

5 Field Service Mega-Trends for 2021



There's no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped our world and our industry, and that field service trends have emerged or accelerated as we all adapted to the changes around us. One thing seems certain: for the foreseeable future, our ability to deliver quality field and customer service will depend on how well we understand these trends and apply the lessons we've learned in recent months to them.

Here are the current service industry trends that stand out to us:

1.

End-Users' Patience for Downtime is Waning

To ensure maximum operational uptime in their mission-critical environments, some end-user organizations (especially in healthcare) have resorted to purchasing more equipment than they've needed and literally rolled in replacement equipment from a closet down the hall when the current system experienced an issue. But it's just not practical to do that anymore. Now, to reduce operational expenses, end-users are right-sizing their capital expense plans and focusing more on keeping the equipment they have up and running consistently.

As such, instead of buying more hardware, they're buying vendor service plans or other third-party maintenance packages. In addition, more organizations are exploring preventative and predictive maintenance services to support greater uptime and fewer periods of interruptive equipment downtime. For the past few years, the [Technology and Services Industry Association](#) has recognized a shift in services industry as SLAs that have traditionally been based on Response Time are increasingly being replaced by Resolution Time as end-users insist on outcome-based service contracts.



2.

Increased Demand for Value-Added Services

End-users don't just want hardware or devices anymore. With increased focus on maximizing uptime, recognizing faster resolution time, and having access to value-add services such as asset management they increasingly want XaaS offerings that minimize their technology footprint, or other systems and offerings that help their hardware produce more value and bring new competitive advantages. This has ushered in a new era of innovation and development, both in hardware and software, and it will be exciting to see how this changes the service landscape in the months and years ahead.

3.

Service Organizations are Seeking Dynamic Workforce Model Solutions

Simply put, it's extremely expensive to build and maintain a full-fledged, employee-based field service network. It's particularly difficult to plan for resource utilization with an employed workforce model – what is a reasonable number of field service employees to have on your bench knowing that service demand may fluctuate or surge and your employees could experience periods of under- or over-utilization?

Since early 2020, many service organizations across industries were forced to lay off some of these employees – but services delivery operations could not pause, particularly in mission-critical end-user environments. As a result, some service organizations have been challenged to provide the same or even more service engagements with fewer internal resources. As a result, they are learning how to find ways to scale their operations without their costs rising in a similarly linear fashion.

Many organizations in this situation have filled that gap by hiring contractors or outsourced service partners. They're finding that this helps reduce both their capital and operating expenses and improves response and resolution times. They're also using outsourced resources for more predictable or routine service tasks, freeing up their employed staff for higher-value or advanced complexity activities.

An important component to this trend, which should not be overlooked, is that OEMs are seeing true partnerships with their outsourced service providers. With brand reputation and customer satisfaction on the line, OEMs need to trust their service partners to align with their values and deliver on the promise they make to their customers with as much focus and intent as the OEM itself.



4.

Moving to More Balanced Service Solution

In addition to more value-added services, end-users increasingly want more counsel to help them get the most out of their equipment. The advice they seek ranges from usage best practices all the way to high-level organizational strategy. As service organizations review their own strategy to deliver onsite repair, installation, and preventative maintenance, and new high-value services, they have the opportunity to seek a balanced services solution that delivers consistent quality performance and high customer satisfaction while also gaining the potential to generate more revenue for their organization.

One example of this is resource allocation. As more OEMs seek outsource service partnerships to augment their existing workforce, they want to allocate resources in a way that best meets their objectives for service value, complexity, and cost. Perhaps the most common solution we're seeing is to outsource lower-level actions that may require fluctuating demand and scheduling, so the OEM can even out their own resource supply across more predictive support tasks.

5.

Connectivity Accelerates

During the pandemic, service organizations focused on finding new and improved ways to resolve tickets and take care of end-users despite travel restrictions and social distancing orders which may have prevented them from delivering services onsite. This has led to a renewed focus on improving hardware connectedness and collecting more data and telemetry and better anticipate, manage, and respond to service needs. Increased focus on connectivity has also accelerated discussions regarding predictive maintenance so service organizations can further support end-users' equipment uptime needs. While this approach was not a new concept, the impact of the global pandemic certainly accelerated focus and innovation.

Organizations who already had a jumpstart on innovative connectivity solutions prior to the pandemic (such a remote support models or integrated augmented reality technology) benefitted as their solution weathered the test of large-scale services disruption.

Already, these efforts have proven worthwhile. In some organizations, up to 30 percent of service encounters are now handled in such a fashion; customer satisfaction hasn't suffered,



and efficiencies are being realized. As such, we expect efforts to improve connectedness and provide more remote support to multiply in the months to come.

There's no question that 2021 will continue to be a fascinating year as we move into a post-pandemic world. We at Source Support will continue to monitor these trends and continue innovating and streamlining support experiences for our customers to deliver best-in-class performance every time.

About Source Support Service's Customers

Source Support's customers are technical product manufacturers in the enterprise IT, medical technology, and industrial automation markets. Since we were founded in 2001, our customers have enjoyed access to a global on-demand field engineer network, a scalable training and certification platform, a global service parts logistics partner network and an advanced services management platform to unify and manage it all.

With over 20 years of experience executing millions of same-day and next-business-day support interactions around the globe, we've refined our service model to streamline support experiences and support our customers' service resiliency and quality performance objectives.

For more information on Source's service model, and how Source can support your organization as you address new and accelerating industry trends, please visit sourcesupport.com.

