Mobile PSO:
It’s about Time

A WHITE PAPER

Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed nothing else can be managed.

-Peter Drucker, Management consultant, educator, and author; Contributor to the philosophical and practical foundations of the modern business corporation
64% of adults in the United States now own smartphones—a staggering increase from 35% in 2011—according to a 2015 report by Pew Research Center.¹ There’s no longer an argument about the importance of mobile and how connected we are as a society. And if there is, next time you drive by a bus stop, take a look at the people waiting—they’re all staring at screens. Whether we’re checking the news, social media, our email, or the general World Wide Web, we’re logged on.

According to the same report, 84% of adults with a household income greater than $75,000 own a smartphone. And, 79% of respondents cited “productive” as a common feeling they get from the mobile connection.¹

The mobile device has transformed into more than a phone, more than a connection to social media, and more than a way to read the news. It’s evolving how we do our everyday work, and is the new normal in terms of productivity. It’s a way to get stuff—anything—done in the moment. It’s about real-time access and results.

**Your PSO is inherently mobile**

Professional services is about connection. It’s about people and providing services that deliver outcomes in the most efficient manner. So, it’s also about *time*.

The people that make up your professional services organization (PSO) are part of the 79%¹ of adults that feel their mobile device makes them more productive. As a faster way to check and respond to emails, it’s helping teams stay connected from anywhere … and everywhere.

In fact, in a recent Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA) survey, 40% of members said they are “constantly connected” to work tasks through a personal device.² But, second only to the quality of services delivery is how tasks and engagements are tracked. Basic time, task, and expense management is how a PSO makes money. But, tracking time and submitting expense sheets are the worst. More often than not, submitting time and expense is a manual data entry process that relies on a person’s memory and is a task that’s procrastinated until it’s a necessary evil. There has to be a better way.

There is. Mobile applications that make it easier to get the tedious work done is a must in professional services. Your workforce is inherently mobile—traveling to clients, visiting sites, racking up frequent flier miles, and relying on hotel Wi-Fi. Instead of having to write down timesheets or record expenses in one fell swoop, mobile applications for time, task, and expense tracking make it easier to record accurate information—simply and easily.
Top four reasons for mobile

There’s a demand

We’ve entered the age of the consumer, where the power lies in the buyer’s hands. As services professionals, all of our attention should be on the client. While that’s always been the case in best practice, today’s technology is starting to support that in an unprecedented way.

As Forrester Research puts it, IT investments have started the transition toward business technology, or “technology, systems, and processes designed to win, serve, and retain customers.” In the age of the consumer and the PSO, professional services teams should be equipped with the technology they need to fulfill engagements and win service deals—and that means mobile applications that help them work smarter and better.

In fact, according to a report by the Aberdeen Group, 71% of respondents said the top technology pressure for today’s businesses is the increasing demand for mobile. Mobile is today’s primary computing platform. Businesses should be rethinking the technology infrastructure and support the devices that employees are already using, instead of relying on systems designed for the desktop-centric world.

In terms of time, task, and expense management, consider this: What were you doing this time last week? According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, we lose 75% of the information we learn after six days. With a mobile way to track time, tasks, and expenses, teams can access and enter data in real-time—instead of waiting until the end of the week and relying on memory. The frequency of input improves accuracy, reduces duplicate data entry or having to jot down information, and keeps the power in the hands of the team to stay on track for billable utilization. It increases accountability and is built to complement the way many people are already being productive: Through their mobile device.

Customer focus stays top of mind

As we traverse the age of the consumer, it becomes more and more apparent about what that means for today’s PSO and how to remain competitive. Truthfully, the professional services industry is comprised of more than 19 million professionals and that means competition. In a report by Aberdeen Group “State of Service Management in 2016: Empower the Data-Driven CSO,” 58% of respondents said the top goal for service in 2016 is to improve customer retention, loyalty, and satisfaction.

That same report stated that the fourth goal for 2016 is to improve mobility and information capabilities. While it seems appropriate that mobility would fall behind in terms of prioritization, it’s notable that technology and mobile capabilities are what will fuel the improvement of customer retention, loyalty, and satisfaction.
When the field is equipped with the tools they need to perform better, more focus can be placed on the quality of the engagement. Professional services is about connection; it’s about people. If the focus remains there, the revenue will come. An additional benefit to integrating mobile capabilities is the trust between service provider and consumer. Entering time and task data is cumbersome, but if it’s done frequently, the accuracy of information will reflect itself positively in invoices. Your clients will have complete transparency into how they’re spending their money with you.

Work that makes sense

Today, there’s really no excuse to maintaining antiquated processes. Sure, that works for some, but it’s quickly being replaced by newer technologies. Maintaining a competitive edge comes down to working as efficiently as possible and putting the power in the hands of our teams (literally).

According to TSIA research, customers are “now insisting that suppliers take more responsibility for outcomes, not just products.” This demand is creating new business models and opportunities that extend the supplier-consumer relationship beyond that of just implementation. That means a lot more time being spent with customers, listening to their needs, and solving problems. Already today, it’s estimated that field services are at their customer sites on average 70 times per month. Services professionals are there to solve the customer’s challenges, but they also need a simple way to track that time and generate revenue.

There are multiple mobile solutions for time tracking. It’s a recognized necessity, but it isn’t always easy to submit timesheets, task updates, and expense sheets without an Internet connection. That said, there are mobile apps that support offline capabilities—helping users manage time, task, and expense entry without having to work around a network connection. Instead, users can enter data into the app and when a mobile connection is re-established, data is synced and uploaded. It’s that easy.

Mobile drives innovation

The professional services landscape is changing. As business models evolve to reflect the customer-centricity needed to stay competitive, new forms of innovation emerge. It’s sink or swim, and that includes mobile renovations.

In Forrester Research’s report, “The Top 10 Technology Trends to Watch: 2016 to 2018,” it identifies trend #10 as “Customer-Obsessed Firms Empower Their Workforce with Technology” and is broken down into three important sub-points:

1. BYOD (bring your own device) will catalyze the employee mobile mind shift

2. Firms will struggle to integrate social, knowledge, BYOD, and core systems
3. Firms will embrace collaborative work management and agile workforce enablement.

To stay competitive and innovative in the age of the consumer, PSOs have to find ways to “empower employees to serve customers quickly.” There are a lot of ways to accomplish that as mobile technologies continue to evolve. Mobile time, task, and expense management is one way PSOs can empower their teams to serve customers better. It provides more accurate billing information to the client, automates the workflow for approvals, and enables PSOs to recognize revenue faster.

With real-time time, task, and expense submissions, the financial health of a PSO stays stronger and helps leaders make more informed decisions about how to continue to transform and innovate their business.

Citations
2. (2015) Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA); “Five Key Criteria in Making a PSA Decisions”

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