Improving the Efficiency of your Mobile Workforce

A Guide to Introducing a Mobile Workforce Management Solution

allsop

Introduction

In today's business environment, the need to support mobile working and the technology that is used to enable this has never been more important. With as many as 61% of workers reporting that they work outside of the office[1] for at least part of their working schedule, it is vital that your business can support and enable this shift to more flexible working.

Further research reveals that just over 60% of the working day is spent on productive activity.[2] Taking this into consideration, businesses have never been more focused on improving processes and procedures to deliver key efficiencies. This is also being applied to mobile workforces as the management of these may prove the most challenging.

Managing a traditional mobile workforce comes with many different challenges. Keeping track of the work that your field workers are completing, accurately managing their time and monitoring the standard of their work are just some of the obstacles that need to be overcome. Along with ensuring that your mobile workers are motivated and have access to the information and support that they need to work efficiently outside of the office.

Many companies are still relying on using paper-based processes for the management of their mobile workforce. Although this may have initially been adequate, as your team grows, your customers become more demanding and your workload increases. You can begin to see how paper processes are holding your business back.

The answer to many of these problems is eliminating your paper processes and investing in a mobile workforce management solution. Our experience of introducing mobile workforce management solutions for a range of organisations, has allowed us to see first-hand the shift to data driven businesses. Where access to real time, relevant and reliable data has brought huge benefits to our clients operating in competitive markets. We are proud to have worked alongside a large range of companies to deliver systems that enable them to thrive and grow in a turbulent and changing landscape. Our experience and our passion for delivering mobile solutions that are customised and can grow with your business have been combined to develop this guide for improving the management of your mobile workforce. This guide leads you through what a mobile workforce solution is, who it is suitable for, the benefits it will bring to your business and the next step to introducing such a solution into your business.

Nearly half of the working day is spent on non-productive activities.

61% of workers, work outside of their office.

---

1   7 Enterprise Mobility Statistics you should Know
2   Micrososft Office Survey Finds Workers Average Only Three Productive Days per Week

Let's get started by looking at how a company using paper based systems operates.

Taking the average day of your field worker, they begin their inefficient working day by travelling from their home to the office. They visit the office to collect all the information required for the jobs planned for them manually. This may include job sheets, health and safety forms and maps. Once these have been collected more time is spent travelling to the worksite.
As a manager, the second your field worker leaves the office, you have no idea where they are, or the work they are completing.

When they arrive on site, work is completed and paper forms are hopefully completed by your field worker. There is no guarantee of this, however, and often health and safety forms can be overlooked. Once the job is finished your field worker then should return all paperwork to the office providing none of it has been lost or damaged. When this has been returned to the office, all information must be keyed into your system by your admin staff with any discrepancies or missing information having to be chased by your office staff. Wasting more of their valuable time and possibly leading to inaccurate invoicing as well as an unecesssary delay between job completion and payment.

Surely there must be an easier way?
There is - introducing a mobile workforce management solution can overcome many of these problems by increasing visibility of your workers, removing paper processes and reducing the gap between job completion and invoicing.

What is a Mobile Workforce Management Solution?

There are generally two parts to mobile workforce management software. A web-based management system and a mobile application. Managers can schedule jobs remotely to field workers from the management system to the mobile app. The web based management system is updated automatically throughout the day, with the information gathered in the field. Real insights into this information allow management to make data-driven decisions and supports admin workers to incorporate any emergency or same day jobs. The information collected can be processed into daily, weekly or monthly reports at the touch of a button allowing for in-depth analysis.

In the field, workers use the app to access their job schedule and record their daily activities. The mobile solution can also be used for navigation to and between jobs. Mobile workers use their devices to capture all data required for the job. This can include but is not limited to photographs, signatures and scanning barcodes or NFC tags. Additionally, most solutions allow for customised workflows to be set up for each job to conform with any required health and safety standards. All data collected is time, date and location stamped. With the data being fed back to the office automatically, management now have real-time visibility of their workers and their activity.

Key Features

There are many different workforce management solutions available. Some of these are out of the box solutions and come with pre-set design and functionality. Others are more flexible and can be customised to the exact needs of your business. The decision on which solution is right for you can depend on a lot of different factors, such as the complexity of your business processes, your predicted reliance on the system and perhaps your budget.

This section highlights the key features that you can expect to find in the majority of workforce management solutions and the solution that we deliver.

Desktop Features

Job Creation and Schedule
Create jobs manually or integrate with your current system. Schedule jobs effectively to your workers and easily incorporate emergency or reactive jobs.

