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Digital



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Facing the future of field service

A new customer experience focus in today's service organizations



An expanded scope

Changes in field service organizations that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic have now positioned these teams to provide more strategic support to the customers they serve. Traditionally, field service organizations have deployed technicians to customer sites solely for repair, installation, maintenance and troubleshooting. Today, field service organizations are increasingly focusing on building relationships, and therefore play a significant role in defining the customer experience.

As the scope of the field technician role evolves to focus more on planned, proactive and predictive service for customers, organizations must embrace a transition to a new hybrid role - the field experience agent. This role combines the traditional break fix responsibilities, those focused on troubleshooting and issue resolution, with a customer experience mindset. In Deloitte Digital's 2023 Field Service Survey, three action items were identified that organizations can take to improve customer experience and support the transition to more relationship-focused field service:

1. Rethink the approach to service delivery and issue resolution

As consumers become increasingly receptive to in-app tutorials, chatbots, and DIY (Do It Yourself) solutions, organizations need to decide how they want to approach troubleshooting as self-service functionality is increasingly accepted, and in many instances, preferred by customers.

2. Implement procedures to enable better first-time fix rates

Product downtime is more than an annoyance to customers, it can hinder their ability to be productive, contribute to lost revenue, cause reputational damage, and result in added expenses in the form of penalties that are incurred when service level agreements are not met. Field service organizations must work to ensure field technicians are prepared with the information, skills, and equipment needed to resolve customer issues during the initial visit.

3. Eliminate barriers for third-party service providers

Field service organizations should ensure their third-party providers have access to the same information as their in-house technicians so that all field service teams are equipped to both anticipate customer needs and resolve customer issues.

A customer experience focused approach

Field service organizations are increasingly playing a dual role for the customers they serve. Across all industries, when identifying the characteristics that are foundational to providing excellent customer service in the field, the following are viewed as most important:

- Performing core field service responsibilities, such as repairs, troubleshooting, remote support, preventative maintenance, etc.
- Building relationships and serving as a trusted advisor to clients

IMPORTANCE OF ABILITIES TO PROVIDE GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

FOUNDATIONAL

- Build relationships and serve as a trusted advisor to clients
- Perform core field service responsibilities like repair, troubleshooting, remote support, preventative maintenance, etc.

IMPORTANT

- Provide guidance to customers to help achieve their business objectives
- Understand business goals and objectives for customer organizations
- Provide more remote troubleshooting support to speed up issue resolution
- Enable greater uptime for the customer

LESS IMPORTANT

- Identify demand for products and services for customers, to proactively monitor demand and generate leads
- Be a product champion and understand all offerings from their organization that may provide benefit to customers
- Shorten purchase cycle

A CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE
FOCUSED
APPROACH

A growing focus on digitalization, an increase in the physical distance between companies and their customers, and expectations for continued revenue growth are some of the marketplace conditions impacting an organization's ability to build stronger relationships with its customers. As a result, interactions with the customer have become more transactional in nature.

As customers turn to online portals to take advantage of self-service capabilities such as managing invoicing and monitoring progress on open tickets, the sales and relationship management representatives historically tasked with cultivating customer relationships have fewer opportunities to establish rapport. The unique attributes of the field service organization—a deep understanding of immediate customer needs, the ability to enhance relationships through face-to-face interactions, and the potential to share optimally timed product and service recommendations—position these teams to serve as trusted advisors who can make the most of customer visits to influence customer loyalty and long-term revenue growth.

