



New Ways to Achieve Accountability and Prevent Waste Using Fleet and Asset Management

Mobile-based companies face considerable challenges to their operational efficiency, both at the home office and in the field. In addition to the billing, payroll, and accounting responsibilities all businesses have, mobile-based companies must track and maintain vehicles and assets, and remotely monitor the behavior and performance of most of their workforce.

There are many potential threats to smooth fleet operations, especially when manual processes are involved:

- Billing errors
- Unnecessary overtime
- Vehicle wear and tear and misuse
- Job accounting disputes
- Risky or wasteful driver behavior
- Complex routing and dispatch

Today's GPS tracking and mobile workforce management technology can address all of these issues and more—provided it is implemented throughout an organization and integrated with the company's existing back-office systems.

This paper examines common operational problems at mobile-based companies, explores how the right solution can mitigate them, and provides guidance regarding what to look for in a mobile workforce management partner.

Back-Office Inefficiencies

If they're not automated, four central functions can breed inefficiency throughout your organization: route planning, dispatch, payroll, and systems integration. Here's what the non-automated picture looks like for companies with fleets or mobile workforces:



1. Route Planning

Handing a driver a stack of paper work orders is a recipe for wasted time and gasoline, error potential, and unnecessary overtime. Failure to optimize route planning at the start of the workday can create a domino effect of delays and lost business that lasts into the evening. Inability to update routes in response to the day's events compounds the problem.

Ineffective routing often leads to late arrivals at the client site, and even appointments missed entirely. Customer frustration and complaints mount, taking up valuable staff time back in the home office to resolve the issue. Businesses' reputations become tarnished; they may even go so far as to hire additional staff and buy more trucks to compensate.

2. Dispatch

Manual systems can't offer real-time visibility into vehicle location or field activity. Communicating work orders by radio or cell phone can take hours out of each day. Worse, you may dispatch a vehicle 30 miles away to a job site, when a closer available vehicle could have cut service call time in half.

Constant status check phone calls are more than time-consuming: they're potentially dangerous. Anything that adds to a driver's distraction level is a costly liability waiting to happen.

3. Payroll

With a manual system, drivers come into the office, clock in, go out on their routes, and return to the office to clock out at day's end. These trips to and from the office waste gas, time, and money.

To increase the expense, drivers in the field may take the long route or run personal errands on company time to pad their hours and cross the overtime threshold.

4. Disparate Systems

Many companies are partially automated: they may use GPS vehicle tracking or GPS-enabled dispatch. But if data from the GPS system is not integrated with data from payroll, time and job accounting, and other back-office systems, they're stuck manually entering data from one system to another—or not entering it at all, and losing valuable insight.

Field Inefficiencies

Four field-based functions suffer the most without an integrated mobile workforce management solution: driver behavior, status updates, and job accounting.

1. Driver Behavior

Having a field-based workforce carries a lot of risk, and the way drivers perform in the field can do significant damage to a company's margins (and reputation).

Risky driving: Insurance liability is a major concern. With manual processes, there's no way to monitor driver behavior—unless someone calls in with a complaint, or a vehicle is involved in an accident. Discourteous driving is bad PR at best, and life-endangering at worst.



Wasteful driving: It's not uncommon for drivers to waste company time by using vehicles for personal trips and errands, or to waste fuel by idling and running the heat or air conditioning during breaks.

Additionally, behaviors like hard braking, accelerating, and cornering cause unnecessary wear and tear on vehicles, and increase insurance risk. Vehicles stuck in the repair shop can't serve clients.

Dishonest driving: As mentioned above, it's also common to take the long route or otherwise kill time in order to pad hours for the biggest paycheck.

Dishonesty may even extend to the use of the company fuel card, where friends of the driver get in line to fill up on the fleet's dime.

Many companies resort to sending a foreman or fleet manager to follow drivers around, wasting time that could be much better used managing other jobs or selling to prospective customers. Without a way to monitor drivers, containing capital expenditures, limiting overtime, and mitigating risk become more difficult.

2. Status Updates

How can you capture billable and non-billable time, plus breaks or time off? Manual status checks through two-way radio or phone calls are distracting to both sides, and unsafe to your driver and others on the road.

3. Job Accounting

Without time-stamped, GPS-backed proof of delivery or time spent on a job site, companies risk becoming entangled in customer disputes. Without documentation, it's your word against theirs.

4. Asset Loss

When multiple vehicles, drivers, and assets are on the move, it's easy for things to go missing—either through dishonesty or carelessness. When field assets aren't monitored, companies can end up pouring money into asset replacement.

