

FUTURE_{of}
FIELD SERVICE

SUBCONTRACTORS

Leveraging a Contingent Workforce
in Your Service Organization





Subcontractors play a vital role within service organizations. They supplement our existing workforce to accommodate time-sensitive projects, provide coverage in low-density regions, unexpected emergencies, and—more frequently in our post-pandemic world—fill the worker gap left by the global skills shortage. Research indicates **44% of workforce spend** is now on the external workforce.

Subcontractors allow us to accommodate changing workforce scenarios, whether for technology infrastructure rollouts such as 5G, standing things back up after a weather event, or simply delivering consistent Moments of Service™ to our customers.



CONSIDERATIONS

While third-party contractors provide us with many benefits, service organizations must consider important factors when leveraging a contingent workforce. These include:

1. PRODUCT & SYSTEM KNOWLEDGE

Although subcontractors have deep domain knowledge, they may lack hands-on experience with the technology and systems of a particular organization, including the benefits of working on the same asset and accounts over time. Supplemental support programs, although helpful, increase the cost of third-party workers. Even with additional support, speed, efficiency, and quality could suffer.



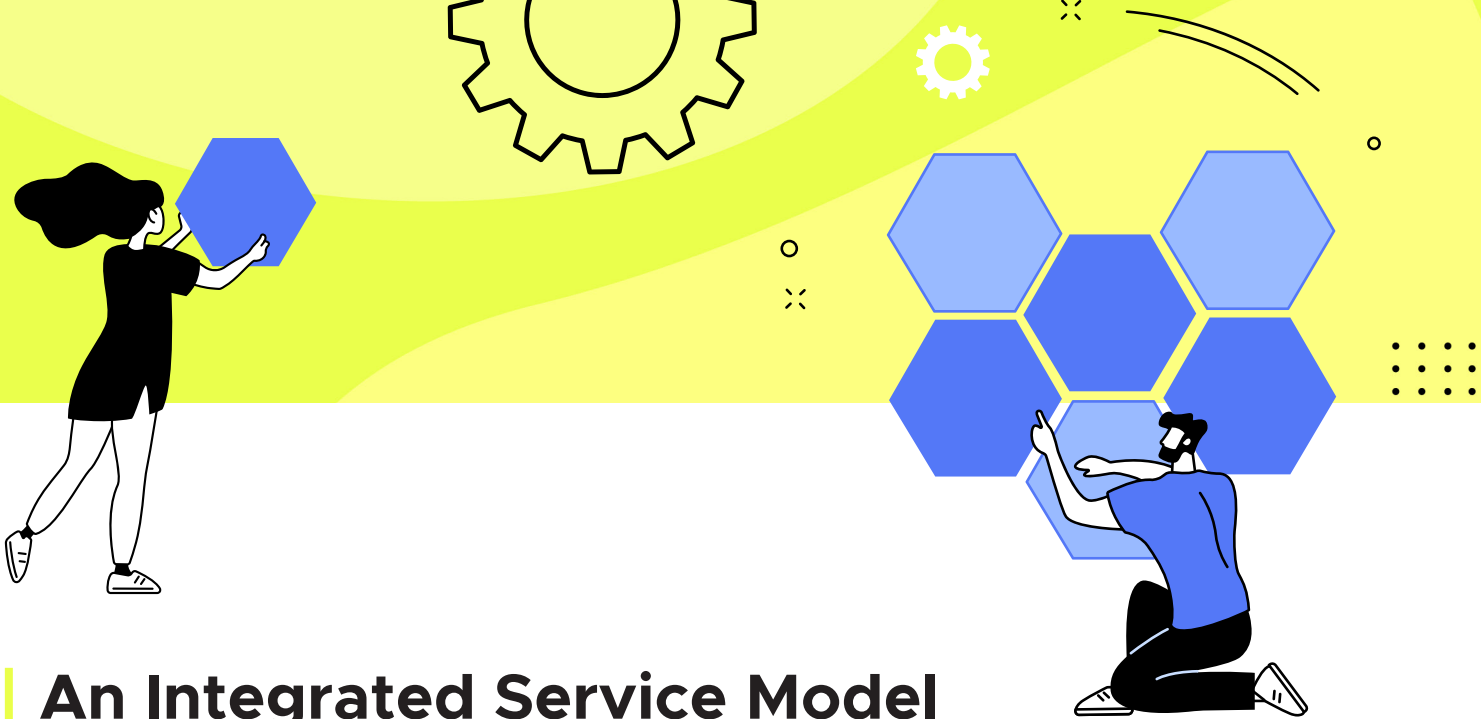
2. FIRST-TIME FIX RATES

One of our most significant success markers is the ability to resolve a service call on the first visit. Unfortunately, the use of subcontractors can have a detrimental effect on this KPI. With reduced product knowledge and account experience, issue diagnosis is less structured and more time-consuming. As a result, first-time fix rates and other KPIs may decline.