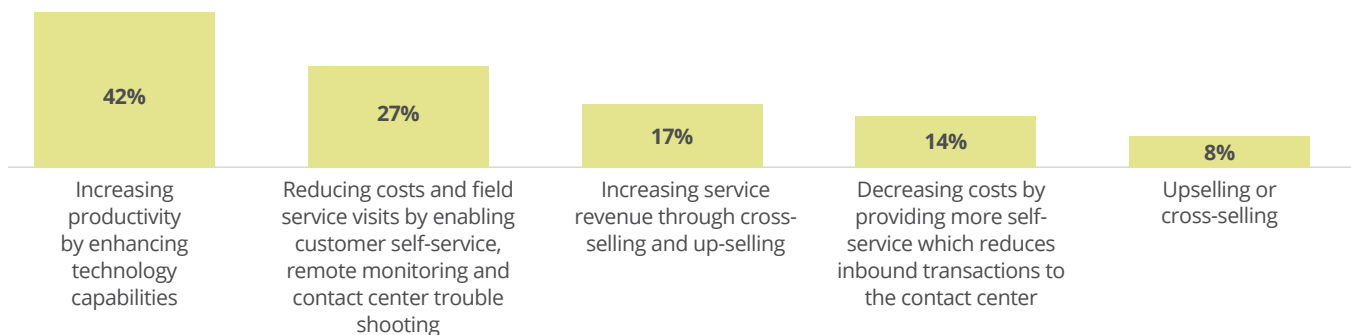
To enhance customer relationships, today's field service organizations must take advantage of opportunities to strategically impact the customer journey. The field experience agent is a newer, specialized hybrid role that is designed to elevate an organization's customer experience while also executing traditional field service functions for customers. As field service organizations transition their customer experience strategy, they have an opportunity to look holistically at the processes that can drive loyalty and growth for the organization and reduce possible pain points for the customer.



Rethink the approach to service delivery and issue resolution

Field service organizations have an opportunity to more efficiently service customers by improving their technology capabilities.

Increasing productivity by enhancing technology is the top ranked priority



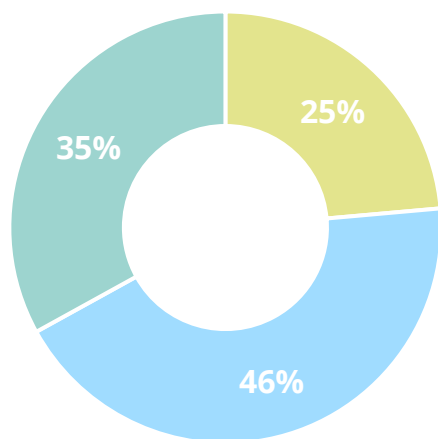
In a global marketplace where customers are increasingly tech savvy and where business happens around the clock, a customer's tolerance for product downtime is dwindling.




To reduce the likelihood of downtime impacting customers, field service organizations should consider deploying more self-service capabilities. Rolling out self-service to customers can do more than improve the customer experience. Self-service also reduces costs and enables field service organizations to operate more efficiently, a characteristic that could be a key contributor to an organization's value proposition.

When customers have access to self-service functionality, they are empowered to act and attempt to minimize product downtime. As customers are increasingly able to resolve issues independently, customer service call volumes are reduced, as is the need to schedule and deploy field technicians. Not only does a reduction in the deployment of field technicians reduce costs for an organization, but it also frees up these resources to respond to higher priority service requests more quickly. This allows field organizations to optimize the time spent with customers when sending a representative into the field is truly necessary.

The availability of self-service capabilities varies among field service organizations, with 35% of organizations offering advanced self-service capabilities, 45% allowing for limited self-service, and 25% not providing any self-service functionality. Larger, publicly-traded companies are the least likely to offer advanced self-service capabilities, even though, at scale, they stand to realize the greatest cost savings by enabling the customer to use the self-service capabilities that they desire.