Cloud Storage
All files related to the job sync to the web application automatically. All files are then saved in cloud storage. Providing anytime, any place access.

Reporting
Fully customisable reports including job reports, timesheets and vehicle checks. Available to download also.

Map Function
View employees, assets and client location on integrated maps. Employee route replay is also available.

Asset Management
Maintain full audit trails for all assets. Additionally, asset triggers can be set up to automatically schedule and dispatch a required inspection job.

Manage Clients
Set up individual companies to manage and record any work carried out on that contract.

Mobile Features

Complete Job List
All scheduled jobs, job locations and any additional job details are received via the smartphone app.

Mandatory Checks
Complete customised compliance forms such as health and safety or vehicle checks on the smartphone.
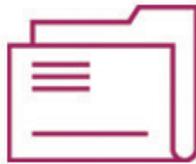
Data Capture
Capture all data for jobs including but not limited to photographs, barcodes and signatures. All records are time, date and location stamped.

GPS
Location tracking allows for improved reactive job scheduling and lone worker protection.

Offline Working
Continue to work offline and data will sync automatically once a connection becomes available.
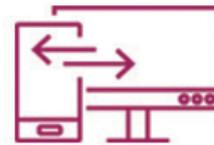
Automatic Syncing
Job details are automatically sent to the web application, giving office staff and managers increased visibility of field activities.

Who is Mobile Workforce Management Solution suitable for?

A mobile workforce management solution is suitable for any business that relies on mobile and field workers. We have supported customers in a wide range of industries, from Food Distribution to Civil Engineering. Mobile solutions have a million and one uses and can be utilised not only for the recording and completion of jobs, repairs or deliveries but also as part of asset management and maintenance or for sales and event staff as a data capture tool.

The Benefits of introducing a Mobile Workforce Management Solution

Utilising the latest technology available can allow you to keep with the demands of both your customers and your employees. Many benefits are realised from introducing a mobile workforce management solution. These vary from increased productivity to the higher level of customer service that you can deliver. The next section discusses the five top benefits you can expect to achieve by introducing a mobile workforce management solution.

Increased Productivity

20%
increase in field utilisation rates

Eliminating paper-based processes can have an immediate impact on productivity. With a paper-based system, workers drive to the office to collect job forms, maps and anything else they may need before then travelling to the work site. By eradicating the need for this by remotely scheduling jobs to the worker's smartphone, this non-productive time is automatically removed. Further productivity gains can also be made in the office by eliminating paper. This will significantly reduce the workload of your admin staff as the need for data re-entry is removed.

By using a mobile workforce management solution, managers can make more informed choices. They have improved access to data surrounding productivity levels and can, therefore, use this data to plan and schedule jobs more productively. With smarter scheduling, managers can balance the workload of their field workers and therefore eliminate the need for overtime.

Increased Profitability

90%
reduction in billing cycle

50%
reduction in admin costs

Using a mobile workforce management solution allows you to speed up your invoicing process. Reducing the gap between a job being completed and payment being received helps to improve the cash flow in your business. By using a mobile workforce management solution invoices can be generated on the same day that the job is completed, as all data is automatically fed back to the office. Every detail from the field, including additional notes, parts used, photos and signatures can be uploaded to the job report so that invoicing is both timely and accurate. No more issues surrounding delayed data re-entry or lost or illegible paperwork. In 2016 an average of 15 per cent of SME turnover was subject to late payment – equivalent to an estimated £266 billion based on SMEs annual turnover in the UK as a whole. [3]

Compliance

Dispatching and scheduling jobs using a mobile workforce solution creates a full-service history of all the jobs completed by your employees in the field. These records will be time, date and location stamped. Smarter scheduling also ensures that jobs are sent to the workers with the correct skills and training to carry out the required task. Most solutions additionally allow you to customise workflows to ensure Health and Safety standards and Service Level Agreements

are met. Making these mandatory steps of the job workflow ensures that these are completed before the job is started.

Increased Efficiency

20%
increase in office personnel efficiency

By utilising a mobile workforce solution, the allocation and dispatch of jobs will become a much quicker process. All required information is sent to workers remotely via the mobile app. Not only this but due to increased visibility any emergency or reactive jobs can easily be scheduled to the closest mobile worker. Removing non-productive time associated with a paper-based system can also increase efficiency. Freeing up your field workers to complete an extra job or task throughout the day. Greater fuel efficiency can additionally be achieved, firstly as it now easier to plan routes and secondly with the increased location visibility any reactive jobs are allocated to the closest available worker.

