# i**W**eigh & **M**easure

## Industrial Weigh & Measure Handling Systems Magazine

**May/June 2012**

# The History of Scales IV

**Weighing In On Mobile Service Management**

## LOA

**Products**        **FYI**        **Classifieds**

# Weighing in on Mobile Service Management

By Robert Sombach

I n the last century, horse-drawn carriages gave way to motorized vehicles, and the term "motor car" became, simply, "car." The same thing will happen to "mobile computing." Experts believe that, in the future, all computers will be mobile, and we'll simply call it "computing." The service and repair business is well into the process of going mobile now. It used to be that servicing and repairing scale equipment required lots of paperwork to be filled in at individual work sites. This was cumbersome and did not allow for instant updating of customer information, resulting in errors and other inefficiencies.

Technology has rapidly evolved to a point where technicians can now access and update important customer data, safely and reliably, in "real time" through smartphones like BlackBerry, iPhone and Android, and other mobile devices such as the iPad and Playbook.

The benefits are many, with dramatic cost savings – response time is quicker, paperwork is minimized, the data is current and completely visible, duplications are eliminated, and technician/engineer scheduling can be optimized. Many companies are already benefiting from the use of mobile computing and market trends are indicating that further adoption can be expected due to competitive pressures and the need to respond to customer expectations.

## Challenge 1: Organization

On any given day, millions of service technicians hit the road with paper based work instructions in hand. Upon their return, their hand written notes need to be entered in a record keeping system. Frequently their work instructions are incomplete or inaccurate, and supporting documentation is missing, or unexpected parts are needed, all leading to service delays as the technician returns to the office or waits for assistance.

## The answer to three big challenges

With 16 years of experience working with a global customer base, Miracle Service has recognized that service operations are subject to three major challenges that have been overcome with an effective Mobile Service Management (MSM) strategy. MSM can be a game changer when properly deployed.

## How MSM solves the challenge

MSM allows instant access to up-to-date service related information. Work can be transmitted directly to a technician's mobile device. Service call information and customer history can be viewed on site. This eliminates mountains of paperwork, significantly increases productive "wrench time" and provides considerable cost savings.

## MSM opportunities:

- View assigned work orders on a mobile device and display details
- Enter parts requests and requisitions
- Modify work order information as the work is completed
- Track labor, travel and complete service details

- View machine details and service history
- Capture a customer's electronic signature on a completed service report
- Email or print completed work orders for the customer

## Challenge 2: Inventory management

The parts stockroom environment can be action-packed. Manual tracking of receipts, returns, and other issues is by nature prone to error, and estimates often replace actual counts during time constraints. Physical inventory audits, best performed when the stockroom is completely shut down, in reality are performed while parts and supplies are moving in and out of inventory, creating inaccuracies and delays.

## How MSM solves the challenge

Extending inventory management to the field virtually eliminates errors and streamlines day-to-day operations. Data on the availability of stock can be looked up in "real-time" both in the warehouse and from the field.

Knowing if parts are available, when a technician is in the field, can prevent a lengthy machine "down time" period that may have not been possible with a paper based system. Inventory is updated in real-time as parts are used on specific jobs, so up-to-the-minute stock availability is accurate and simplified. The availability of critical parts is easier to track, resulting in timelier parts inventory management.

On the other side truck stock accountability is easier to manage and maintain. This enhances the accountability requirements to ensure each technician is aware of their stock usage and the items on their truck.

## Inventory management opportunities:

- Provide inventory audit and cycle count rapidly and accurately
- Improve stock availability, issuing receipts and returns to inventory easily
- Improve parts and service requisition processing
- Better truck stock accountability

## Challenge 3: Operations management

Management's goals center on running the service department at the highest efficiency and at the lowest cost possible. Incomplete data, inaccurate job assignments, inefficient scheduling and unexpected delays all negatively impact operations in the field. Managers can be suddenly blindsided by unexpected failures, parts shortages, productivity problems and inefficient business processes. Customer service can suffer as a result of ineffective resource management. Management simply cannot afford to rely on old data.

