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from Microsoft

**eBECS**  
*Experts in Microsoft Dynamics*

The Internet of things  
and field service  
management





# The Internet of Things and field service management

Kevin Ashton, a British technology expert, founded the Auto-ID center at MIT. That center did pioneering work with RFID and other identification sensors, and in the process of this work, Ashton also coined the term 'Internet of Things' to refer to household, everyday objects having network connectivity and sending data. Because of this, some call Ashton 'the father' of the Internet of Things concept.

Well, in late 2015, Ashton spoke at a European customer service conference and admitted that field service management is the first industry being transformed by the Internet of Things (IoT).

The father of the idea is saying field service management is the first industry to really be changing because of it -- and that's not all.

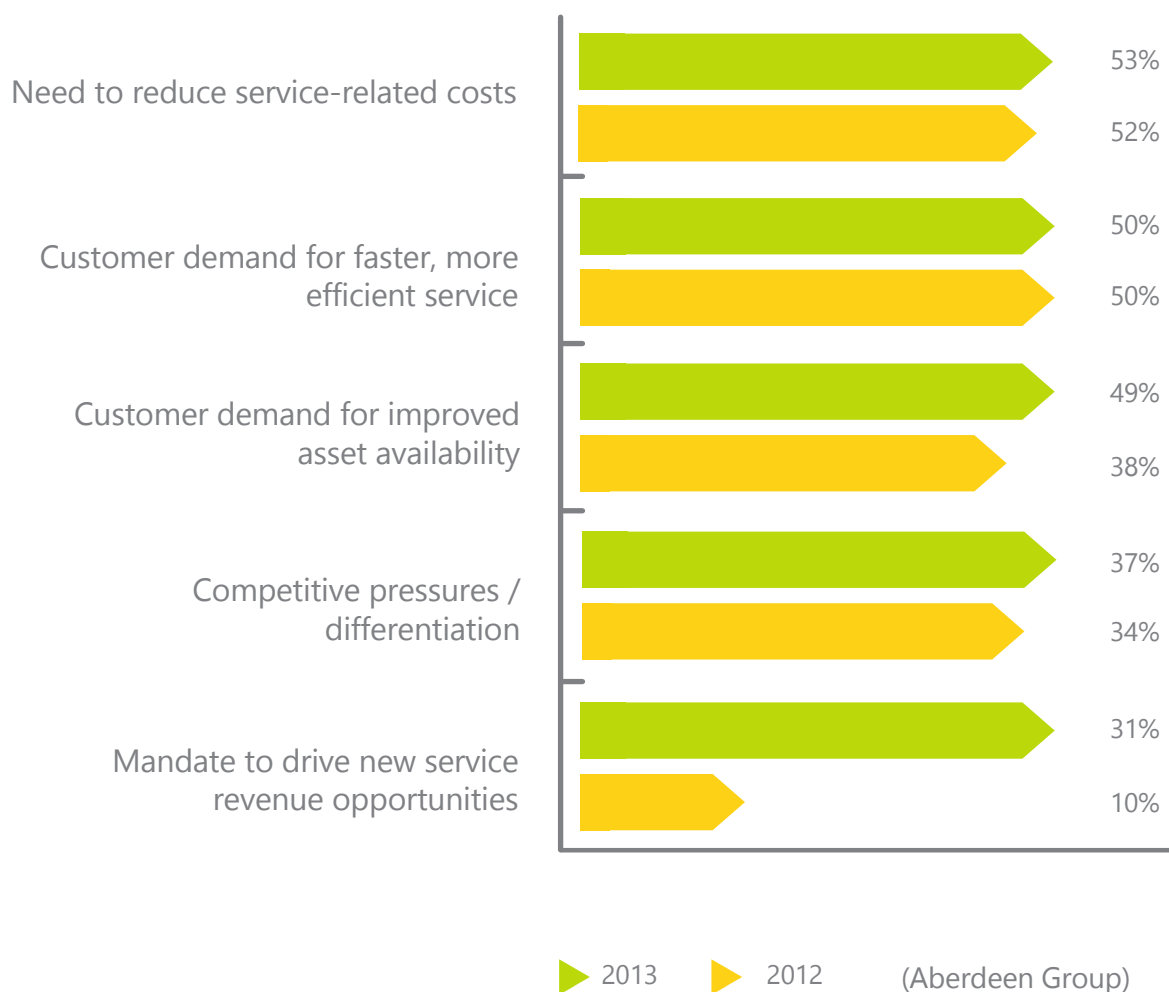
Some in the industry have even noted that the entire concept of the Internet of Things came from trying to solve field service problems in 1999. IoT's origin story lies in field service management, then!

Clearly, field service management and IoT are deeply intertwined. But how are the changes happening? And how can you benefit from them?

# Why is IoT so important to field service management?

Essentially, this is a bottom-line question. Look at this research from Aberdeen Group, for example:

## Top pressures advancing increased remote connections



Field service management teams want to keep costs down, while improving their customer service relationships. That can be hard for organizations in any industry -- oftentimes, reducing costs will also hurt a customer relationship -- but IoT provides a way for field service organizations to achieve this.

