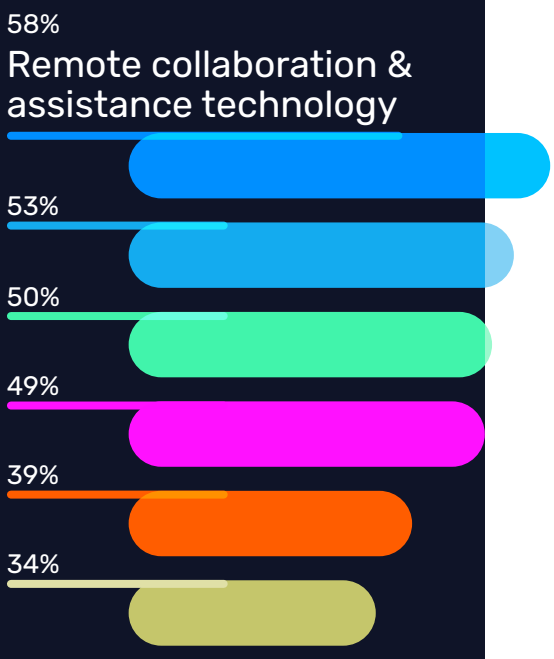
Read the report

IFS

Interactive Tools Increase Customer Engagement and First-Time Fix Rates

Field service technicians are often required to work in difficult environments that can be challenging to manage. They depend heavily upon the organization's deployed technologies to interact with customers, gain assistance while in the field, and improve first-time fix rates. As such, interactive tools are becoming much more important for field service outcomes, especially as customer expectations for fast resolutions, predictive solutions, and simplified service increase.

In this context, an interactive tool is any technology resource that enables the user to communicate seamlessly with other people or streamline field service processes. Common deployments of interactive tools include augmented reality (AR) and remote collaboration solutions, but also dispatching solutions, digital work order management solutions, and enterprise management platforms.



What interactive field service tools is your organization currently using?

- **58%** Remote collaboration and assistance technology
- **53%** Enterprise management platforms
- **50%** Digital work order management solutions
- **49%** Scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools
- **39%** Customer self-service solutions
- **34%** Mobile apps for technicians

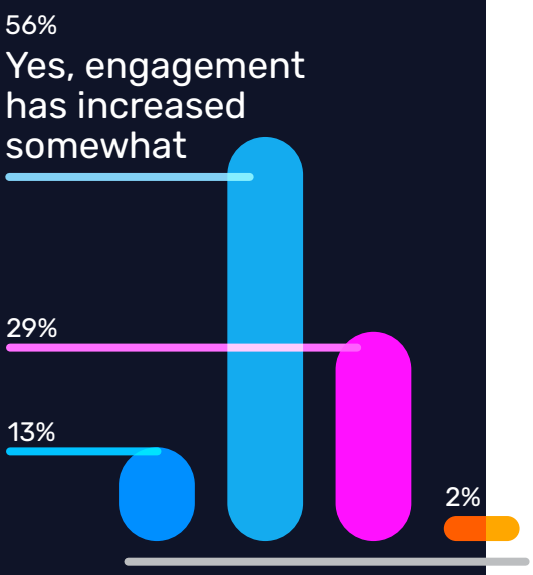
Currently, most of the respondents are using remote collaboration and assistance technology (58%) and enterprise management platforms (53%) as part of their field service operations.

Remote assistance technologies have become exceedingly important in field service settings, as they enable technicians to interact with other field service experts while working in the field. Remote assistance has also become critical for customer self-service. Through mobile apps and online dashboards, customers can engage with the field service organization to fix issues on their own, reducing the need for a visit from a technician.

Each of these uses of remote assistance can significantly improve first-time fix rates and lead to faster resolutions of customer challenges, thereby reducing costs and improving customer satisfaction.

Enterprise management platforms enable field service organizations to manage their resources more effectively. They are also important tools for integrating field service processes with the rest of the company's operations.

