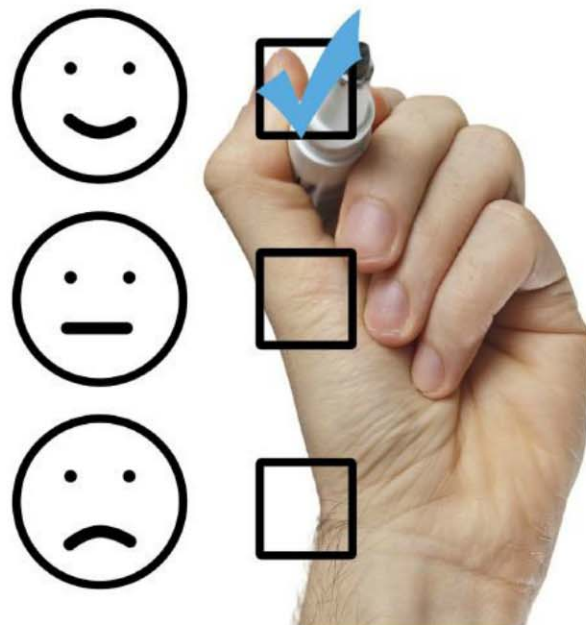


# Is Status Quo Good Enough for your Customers?



By Robert Sombach

**It has often been said that the enemy of great, is good. As a business owner in the scale industry, you typically make changes when some facet of operations is underperforming: the squeaky wheel gets the grease. In most cases when something is performing well, you best leave it alone. Yet, it is often those exact items that prevent our businesses from really taking off, the items that restrict growth in revenue and profits.**

Customer service and technician management are two of these areas in the scales industry. We often

ignore small issues, and the popular comment “our customers love our personalized service” covers up some potentially bigger problems. Let’s face it, many have been your customers for decades. In your geography there may not be many competitors, so it’s easy to opt for the status quo, delivering service in much the same way as it’s been done for the last 20 years. But is that good enough for your clients?

Two areas that scale service companies can improve upon are certificate management and service technician management.

In the past decade, customer service has gone through a massive transformation. At one time the standard for customer service was in person or at least over the phone. Then customer service shifted to electronic communication (website or email), which was initially regarded as second rate. Today, however, these two have switched sides—customers live in an *electronic information universe* and switching out of that mindset is seen

as taking a step backward. How did this transformation occur so fast? Through information; specifically the expectation of instant access to information. Customer service has always been about that; a quick resolution to a question or a problem. Whether you are calibrating a scale, fixing a broken device or providing a customer with access to their certificate details—in the past, that meant talking to someone. Today—that same “*someone*” is often seen as a barrier to accessing information.

This change in expectations is not specific to the scale industry. Customer expectations for all manners of service have increased, and now they expect that same standard of from you. Today a customer can see their order history from an office supply vendor, access online banking information—even the last 10 books they’ve read from their Amazon account, so it makes sense that they expect their audited certificate information to be available in the same manner.

Our perception of information



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## Is Status Quo Good Enough....

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today is very different from even five years ago. Certificate information is not your information; it's their information. Customers feel that as a vendor, you are merely holding their information for them, and they should be able to access it when they need it. Calling or waiting to ask for a certificate doesn't meet that standard.

It's true that in many cases customers are bound to you because of your ability to sell, service and calibrate their equipment, however, it's often dangerous when customers do business with you because they have to. Most long-term customers should *want to do business* with you.

There's other equally important reasons to start managing your service teams and managing certificates digitally (though happy customers should be reason enough), but here's the best reason: information.

### Information will become data.

### Data becomes intelligence.

### Intelligence turns in profit.

Let's consider the decision to digitize your certificate management. As previously discussed, doing this will give your customers confidence that you're a technology savvy vendor fulfilling their requirement to have fast access to their information. The execution of this change is made even more effective by having your service technicians manage their calls via a digital system.

Many scale vendors today still have technicians filling out paperwork on-site, then returning that paperwork back to their office. The paperwork is then copied and sent to various systems for invoicing, and the details of the work are then entered into a spreadsheet, which serves as the database to schedule future calibrations and additional service information. Such a pro-

cess requires a fair amount of labor to manage.

How could this process be improved with automation? When a scale calibration call and certificate are completed, it will immediately schedule the next service call. It can also record the details of the last call—how long did it take, what parts were used, and who performed the service call. That information can then be compared to other service calls on the same device. It can also measure how efficient one technician is to another. It can be compared to other devices to predict future maintenance or future problems. In short, this information is now data.

When you study this data, it may become obvious that some technicians take longer than others to perform similar tasks. Perhaps training is needed to improve results. If you can spot a trend that one vendor's parts consistently fail faster than others, or that some models tend to fail more frequently than others, you then have the opportunity to make changes.

### The data has now turned into profit.

Changing your business processes, especially "good" processes, is difficult to do. There's always something that seems more urgent at the time.

The scales business presents many opportunities—there's always a need for measurement, and machines will always need maintenance. With this in mind, consider an investment in a certificate management and service technician software system. Do it as a long-term commitment to your customers, as well as a long-term investment in your bottom line.

### About the Author

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