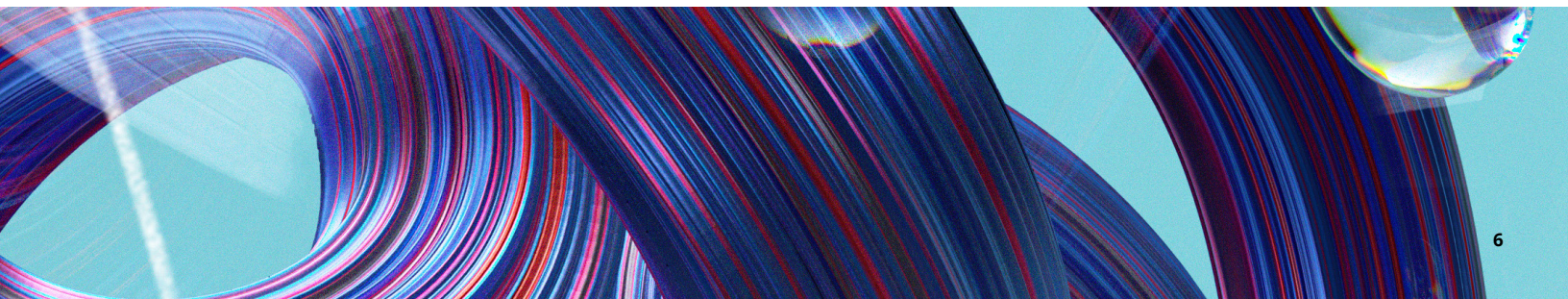
Availability of self-service functionality



-  No, customers can not interact with my organization's systems for self-service capabilities
-  Yes, customer can interact with the organization's systems for self-service capabilities, however, capabilities are limited/manual
-  Yes, customer can interact with the organization's systems for self-service capabilities, and capabilities are advanced

In addition to elevating the overall customer experience, self-service capabilities can provide other benefits to an organization, including:

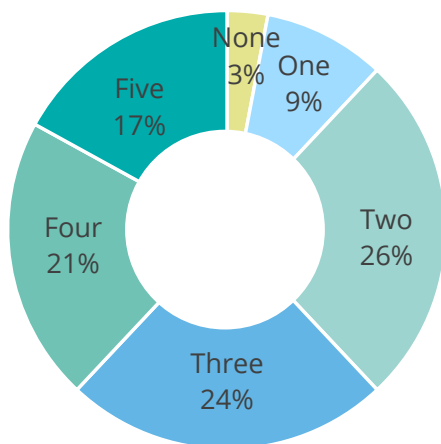
- **Additional revenue streams:** Dependent on the industry and the level of complexity associated with repairs and updates, some organizations can sell self-service functionality to their customers. Further, the service can be provided as a value-add to larger, more profitable customers.
- **Access to more data:** Meaningful data can be analyzed when customers regularly use self-service features. With this data, leaders can glean insights into how products are used, when products break, the causes of downtime related issues, a customer's technical capabilities, and more—all of which can be used to develop and market relevant add-on services.
- **Increased employee satisfaction:** Providing customers with self-service capabilities leads to a decrease in routine, repetitive, lower-value service requests, which positions field service staff to focus on higher value, more rewarding work. This more rewarding work for field service staff is significant for leaders to keep in mind, given that 27% of publicly-traded companies identify finding and retaining qualified talent as the biggest challenge they face.



Implement procedures to enable better first-time fix rates

When self-service is not an appropriate option, given the complexity of the task, a visit from a field service technician may be needed. To maximize the efficiency of the technician, organizations need to make sure that field technicians complete all appropriate pre-route tasks, such as reviewing the customer's repair history, checking all open issues, and doing a pre-check of data from installed machines. Actions like these can lead to improved first-time fix rates (issue resolution in a single field visit) for field service organizations.

