

Improving field work productivity in government

Mobile workforce software



Improving field work productivity in government: mobile workforce software

If the government applies the same software approach to field-based workforce management that it has successfully adopted in other areas, it has the opportunity to reduce costs and boost productivity.

Every government department which uses a mobile workforce has an opportunity to make significant cost savings and productivity improvements, not to mention improved workforce morale, with the new technologies available. The result will be better services to citizens. However, our research of more than 1,000 UK civil servants indicates that the productivity of the UK government's field-based teams is being hampered by poor quality processes and a reliance on outdated paper-based systems.

This white paper looks at how government departments currently schedule field work, how effective they are, and what's most important when managing mobile workers. Our research uncovers some of the common causes of problematic scheduling, then offers a dynamic solution.

Research: shifting the focus to field work

During our research, nearly all the main ministerial departments told us they have field worker teams, while many agencies and organisations said they have staff regularly working out of the office. Many of these are in the regulatory, judicial, prosecution and counter-fraud services, and organisations as diverse as the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and NHS Blood and Transplant have told us they have mobile field work staff.

Our research shows that the civil service is not innovative in its approach to managing mobile workers. Compared to other areas where government has made big leaps in its use of cutting-edge software, field work, it seems, has been left behind.

How is field work scheduled?

In our survey, almost half of field work managers said jobs were booked through a shared calendar (46 per cent). The same proportion said appointments were booked by email. Only two per cent said they used a mobile application, two per cent said they used an online dashboard, and only two per cent said they used dynamic scheduling software. The final two per cent said there was even a whiteboard involved in the scheduling and allocation of field-based workers' jobs. Many respondents referred to paper-based systems.

The vast majority (71 per cent) of the staff we spoke to said there was an opportunity to do things better.

How effective are current job-booking systems?

Just 29 per cent said that the system used for booking jobs was 'very effective'. Less than half (43 per cent) said their job-booking system was 'somewhat effective.' One fifth (20 per cent) were unsure, saying their system was 'neither effective nor ineffective.' Nine per cent rated their system as ineffective.

What's important when managing mobile workers?

Managers and field work staff do recognise the problem. Just over three quarters of managers (76 per cent) said that the productivity of their field work teams could be improved. Two out of five (39 per cent) said the ability to know where field workers are in real time — for example through better use of location services — would be useful. And almost a quarter (23 per cent) said they would like to ensure staff had less unused time between jobs. A similar proportion (25 per cent) said reducing the cost of managing staff would be useful.





The causes of problematic scheduling

Right people, right jobs, right time

The main problems experienced by government field workers and managers are caused by a reliance on static systems, too many platforms, poor device quality and bad connectivity. This, they say, leads to wasted time, inconsistent data and poor communication.

Static systems

A number of respondents said they wanted to have a process that did not rely on static systems, such as spreadsheets.

“A live database system, not a historic, non-updated one, would make scheduling easier”

Multiple platforms

They also called for a single platform which is used by everyone, rather than different platforms for different teams.

“Updating changes across multiple offices with paper-based and spreadsheet records leads to inconsistencies, incorrect information and scheduling issues”

Lack of staff visibility

One respondent said that if they needed to discuss a case they often had to call around until they reached someone, because there was no way of knowing who was available. This demonstrates a poor use of staff’s valuable time.

Poor devices and bad connectivity

For staff in the field, the main issues relate to the low quality of devices, poor connectivity and a lack of secure connections when logging on to update systems. Poor mobile signal means that workers cannot check in, which is a concern for departments trying to ensure the safety of their staff outside the office. But it goes beyond safety. Many respondents said it prevents them from doing their job properly.

“The system to book in work is very slow to access remotely so people tend not to update it.”

For managers, the issues around devices and connectivity highlighted another problem: the inability to communicate about delays affecting progress. Some said they wanted a system that would allow staff to indicate when there was a delay, and whether clients, or traffic, for example, had caused that delay.

A dynamic approach to managing mobile workers

Our research indicates a contradiction. While field work management teams in the civil service don't rate their current processes as particularly inefficient, they struggle with a number of inherent problems, such as:

- ▲ Field workers cannot update their calendars while on the move
- ▲ Managers do not know where employees are when they're out of the office
- ▲ No one can make real-time updates
- ▲ Staff find it difficult to change their schedules
- ▲ Staff cannot plan appointment routes in the most time-efficient and cost-effective way

Dynamic resource-based solutions

All these problems not only have a negative impact on the department's productivity, but on the citizens who rely on the service. To turn this around, government departments need to adopt a more innovative approach based on dynamic software platforms.

Dynamic field workforce platforms allow proper management of the end-to-end service processes and seamlessly link field-based workers with central functions. They enable managers to track individuals' workloads and help managers deploy staff in the most effective way possible.

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And the best mobile workforce applications offer off-line capabilities for situations when reception is poor or non-existent. This means staff can continue working even if they are in remote locations, as all the job information is available to them.

Our research shows that government departments are currently ineffectively managing their field workforces. Yet, although the problems are acknowledged, there may be little awareness of how they can be addressed.

As well as choosing an intuitive system, so everyone in the team can use it — whether in the field or the office — government departments need to select a system that is secure, reliable and Cloud-based so that it fits their security needs, allowing them to meet Whitehall's Cloud-first rules.

Despite ongoing budgetary challenges, there is a better way for government departments to manage their field-based staff; one which will ultimately lead to cost savings, efficiency gains and a better service to taxpayers.

How can we help?

Organisations with a field-based workforce can increase their productivity by 20 per cent using mobile workforce management software. To learn more, visit our [website](#).



About Advanced

Driving productivity, insight and innovation

We enable our customers to achieve increased efficiencies, savings and growth opportunities through focused, right-first-time software solutions that evolve with the changing needs of their business and the markets they operate in.

As the third largest British software and services company in the UK, we help organisations create the right digital foundations that drive productivity, insight and innovation – all while remaining safe, secure and compliant.

Our solutions for both commercial and public sector organisations simplify business challenges and deliver immediate value, positively impacting millions of people's lives.

Journey to the cloud

We have a strong track record in helping our customers' journey to the Cloud. We manage private, public and hybrid Cloud environments as well as deliver sector specific Cloud-based solutions and services. We are certified partners with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft, and have achieved the highest levels of accreditations. Our Cloud solutions are used by organisations of all shapes and sizes including Highways England, Performing Rights Society (PRS) and Aspire Furniture.

Field service management

Our field service management software solutions help our customers streamline their service to increase job capacity, reduce overheads and improve customer satisfaction.

More than 40,000 field workers rely on our software to undertake their work every day, and over £20m has been spent in research and development of our product. Our applications can be fully integrated with their existing infrastructure, or rolled-out as independent solutions, with the option of being hosted in the Cloud.



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w oneadvanced.com

t +44(0) 8451 605 555

e hello@oneadvanced.com

Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, SL3 9LL

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