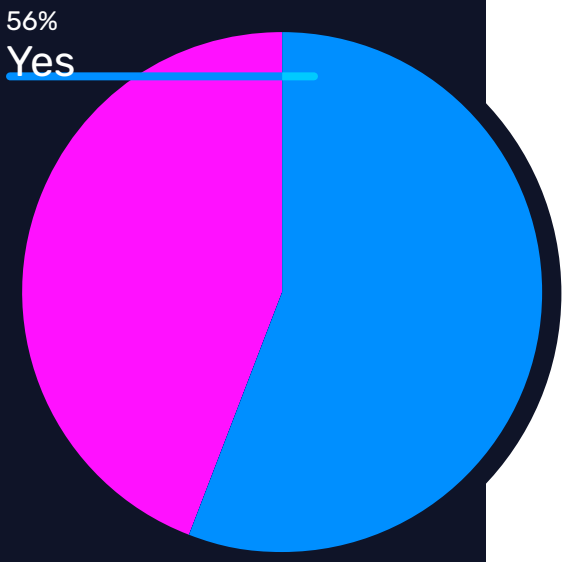
In each case, about half of the respondents are also using digital work order management solutions (50%) and scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools (49%). These interactive technologies are vital to the effective management of fleets and the efficient deployment of technicians to resolve customer requests.



Have interactive tools changed the way your customers engage with your business, and to what degree?

- **13%** Yes—customer engagement has increased significantly.
- **56%** Yes—customer engagement has increased somewhat.
- **29%** No—we haven't witnessed any change.
- **2%** No—customer engagement has decreased.

Interactive tools are enabling field service organizations to interact with customers more effectively and improve engagement. Most of the respondents (69%) say their interactive tools have improved customer engagement at least somewhat.



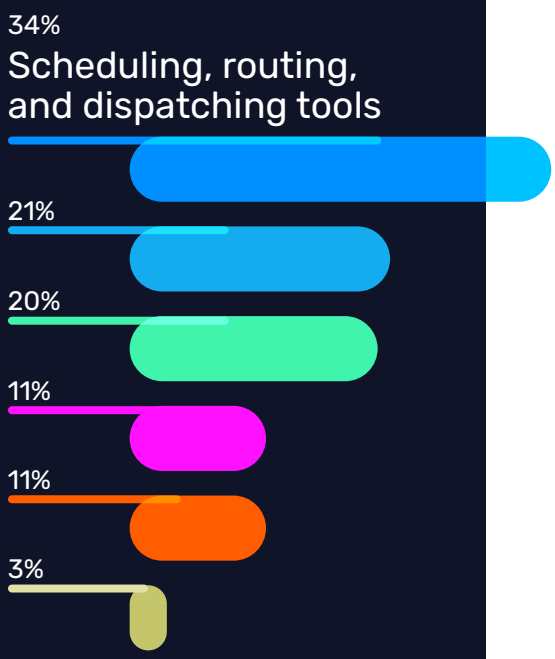
Have your technology investments improved first-time fix rates over the past 12 months?

- **56%** Yes
- **44%** No

Interactive tools have also had a significant impact on first-time fix rates—now a critical metric in determining field service success. Most of the respondents (56%) have witnessed an improvement in this area.

However, a significant portion of the respondents (44%) have not witnessed an improvement in their first-time fix rates due to their interactive technology deployments. There could be a variety of challenges causing this.

Some companies struggle to encourage their employees to adopt new technologies. Others may need to make more targeted investments in interactive technologies to see a significant improvement in this metric specifically.



Since you said, "Yes," which single investment in interactive tools helped more than others in improving first-time fix rates?

- **34%** Scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools
- **21%** Remote collaboration and assistance technology
- **20%** Customer self-service solutions
- **11%** Digital work order management solutions
- **11%** Enterprise management platforms
- **3%** Mobile apps for technicians

For example, organizations that reported improvements to their first-time fix rates attribute them to specific technologies. Over one-third of the respondents (34%) say their scheduling, routing, and dispatching tools were the technologies that helped more than others when it came to first-time fix rates. As we learned previously, only 49% of the respondents are currently using such tools.

Other important tools for improving first-time fix rates include remote collaboration and assistance technology (21%) and customer self-service solutions (20%).