As a result, over half of current field service executives polled believe IoT will fundamentally change their industry.





# Why is IoT so important to field service management?

## 1. Automation and the customer service relationship

**The old model** In the old model, someone who works with a field service technician would have an item -- say, an air conditioner -- break. This person would call the field service agency and a technician or representative would visit the site. When he or she visited the site, though, there would be a lack of context around the definite problem, the relationship between client and vendor, and how pressing the replacement is. The rep would look at the air conditioner, determine the problem, and potentially need a new part, saying he or she would be back in a few hours or days. This leads to frustration on the customer service side.

**The new model** The new model, powered by the IoT concept, is different. In this case, the device itself sends information to the field service agency about what is wrong -- and that information is specific, and can be tailored to a specific technician who has the know-how to fix it. That technician shows up with the exact parts needed and finishes the job right there: it's 'First Time, Right Time' service. The customer is happy, and the relationship with the field service organization strengthens.

Marketing automation with customization is allowing many companies to tailor welcoming messages and timely, relevant information to specific audiences. Similarly, in field service management, automation and IoT represent a huge breakthrough in customer service and the building of lasting relationships





## 2. Inventory management

Imagine a world where connected devices signal your operations team and warehouses when they're soon to need a new part, as opposed to the operations manager of your site telling you once it's already broken. That's a potential promise of IoT, and it's connected to some of the advances that field service management is seeing in mobile technology as well. With mobile, reps out on jobs can easily connect back to a warehouse about the availability of parts they need; IoT goes much further where the devices themselves inform what parts are needed and when.

## 3. A reduction in inspection calls and appointments

With IoT, field service techs can make less calls designed to inspect, or simply check on, devices. The devices possess self-diagnostic capabilities and report back to operations on their performance. When your field service techs can make less simple check-up calls and make more calls dedicated to actual repairs, service, or new parts/upgrades, that increases their effectiveness -- and, in turn, your bottom line.



## 4. A redefining of service

Field service management executives have been talking for a few years now about how connected service and IoT might change the very definition of service.

Think of it like this: for years, 'service' meant fixing something that's broken or is getting in the way of business. With IoT, it's more about customer promise where now you can predict how long the machine will run and fix the issue before the customer even notices. Reactive maintenance is being substituted by proactive and predictive maintenance all working off the combination of mobility, the cloud, and big data

We've always thought of 'service' as an after-concept, or 'Something that happens after something breaks.' What if service becomes a before-concept?



# If you understand the benefits, how do you prepare for IoT?

By now, ideally you see some of the benefits to the Internet of Things in a field service organization. The next logical step is: how do you maximize these benefits in your own organization?



Carefully evaluate field service options

Evaluate the complete product and service offerings available from different solution providers. [Be sure to avoid the 5 common mistakes.](#)

Implement a field service management solution

Choose [a company with a suite of products and deep organizational knowledge](#) best suited to help you thrive in a changing field service management world. Be sure to choose a partner that listens and adapts to your needs, not the other way around.

Prioritize your first steps

What is most important to you in the first year of embracing IoT? Do you want to improve customer relationships? Do you want better routing, or better inventory management? Determine those steps and start small as you further incorporate the benefits of IoT.

Prioritize how well applications 'talk' to other systems

This will be the core of your success. How connected are the devices in terms of the processes that are needed for optimal field service operations and client successes?

Engage with needed skills and parts

All the connected devices in the world won't help you if your techs lack a variety of skills and your inventory is often depleted; [the human and tools elements need to be there for field service management to work](#), even in an age driven by IoT and automation.

Measure and monitor your KPIs

Define, expand, and monitor your KPIs. Use business intelligence and your interconnected systems and data to uncover opportunities and business insight. Stay ahead of your competition in this rapidly changing industry.



## The broader takeaway

Presently, about 15 percent of field service organizations use some form of an IoT program. That's drastically low, especially when you consider that 37 percent of those organizations are still primarily paper-based. That's 2.5x times the number operating according to 1970s' principles.

The three major factors that will radically change field service organizations in the next few years are, almost unquestionably:

- Mobile solutions
- The Internet of Things
- Big data

Getting on board with these three concepts effectively now, instead of 3-5 years from now, can be a huge first-mover advantage -- just as some of the companies who embraced digital in the early 2000s are revenue machines now, as opposed to playing catch-up.

Change is hard, and we, at FieldOne, from Microsoft, understand that. But we can guide you through the necessary steps, processes, products, and changed thinking to make IoT a reality for your field service organization.

Are you ready for lower costs, less time on checking-boxes service, happier field techs and customers, and higher profit? Learn more by downloading our eBook below.

## Are you in charge of evaluating and proposing a Field Service Management Solution?

Find out more about how eBECS and FieldOne work together to deliver world-class Enterprise Field Service on Microsoft Dynamics CRM, the world's most configurable business and mobility platform.

*Email Tracey Barrett now on [tbarrett@ebecs.com](mailto:tbarrett@ebecs.com) for more information or sign up to one of our free FieldOne events*



5 mistakes to avoid  
when evaluating an enterprise  
field service management solution

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