Number of pre visit activities completed

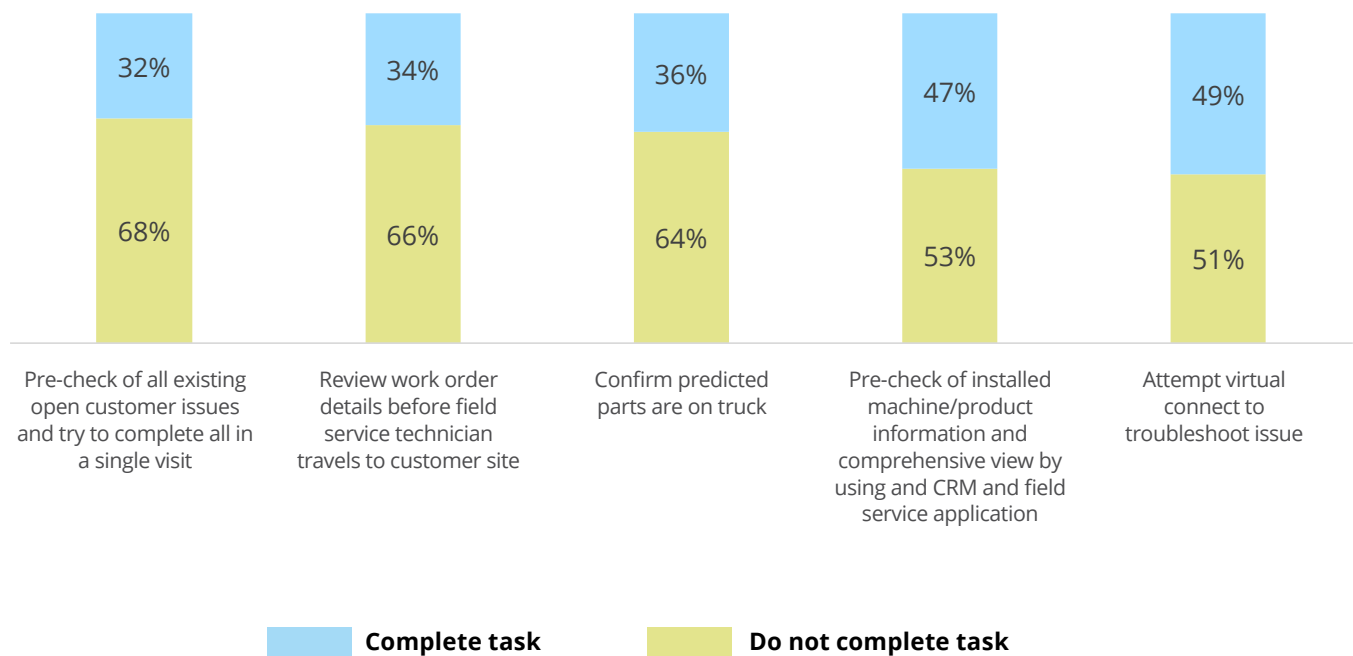


Across industries, less than 20% of organizations currently complete all five pre-route tasks, creating an opportunity for organizations in the future. Additionally, only 51% of organizations currently attempt some form of virtual troubleshooting prior to deploying a field technician. Virtual troubleshooting has the potential to confirm that the issue reported by the customer is being accurately described for the field technician, increasing the likelihood of a first-time fix, or even eliminating the need to deploy a field technician altogether.