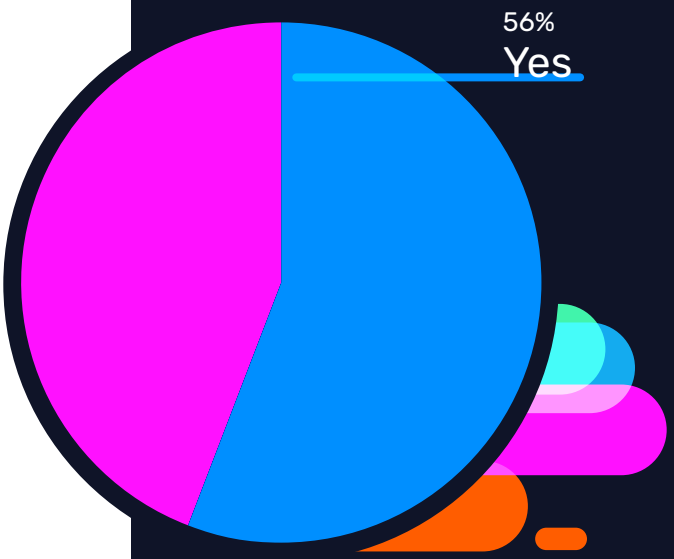
Teams Are Leveraging Tools to Delight Customers at the Moment of Service

The moment of service is the critical point in field service when the customer interacts with a technician or representative, either remotely or in person. This interaction can have a significant impact on the customer's perception of the entire field service experience. In many cases, it's the customer's only opportunity to interact directly with the company.

Field service organizations must ensure that they are providing their technicians and representatives with the tools and resources they need to deliver positive customer experiences.

Are you currently using augmented reality (AR) within your service organization?

- **56%** Yes
- **44%** No



One technology—augmented reality—has become increasingly important for helping field service organizations delight customers at the moment of service.

AR uses digital information to enhance or alter the real-world environment. In many field service settings, AR can now be accessed by technicians for remote assistance, but also by customers for self-service. Many AR solutions operate through easy-to-use apps available via a smartphone.

Most of the respondents (56%) are currently using AR within their service organizations. These respondents say they have realized significant benefits thanks to the technology, such as better planning and a higher first-time fix rate.

For example, an IT director at a construction and industrial company says AR allows them to "prepare our service offering with better analysis. This has reduced our turnaround time and made us highly effective in our response and first-time fix rates."

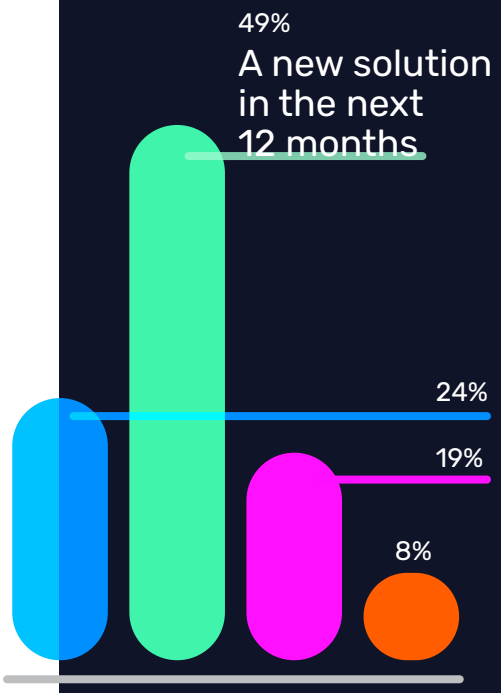
Similarly, a C-suite service executive from a manufacturing company says, "Planning the entire service case has been made easier with the assistance of AR, and its accuracy has provided better first-time fix rates to the organization."

Other respondents that currently use AR say it is a versatile tool with multiple applications, including training.

"AR has assisted us in transforming field service to focus on the task at hand rather than using up additional time to diagnose issues," says an operations director from a domestic computer company. "AR is strategically used to train, develop, and maintain our field service solutions. Our organization has been able to pioneer new-age field solutions with it."

Do you currently use a customer experience management solution to drive customer engagement and feedback?

- **24%** Yes, and we are keeping our solution for the time being.
- **49%** Yes, but we plan to adopt a new solution in the next 12 months.
- **19%** No, but we plan to adopt one in the next 12 months.
- **8%** No, and we have no plans to adopt one in the next 12 months.



