The Service Model Evolution

Today's field service teams are very different than teams of the past in terms of how they're formed, how they operate, their everyday responsibilities and more. Advances in technology, travel and society fueled this evolution for decades. Then, after the dot-com boom and the economic downturn of 2008, more changes occurred when organizations of all kinds earnestly challenged themselves to do more with less. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and everything changed again; in many ways, we're still in the midst of assessing how our world is different than before and how teams need to evolve to streamline operations and best serve customers and end-users.

Since the pandemic began, we've seen acceleration in four influential drivers of change in service delivery.

1. New Customer Expectations Around Uptime

Uptime has always been a primary value factor for many organizations that work with data. As end-user focus on the cost of downtime rises, service organizations must adapt to meet increasing expectations to support their end-users and reduce potential operational interruptions.

Traditionally, to ensure optimal uptime, these organizations have purchased more equipment of various kinds than they've needed and literally rolled in something new from down the hall when something wasn't working properly. Their strategy was to achieve uptime by substitution, plug and play. These days, that's just not practical; they simply can't afford to buy all that equipment anymore. Instead, organizations are more focused than ever on maximizing their product investment by keeping the

equipment they have up and running well – and, accordingly, are buying vendor service plans or other third-party maintenance packages instead of more equipment.

This new strategy already has produced results, in terms of reduced costs and better asset utilization and management. As such, we expect demand for field service to continue to rise. We also anticipate that OEMs will continue to augment their field service workforce, both in terms of staffing up to ensure they can handle demand and strategizing how best to deploy those resources in the field.

2. Pressure to Cut Costs and Scale More Efficiently

Of course, it's expensive to build and maintain an internal service team. And for most organizations, as business grows and demand for service increases, more hiring, training and other investments must follow. Put another way, as organizations have grown on a linear trajectory, their expenses to service that growth have traditionally risen in similar fashion.

The pandemic, however, has forced organizations to re-think their approaches toward scaling service. They're looking to add value and drive efficiencies however they can, and many of them had to lay off field service employees in 2020. Essentially, they're looking to scale their field service capabilities non-linearly, and find ways for the limited team and resources they have to handle increasingly higher-value work in addition to more tasks and responsibilities.

3. Localizing Service

In an effort to reduce the time and expense involved with sending full-time field engineers to end-user sites, organizations have increasingly been hiring FEs who are conveniently located to those users instead of amassing FEs at their central offices and sending them wherever service is needed.

It's a logical strategy but in reality, it's much more difficult than meets the eye to make this pay off. It can be hard to find the right people with the right skills when limited by geography, and above that it takes a significant investment to onboard them properly and then provide initial and ongoing training. Organizations are finding that these costs often equal or exceed the savings they generated from cutting their overhead to begin with. As such, going forward, service teams will increasingly be looking to strike the right localized workforce balance of training time, experience, and retention. This is a natural segue into our fourth driver – changes in the workforce.

The pandemic has created new methods of working and communicating everywhere. New laws and regulations govern what people can do and how they can work. Also, as a significant portion of the field service workforce retires or leaves for other reasons, managers have to find ways to recruit, develop and train the right people with the right tech knowledge to replace them. It's a lot for service organizations to adapt to, and they're increasingly looking for counsel and advice to help them evolve.

These trends have a central question in common: how do service organizations provide comprehensive on-site service that meets all of their customers' needs and ensures their satisfaction while minimizing costs?

Finding the Right Solution

For obvious reasons, service organizations are finding that one-size-fits-all approaches simply don't work anymore. It's difficult or simply impossible to develop the resiliency they need and achieve as many of the above characteristics (equipment uptime, service performance, localized workforce, and adaptability) as possible with their existing resources and regular W2 workforces. Instead, many organizations are hiring contractors or outsourced service vendors. This strategy has proven to help many organizations reduce both their capital and operating expenses while helping them adapt to and meet/exceed customer needs.

There's no question that now is a difficult time to provide field service. Customer needs and expectations, and the environments we all work in, are changing every day. It's at times like these that trusted, experienced advisors can be especially valuable. At Source Support Services, we are committed to helping all of our customers deliver superior service to all their end-users, no matter what challenges arise or what situations come along. We stand ready to counsel and work with you to help you achieve success.

Call us or visit to our website today to learn more and get started.