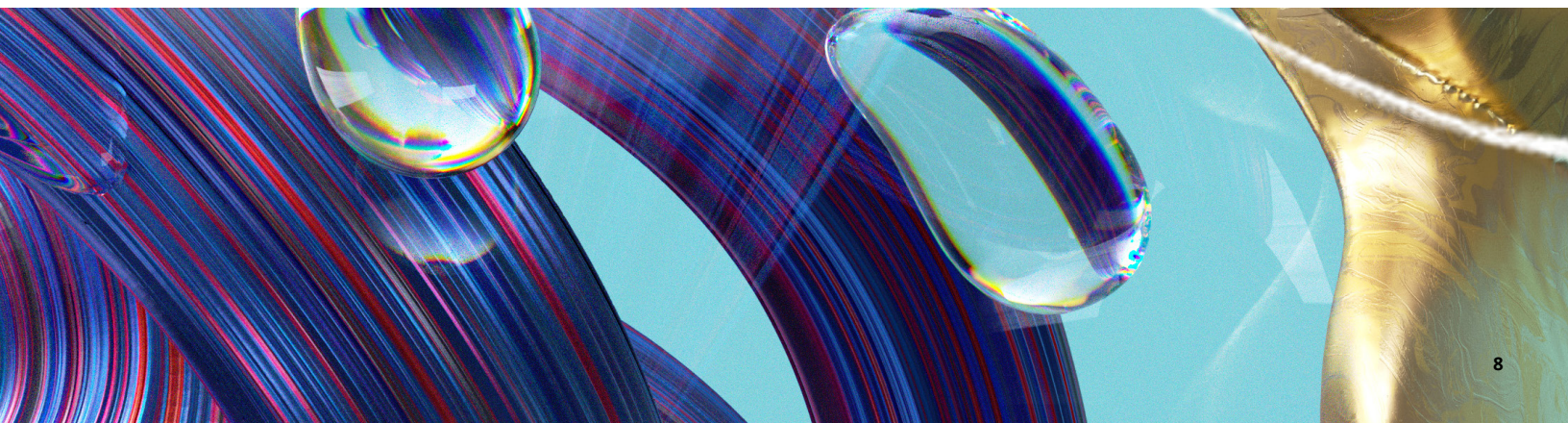
Opportunities also exist for field service organizations to show up to the customer site better prepared. 34% of organization's field service technicians currently do not review work orders until they've already arrived onsite, and 53% of organization's field service technicians do not review details about the customer in a customer relationship management (CRM) system or field service application before showing up onsite. Today's customers want to feel listened to and to be seen as individuals with personalized needs. This field service data highlights recurring issues that could lead to dissatisfied customers and negatively impact customer loyalty. Leaders must empower field technicians to proactively prepare for each customer visit.

Additionally, 36% of field service organizations do not confirm that trucks are stocked with the parts necessary to determine all issues that field technicians are tasked with resolving. Not only is this an inefficient use of field service resources, but it also increases the likelihood of a customer forming a negative perception of the company when seemingly routine requests require a follow-up visit for parts.

Tasks completed before sending field service technicians onsite



If providing an improved customer experience is a priority for field service organizations, showing up onsite with a comprehensive understanding of both the customer and the issue they are experiencing is critical. To see true success in both revenue and customer retention, field service organizations must embed service call preparation activities into their overall processes.



Eliminate barriers for third-party service providers

When field service technicians arrive onsite, it is critically important that they have not only the skills, but also the necessary information to assist their customers. Many field service organizations leverage third-party providers to extend their capabilities for reasons that can include cost savings, geographic reach, and additional capacity during peak periods. While organizations are increasingly relying on third-party providers to perform field service tasks, they are not providing these mission-critical partners with the same information as their in-house counterparts.

Field service organization leaders know that they need to provide key data to technicians in order to serve their customers effectively. However, the data reveals there is limited data sharing with third-party providers:

Organizations that share key data with third-party providers

86%

SHARE REPAIR HISTORY

78%

SHARE INFORMATION ON PRODUCTS CURRENTLY USED BY THE CUSTOMER

72%

SHARE IOT (INTERNET OF THINGS) DATA

64%

SHARE BILLING HISTORY

44%

SHARE INFORMATION THAT CAN BE USED FOR UPSELL OPPORTUNITIES

To see a meaningful improvement in customer experience, field service organizations must analyze what information field technicians need to have on-hand to effectively address customer issues and then compare it to the information that they currently make available to both in-house and third-party field technicians. Where gaps exist, leaders should determine whether they are withholding critically important customer information from third-party technicians intentionally, or if this is due to outdated support systems and legacy service agreements. If the latter, organizations should invest in tools that enhance existing field service capabilities to extend access to third-party service providers accordingly.



Preparing for tomorrow and beyond

More and more field service organizations are expressing a desire to transition from the more tactical field technician role to the more customer-focused field experience agent role. The actions identified create opportunities for field service organizations to elevate the experience of their customers.