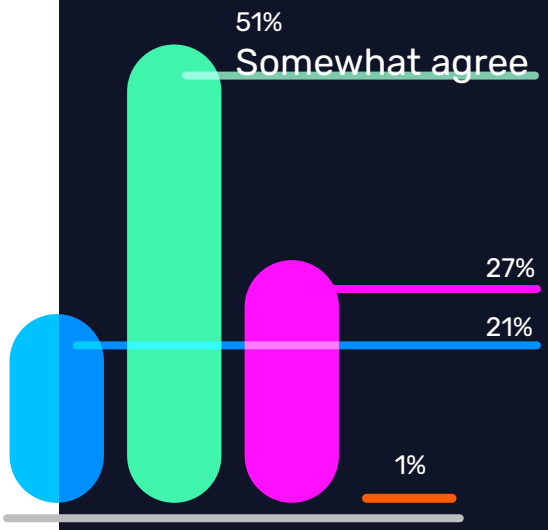
Field service organizations are levering AR in combination with other technologies to improve results and customer satisfaction. For example, 73% of the respondents currently use a customer experience management solution to drive customer engagement and feedback.

Still, some companies may be looking to upgrade their solutions soon. About half of the respondents (49%) plan to adopt a new customer experience management solution in the next 12 months even though they already use one.

Another 19% plan to adopt one for the first time in the next 12 months.

How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "Our interactive technology solutions help us keep our employees engaged and allow us to delight our customers at the moment of service?"

- **21%** Strongly agree
- **51%** Somewhat agree
- **27%** Somewhat disagree
- **1%** Strongly disagree



The push to transform field service operations with new interactive tools is not an example of investing in technology just for the sake of it, either. Most of the respondents (72%) at least somewhat agree that their interactive technology solutions help keep their employees engaged. They also believe their tools allow them to delight customers at the moment of service.

Field service organizations that don't make investments in interactive technologies may find themselves struggling to compete. Customer expectations will only continue to grow as customers grow accustomed to self-service, digital interactions, and high rates of first-time fixes.

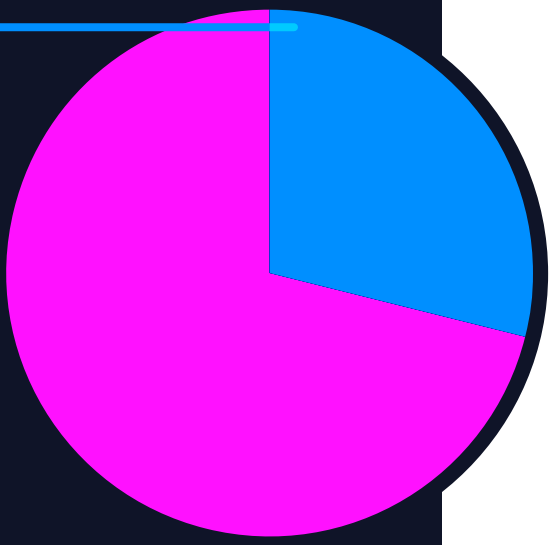
Data Management Remains a Challenge Amid Technology Investments

Organizations have achieved clear and measurable gains thanks to their investments in interactive tools. Nonetheless, there are still some challenges to overcome before efficiency can be optimized at some companies.

Effective implementation of new software and new interactive tools typically requires change management among the workforce. Many companies must also make significant changes to their technology infrastructure and their data management programs to accommodate new interactive technologies.

29%

Actively looking to fix this issue



Is there a function within your service operation that is causing some friction and slowing down your operations?

- **29%** Yes, and we are actively looking to fix this issue.
- **71%** No, our service operation is running smoothly with no issues.

Only 29% of the respondents say there is a function within their service operations that is causing some friction and slowing down operations. Although most of the respondents say their operations are running smoothly, this is still a significant percentage of the companies surveyed.