Now that we've explored the way inefficiencies plague both back-office and field operations, let's look at how a mobile workforce management solution can address each source of waste.

Integrated Mobile Workforce Management for the Back Office

Mobile-based companies can see immediate back-office improvements with an automated mobile workforce management solution. Those improvements build over time and pay dividends for years to come.

1. Optimized Routing

GPS-enabled routing allows companies to get more routes per day out of a single vehicle and driver. This increased speed and efficiency has another benefit: customer satisfaction and retention.





2. GPS-Enabled Dispatch

Knowing exactly which vehicles are available and close to job sites leads to more completed jobs per day, better use of existing equipment, and ultimately to happier customers. For companies that provide emergency response services, optimized dispatch can even save lives.

3. Digitized Payroll

GPS data about when a driver arrives at and leaves a job site, what route he took, and whether he stopped for a break can take the guesswork out of payroll. No longer are staff members on the honor system when reporting hours worked.

Additionally, with remote time clocks, employees can be dispatched from home to save time and fuel.

4. Integrated Systems

When data is shared among multiple back-office systems, the need for paper logs, time sheets, faxed work orders, and phone updates is eliminated. When information flows smoothly between teams, it reduces stress and improves margins.

Mobile Workforce Management in the Field

Mobile workforce management solutions can have far-reaching implications for field operations as well.

1. Driver Monitoring and Accountability

Mobile workforce management solutions allow a high level of visibility into driver behavior. Drivers log in and out of their vehicles each time they make a move, either with a key fob or with door monitoring. This visibility allows managers to identify and address undesirable driving practices like wasting time and using vehicles for personal errands.

Many of these solutions also offer in-cabin, real-time alerts to drivers when they brake, corner, or accelerate too hard. With this increased accountability, many drivers will naturally self-correct, reducing risk and waste. Insurance companies now look at driver safety programs and reward companies that offer them with lower premiums and other incentives.

Finally, vehicle maintenance data can be integrated with driver monitoring data to pinpoint which drivers may be putting too much wear and tear on vehicles.

Many fleet managers are wary of being perceived as “Big Brother”. The truth is that driver monitoring has become the industry standard. If your competition is not already using this technology and reaping the benefits, they will be soon.

2. Real-Time, Automatic Status Updates

With GPS data about the location and job status of each vehicle and driver, there is no need for constant phone or radio status checks. Drivers can focus on the road, not answering a call.



3. Optimized Job Accounting

Proof of service reports tell companies exactly when and for how long a technician or driver was on site. This information can be valuable evidence in a dispute with a customer, and it allows companies to demonstrate their dedication and attention to detail.

4. Asset Tracking

The cost of stolen or lost assets can add up quickly. When drivers use smartphone scanners to verify the presence of field assets at each stop, managers can pinpoint exactly when an asset went missing, and address the cause of the loss appropriately.

How to Select a Provider That Will Help You Get More with Less

We have explored the ways mobile-based companies struggle with inefficiencies in the back office and in the field, and shown how the right mobile workforce management solution can help with each of those struggles.

But what does the “right” solution look like?

In short, the right solution offers all of the features outlined above, reinforced by a strong foundation of service and support.

Many of the time- and money-saving capabilities of mobile workforce management can only be realized through systems integration—if driver monitoring is integrated with vehicle maintenance data, for example.

The right mobile workforce management solution provider will work directly with you to ensure that your systems are integrated and that the solution is deployed everywhere it might benefit your company.

Make sure your new workforce management solution partner does the following:

- Integrates your multiple systems as a standard part of your contract, not as an expensive add-on.
- Helps you monitor, analyze, and act on system-generated data.
- Maximizes your existing mobile technology, such as smartphones and tablets—no more need for bulky laptops traveling with your field crew.
- Offers on-site training and support, and serves as a trusted advisor to your team— not just another vendor.

Be diligent in your search for the right system and provider and your company will reap the benefits of an optimized mobile workforce for years to come.

Founded in 1998, InSight Mobile Data is an independent, employee-owned technology company dedicated to one thing: providing real-time visibility into the mobile work environment. We've made decisions over 15 years to remain independent, because it allows us to preserve our uniquely close relationship with our customers. We're accountable to them, and to our own high standards of innovation and customer service.



INSIGHT
Mobile Data

23330 Cottonwood Parkway, Suite 333
California, MD 20619
301-866-1990
www.insightmobiledata.com