In the office, efficiency can be increased as data re-entry is eradicated and scheduling and reporting time is decreased. This means your office workers can concentrate on more important business tasks. Improved access to data provided by the mobile solution can also help to reduce the time spent dealing with customer enquiries as all information is at the fingertips of your office admin.

Insights

100%
visibility into the health and progress of all work projects

Gain access to real-time data by using a mobile workforce management solution. This allows for data-driven decisions to be made by management. Not only is there greater access to important data but accuracy is also improved when using a mobile workforce solution. This is because data re-entry is eliminated, which is often where mistakes can occur. Many solutions also offer the ability to run customised reports from this data. Giving you an even better insight into how your field workers are performing.

Improved Customer Service

With the increased visibility that using a mobile workforce management system provides you have a real-time view of where your mobile workers are and the work they are completing. This makes it much easier to incorporate reactive, emergency and same day repair or delivery jobs. This vastly improves the level of customer service that you can offer.

Our client, Patterson Oil has been able to reduce the time spent on planning deliveries for their drivers by a massive 50%.

Our client, Brakes Foodservice have decreased administration costs by 50% and their office personnel are 20% more efficient since introducing a mobile workforce solution to manage their deliveries across Ireland.

Next Steps

So, you've bit the bullet and you recognise now that introducing a mobile workforce management solution is the next logical step to support and grow your business. The following section covers our advice on how to make the implementation of your solution as smooth as possible.

Evaluate your Processes

Have a look at what your processes are now, what processes do you need to keep? what processes, if any, can you ditch? Are there any steps that could be automated?
Work out all the data you definitely need from each job, the information you would like and stop collecting information that is no longer needed. By maintaining and building on your current processes your solution will be more intuitive for your staff to use and this will help to reduce any resistance to the new technology. Mapping out the workflows, steps and the key information that you need to collect will make the process of choosing the correct solution a lot easier.

Shop Around

Once you have mapped out your processes and workflows you should have a good idea of the functionality that you require. With so many options available to you, have a look around at what the different systems can offer and how they would fit with your business. Not only is function-ality important, you may also consider other terms such as payment types, minimum number of users, and set up fees. Another consideration is ease of use which is vital for the adoption by your staff. Take the time to look at different demos and assess how they would fit with your needs and your staff. Further questions to ask may be the flexibility of the software, can elements be easily customised to your business? is your software provider flexible with user numbers? and what are the contract terms?

Assess your Current Technology

As previously mentioned a mobile solution has two parts, web-based management portal and a mobile application. As the management portal is web-based most offices should have enough computers to support the use of this. It may be more challenging to support your mobile workers, you could consider a bring your own device policy, the purchase of standard smartphones or rugged smartphones if required. Rugged smartphones are made to be much more resilient against shock, water, dust and extreme temperatures. Planning the amount of equipment required and pricing will allow you to allocate budget against this cost and may affect your choice of software.

Get Key Players on Board

It is important to include all staff who will be using the mobile solution, early on in the project. This, however, is not always possible especially in a large organisation.
Instead, you may consider recognising your key players. These tend to be Operations Managers, Managing Directors and a representative from your field workers ond office admin. Getting these people involved as soon as possible is a good way to ensure that the implementation of your solution runs as smoothly as possible. These key players can also be a point of contact for their teams, being able to answer questions and queries and possibly provide training.

Break it down into Manageable Chunks

You obviously want to get the most out of your solution and use all the functionality that is applicable to your business. This, however, is unlikely to happen within the first month. Instead consider the most important areas that need improvement and focus on these areas first. A phased approach gives your staff more time to get comfortable with your solution and naturally they will explore the further functionality and may come up with additional uses that you hadn't even thought of.

Dedicate time

The success of your solution won't happen overnight and it definitely won't happen unless you dedicate the required time. This starts at the beginning with taking the time to first choose the correct solution, second train your staff to understand the functionality and how to use it and third be patient during the bedding in period of getting your employees to actually use the system and ditch the paper processes.

Our Clients

About Us

We are based in Belfast and work with a wide variety of clients to deliver a range of custom mobile solutions that focus on improving the management of their mobile workforce and delivering key efficiencies. Our mobile solution is built on the highly flexible GeoPal platform and we use this platform to build a solution that fits your exact business needs. We ensure our mobile solutions deliver to save our customers time and money, while producing efficiencies that enable their business to grow further. At Allsop, we work with all our clients to understand their businesses from the ground up. Building on the assets that you already have, to minimise the process of change, whilst maximising its impact.

Allsop
4a Heron Wharf
Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE

www.allsop.software
info@allsop.software
028 9018 3250

allsop