## How MSM solves the challenge

Mobile devices keep current operational data at the manager's fingertips allowing for prompt corrective action, recognition of opportunities for improvement, and better
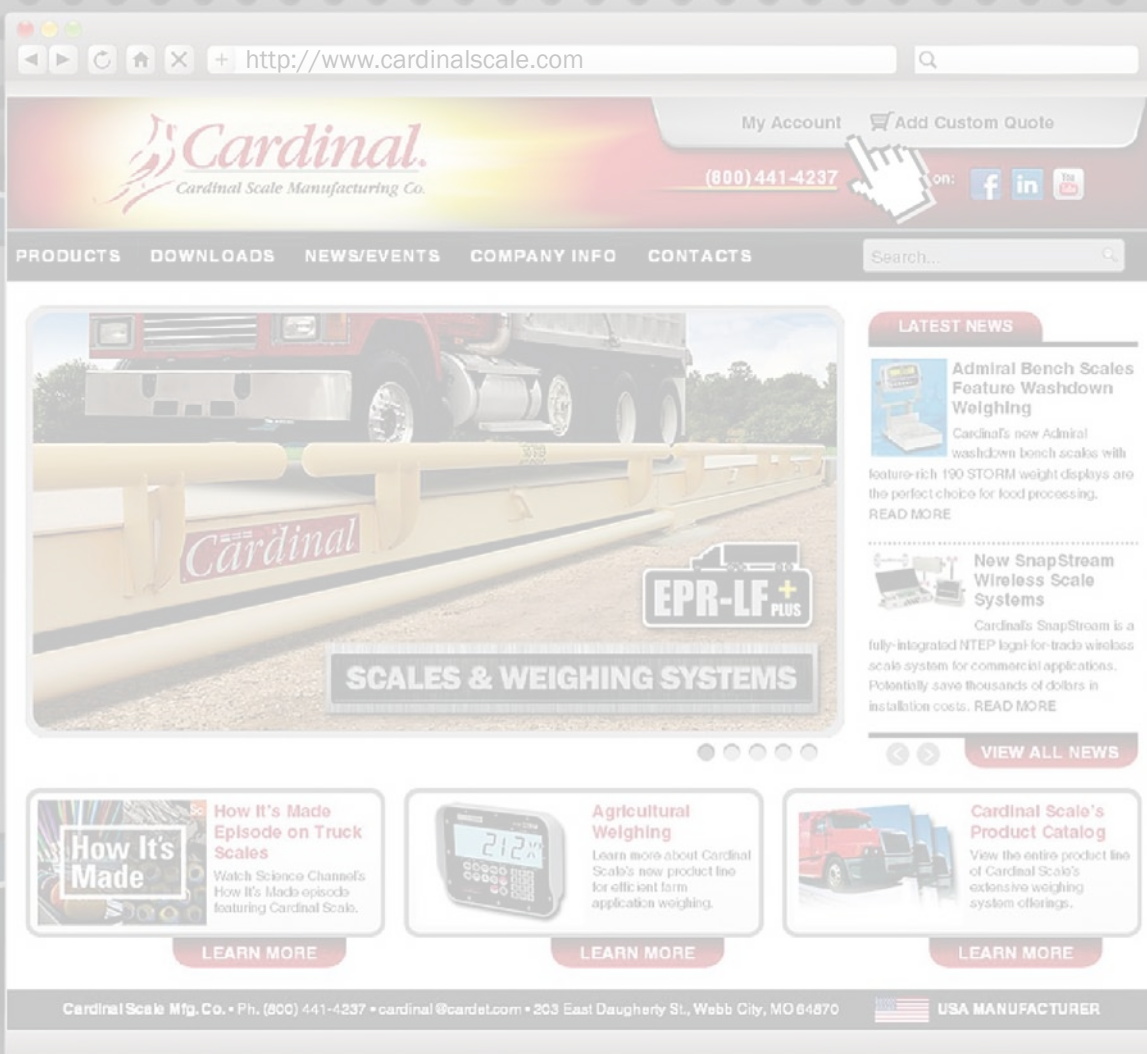
decision making.

Empowering remote users with the right tools and ready access to critical information allows them to perform their work more effectively. A MSM solution improves the bottom line by automating business processes and replacing paper-based transactions, ultimately improving service levels and customer satisfaction.

## Operations management opportunities:

- Improve resource productivity by reducing delays in accessing information
- Track work order backlog, status and completion times
- Decentralize decision making to users physically at the location requiring attention
- Improve customer service with remote status updates

## MSM as a competitive advantage

As technology continues to provide answers to business challenges, mobile computing will continue to grow. Dramatically improved operational efficiency, productivity rates and responsiveness resulting from MSM will benefit businesses in the scale industry that are seeking rapid cost reductions, increased competitiveness and a greater return on their assets.

### About the Author

Robert Sombach is Vice President, Operations and Development, for Nexent Innovations, providers of Miracle Service, Service Management Software.
www.MiracleService.com