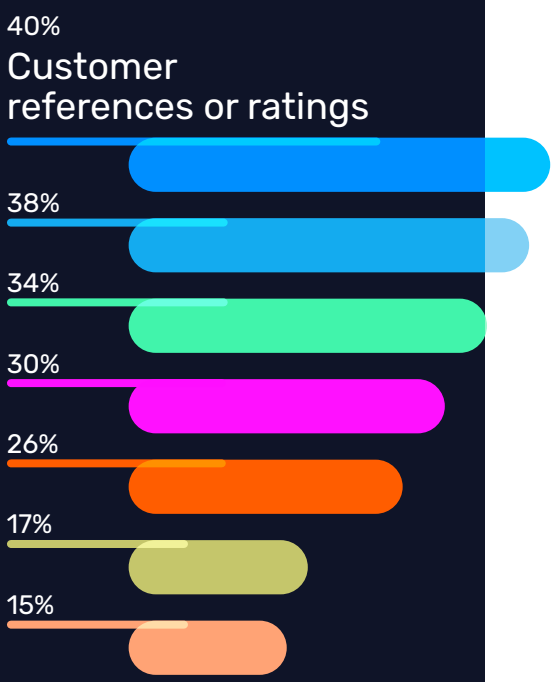
In verbal responses, these respondents overwhelmingly say their data operations are key areas of friction in the service function. Specifically, "data fragmentation," lack of "data speed," and lack of "data flow" are causing challenges.

"Our data stream needs more pace," says an IT director at a medical and scientific devices company. "Lack of seamless data solutions is causing friction points in service and operations."

Similarly, a service and support VP at another medical and scientific devices company says, "I would say data management would be the one function that is not providing us with solutions for optimum business and operations development."

These companies must take steps to improve the efficiency in which data is generated, but they also need to upgrade their data solutions and protocols to ensure data is useful. For example, one operations director says their "data validation process," takes too long.

There are several solutions to these challenges. They could be resolved through a more strategic approach to data collection and processing, such as through edge computing and cloud-based computing environments. Other companies may need to take a second look at their data governance standards to ensure they are appropriate for their new technology deployments.



Which of the following criteria do you consider the two most important when you are choosing a new technology vendor?

- **40%** Customer references or ratings
- **38%** The value of operational savings anticipated
- **34%** The total cost of ownership
- **30%** Industry expertise
- **26%** The value of increased revenue anticipated
- **17%** Analyst recognition
- **15%** Influence on the vendor's long-term roadmap

Moving forward, many of these field service organizations will need to engage with new technology vendors to get the solutions they need. Based on this study, the vendors they work with must be trustworthy, but they must also be highly cost-effective.

The top two criteria the respondents look for in a technology vendor are the vendor's customer references or ratings (40%) and the total value of operational savings the vendor can deliver (38%). Over one-third of the respondents (34%) also say the total cost of ownership of working with the vendor is one of the most important factors in their decision-making.

Conclusion: Field Service Continues Its Transformation

Field service organizations are adopting interactive technologies because they contribute to important KPIs like first-time fix rates, cost savings, and customer satisfaction. However, these investments are also having a noticeable impact on the way field service is delivered.

The break/fix model of service is obsolete. More and more organizations are relying on strategies like remote service, self-service, predictive maintenance, and digital collaboration to serve customers.

Researchers asked the respondents to describe what changes (if any) they intend to make to the way they deliver service in the next 12 months.

Several of the respondents say their organizations will become much more data-driven over the next 12 months, and they are making key investments into new data management capabilities. This aligns with previous responses indicating that data management and validation were key challenges.

"We will seek to transform service delivery with real-time data solutions in the next 12 months," says an IT director at a utility.

"We are set to improve our data collection capabilities to keep improving our quality-of-service delivery over the next 12 months," says an operations director at an information and communication technology company.

Other respondents say they are focused on adopting additional digital solutions to improve their capabilities. Multiple respondents mention artificial intelligence, for example. AI can be used for predictive maintenance purposes, but it also has more tactical applications in scheduling and routing.

"We are testing the use of AI as a scheduling assistant for better service outcomes in the next 12 months," says an operations VP at a transportation company.

A C-suite executive at a utility company says they intend to "add better predictive visibility" through AI.

Field service organizations are at various stages in their adoption of interactive tools and other transformative technologies. However, the results of this study indicate they are all moving in a similar direction.

To meet rising customer expectations, field service organizations must provide multiple modes of service through interactive technologies. They must also improve first-time fix rates by gaining more visibility into deployed assets and obtaining better predictive capabilities. Through effective data management, analytics, and customer engagement, field service departments will transform their teams into digitally-enabled customer ambassadors armed with groundbreaking service capabilities.

Key Suggestions

Conduct a Review

Conduct a review of the interactive tools your field service organization currently uses. Identify gaps based on industry benchmarks and the capabilities of your competitors. Invest in interactive tools that can reduce costs, enhance the customer experience, and improve first-time fix rates.