3. CUSTOMER SERVICE

With less experienced subcontractors and longer job durations, it's no surprise that the customer experience suffers, leading to a noticeable difference in service—especially if previous interactions were with a long-serving staff technician. These experiences result in neutral or negative customer reviews, lowering NPS and influencing new and existing clients' perception/future choices.

Fortunately, we can manage most of these outcomes by effectively integrating the contingent workforce into our existing service model.



An Integrated Service Model

Like any new resource or asset, we must integrate the external workforce into our operation. Although these workers require different levels of support in the field, building a separate service model to accommodate them is expensive and ineffective.

Instead, we must address these data and information deficits (customers, systems, technology), as we would in any service call scenario. By leveraging our existing field service management (FSM) systems, contingent workers can intuitively access the information they need when they need it via any device (including BYOD).

We maintain a singular holistic view of the operation with an integrated service model regardless of worker status. Subcontractor information (cost, experience, certifications, skillsets, proficiency, etc.) is maintained in the FSM system to help drive the scheduling process, allowing us to consider all available resources and constraints in our analyses and response plans.



As a subcontractor completes a job, the call and customer information is updated in real-time, enabling dynamic scheduling based on the as-is state of the network.

There are two general methods for integrating subcontractors into an FSM system:

POOL ALLOCATION

Many service organizations prefer to empower subcontractors to plan their schedules by allocating pools of jobs but still providing authorized access to their FSM systems. These workers can use their own mobile

devices (BYOD) to manage assigned tickets, providing dispatchers and team leads with real-time insight into what is happening in the field.

This connectivity allows third-party contractors to access historical data, account information, and other intelligence to help them diagnose and complete a repair. It also ensures tickets are closed and records updated in the moment, so all actions and outcomes immediately integrate with existing data for performance analysis and future context.

A good example is an IFS customer in mechanical and electrical construction, industrial and energy infrastructure, and facilities services. With a network of over 60,000 subcontractors, they wanted to optimize productivity while avoiding a heavy administrative burden, providing each worker with authorized access to its FSM via a subcontractor portal.

With such a large subcontractor worker base, dedicated administrators support the onboarding of technicians while managing day-to-day job allocations using filters. The administrators can also provide quotes for jobs before work execution. For additional efficiencies, third-party contractors can select unallocated jobs from a list within the FSM if an unexpected open time slot transpires.

SPECIFIED ALLOCATION

Some service organizations prefer to maintain control over the planning and scheduling of subcontractors.

Another IFS customer example is a provider and servicer of furnaces, air conditioners, and water heaters for residential and business use. The company supports a 24x7 service model involving complex SLAs and handles a high volume of jobs each day using a workforce relatively evenly split between staff and subcontractor technicians. The nature of the work is seasonal, with service cycles—and the company's contingent workforce—increasing during the colder winter months.

Due to the dynamic and complex nature of its SLAs, they wanted to maintain hands-on control of the planning of subcontractor work. This higher degree of management allows the company to oversee additional aspects of planning, such as service parts needed for calls and exceptions.

Although the company handles the planning of work, subcontractors can access its FSM system to ensure real-time reporting of all activities in the field via their mobile devices. Like a full access model, data is integrated with back-end systems to optimize performance analysis and ensure a consistent real-time picture of the state of the network.

Summary

The global skills shortage—coupled with the unpredictable nature of the work we do as service organizations—means we must be creative in how we build and manage our entire workforce. By leveraging technology, we can respond with resilience in the face of unexpected change, delivering meaningful Moments of Service™ to all of our customers.

For more information on how technology can strengthen and extend your workforce, read the whitepaper: **How Service Organizations Will Overcome the Global Skills Shortage.**



| ABOUT THE AUTHOR




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Sarah is a well-known figure in the industry having served for more than a decade as Editor-in-Chief of Field Technologies before creating the Future of Field Service platform in late 2018. As a writer, podcast host, and keynote speaker, Sarah is passionate about aiding businesses in realizing the full potential of service.

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Future of Field Service is an educational resource for service leaders to gain knowledge and perspective to help shape their organization's journey into the future. The platform provides objective insight, success stories of service business transformation, firsthand perspective from service leaders on foremost service topics, and analyst perspective on industry trends. Our mission is to focus on sharing the voice of the industry – in their words – and to share real-world stories of trials and triumphs.

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