The Number One Risk to Your Service Business?

STATUS QUO

As little as five or six years ago, most dealerships that billed customers per page, called or faxed those customers each month and asked them to print a configuration page and submit the various meters. Other dealerships stepped it up and sent out technicians to read those meters at each customer site for them. The advent of remote monitoring changed this exercise completely.

Customers and dealers alike have benefited from a less intrusive and more comprehensive means to gather data: remote monitoring and reporting. Once remote monitoring was adopted, going back to manual collection of meters would seem archaic. Service businesses are now going through these same changes. Here are some examples:
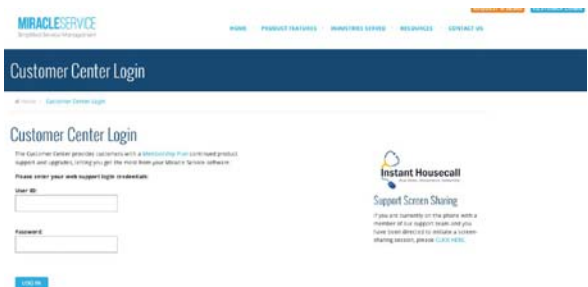
Booking a service call

Where companies are large enough to have an in-house IT staff, over the past several years, that IT person is responsible more and more for managing printing assets. Let's assume that person is comfortable calling your business and initiating a service ticket, and consider that following up on that ticket is a potentially dangerous assumption. Sure, they will call you, but they will not likely be happy about it. In the IT world, and among those professionals under age 30, they assume these things can be done online.

Booking a service call should not require a phone call. Checking in on the status of a ticket should also be more automated than calling someone. This is standard in other IT functions such as telephony and computer server break-fix, so they will expect it for printing infrastructure. If they do not get it from you, they will eventually look for vendors that are more *technology savvy*. Do you have a customer portal for customers to log and track service calls?

Review Service History and Billing Online

Financial employees are becoming accustomed to electronic billing and having access to their account information online. Not only is having paper records becoming less important, companies now want access to their records on demand. Often the paper statement process results in slower payment cycles.

Lost statements result in time consuming steps and frustration not only for the customer and their employees, but yours as well. Time is money, and when it comes to receivables, time literally *is* money. Is your service and accounting system set up to send out invoices electronically?

"Our customers love our personalized service" is something many owners of office machine dealerships are fond of saying. With many dealerships loyally serving the same customers for decades, it's difficult to argue that they aren't doing something right. But technology is changing the way that customers conduct their day-to-day business, and it's important that your service company adopts and supports these technologies to keep customers happy. Yes, stellar customer service is the linchpin in the overall experience, but adopting the right technologies and processes to support that great service is just as important in working to cultivate a *lifetime customer.*

What about your employees?

Not only do customers expect automation, your employees do as well. Many owners complained for years that their service technicians refused to use their mobile devices to open, update, and close service tickets. The old system of collecting paperwork and notes daily or weekly, chasing down technicians for open tickets or missing information was a pain… hopefully you are not still living with that pain. This is a clear example of technology that has a very rapid return on investment (ROI).

Once technicians migrate from a paper system to one that leverages their smartphones and laptops, they should spend more time on calls and less time on administrative functions. Your internal staff should also spend less time on redundant tasks, like transcribing notes and information from paper to digital.

So, where do you start?

One thing to be mindful of with technology, especially with your dealership, is the thinking that you somehow need to do all of these things at once. This is an example of how the prescription can kill the patient! You do not need to shift all of your processes (accounting, service dispatch, customer portals) all at once to a new system. If every team in your company moves at the same time, it can result in a nightmare of change for your business, and potentially more headaches for your customers.

Instead, make your goal to get there over time by automating each process individually. This approach is also financially more responsible as you only invest in new infrastructure as you need it. As an example, Miracle Service has always believed that companies should keep their existing accounting systems as "off the shelf" as possible. Your accountants will thank you when

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they review your books in QuickBooks instead of some proprietary system. Remember status quo is the enemy: leverage technology to improve your profits, your customer service, and your customer loyalty.

For more information on simplifying service management, visit Miracle Service at www.miracleservice.com. Miracle Service's field service management software can equip you with everything your service business needs to become more efficient and more profitable.