Enact Change Management

Enact change management when adopting new interactive tools. Train your field service technicians on how to use the new technology. They will be the ones using it most and will need to be able to troubleshoot any problems that arise.

Collect Data

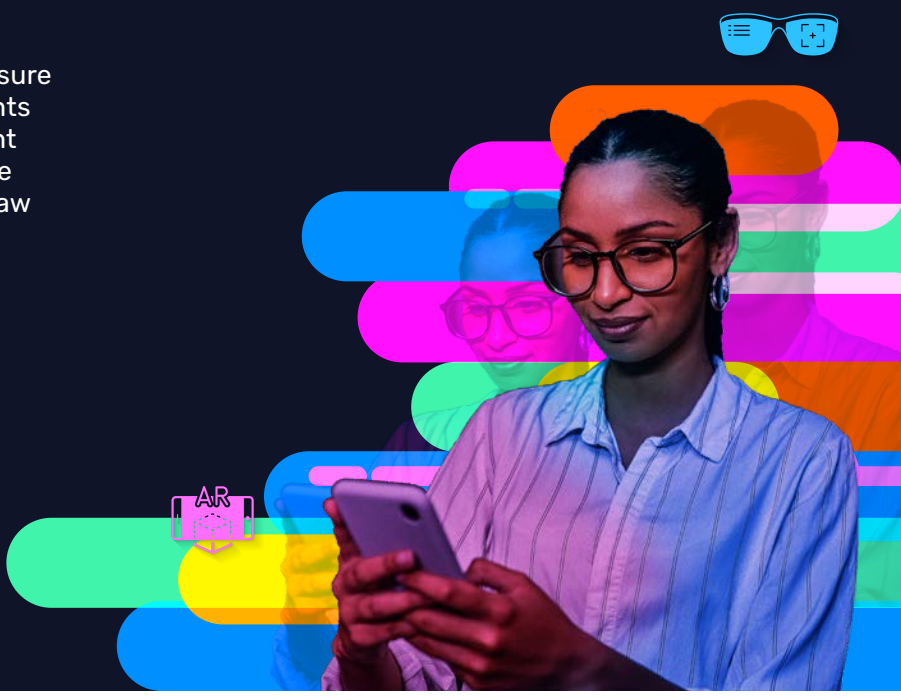
Collect data on the performance of the interactive technology after deployment. This will help you measure its impact and ROI. Make investments to transform your data management and governance programs if you are struggling to collect, analyze, or draw insights from data.

Use Customer Feedback

Use customer feedback to improve your field service offering. Ask customers how they felt about their experience with specific interactive tools as well as what could be improved.

Review Your Business Objectives

Review your business before selecting a technology vendor. Make sure the vendor can deliver the specific benefits you are looking for. Consider the total cost of ownership when choosing your vendor, including upfront costs, implementation time, and maintenance fees.



About the Sponsor

IFS develops and delivers cloud enterprise software for companies around the world who manufacture and distribute goods, build and maintain assets, and manage service-focused operations. Within our single platform, our industry specific products are innately connected to a single data model and use embedded digital innovation so that our customers can be their best when it really matters to their customers – at the Moment of Service™.

The industry expertise of our people and of our growing ecosystem, together with a commitment to deliver value at every single step, has made IFS a recognized leader and the most recommended supplier in our sector. Our team of 4,500 employees every day live our values of agility, trustworthiness and collaboration in how we support our 10,000+ customers.

Learn more about how our enterprise software solutions can help your business today at ifs.com.

About the Authors

INSIGHTS Worldwide Business Research

WBR Insights is the custom research division of Worldwide Business Research (WBR), the world leader in industry-driven thought-leadership conferences. Our mission is to help inform and educate key stakeholders with research-based whitepapers, webinars, digital summits, and other thought-leadership assets while achieving our clients' strategic goals.

For more information, please visit www.wbrinsights.com.

FIELD SERVICE

We launched Field Service in 2002 and have been dedicated to supporting the growth of the service industry ever since. What started as 100 people in a room discussing the future of service has become 500 senior-level service executives being inspired while learning and developing their company as well as their careers.

For more information, please visit fieldserviceusa.wbresearch.com/.