As organizations look toward their field service programs to enhance customer relationships and manage costs, there are several opportunities available to make positive impacts. Individually, rethinking the approach to service delivery and issue resolution, implementing procedures to enable better first-time fix rates, and eliminating barriers for third-party service providers, all have the potential to impact the value the field service organization provides, but combined, they position the field service organizations of today to meet the needs of tomorrow.

Given the way organizations look to field service teams to impact customer experience, business leaders who want to stay ahead of the pack should ask themselves the following questions:

- How can we enable our field technicians to provide more customer experience-focused services?
- Can we utilize self-service functionality to streamline the way we deliver services to our customers and improve our timeframe for issue resolution?
- How can we better prepare the field technicians prior to deploying them into the field?
- How can we ensure that customers have a seamless experience when deploying third-party providers to resolve issues?

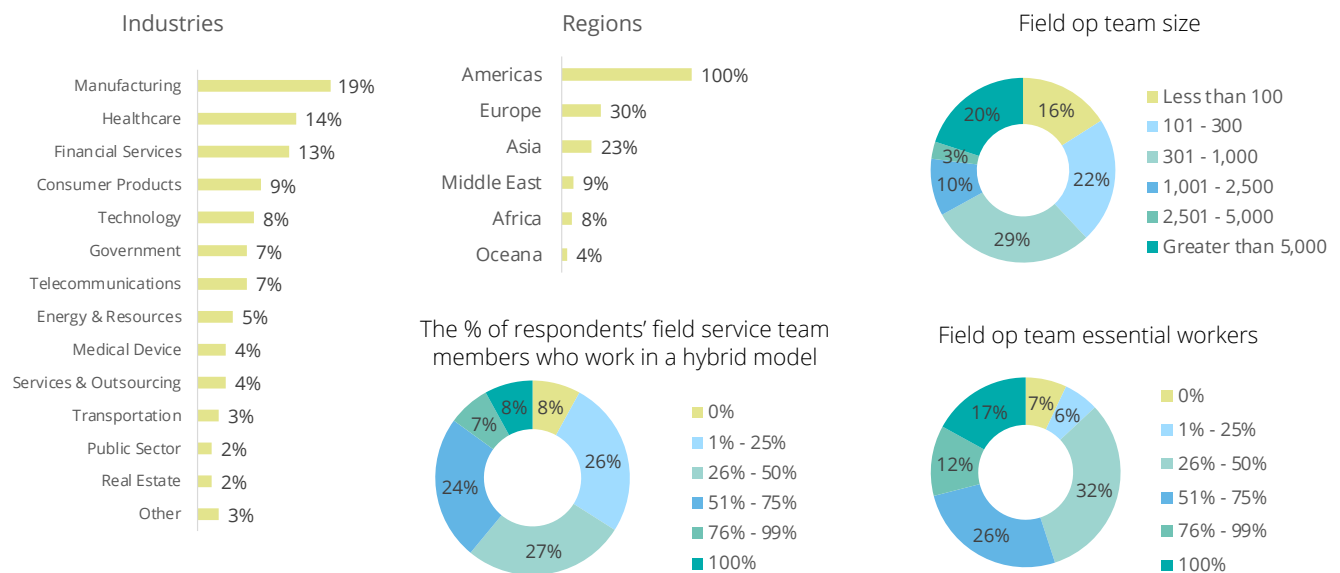
If you are interested in learning more about ways to improve your customer's overall experience through your field service team, please reach out to Deloitte Digital.

Demographics and Methodology

Deloitte Digital surveyed executives of global organizations with significant field organizations in 2023 regarding the current state of their businesses and what they perceive their businesses will be doing in upcoming years.

Respondents represented industries in manufacturing, health care, financial services, consumer products, technology, government, telecommunications, energy and resources, medical devices, services and outsourcing, transportation, and real estate.

Demographic breakdown





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