

DO YOU REALLY NEED INTELLIGENT SCHEDULING, FIELD SERVICE MANAGEMENT OR BOTH?

Intelligent scheduling is a powerful tool for large or complex field service teams. Software functionality like IFS Planning & Scheduling Optimization™, part of IFS's overall field service management solution, can provide real-time control over distributed teams of technicians, adjusting the schedule in real time using powerful algorithms. The schedule can be optimized by a number of criteria in order to increase profit, reduce cost and ensure service level agreement (SLA) compliance. In rapidly-changing service environments, intelligent scheduling can automate the very complex problem of sending the right technician with the right parts to the right job at the right time. But is it essential for everyone?



Many field service software vendors focus largely or in whole on scheduling, to the detriment of powerful logistics and back-end functionality offered by IFS Field Service Management™. Does your company truly need intelligent scheduling? Or do you really have a greater need for back-end functionality for things like reverse logistics and parts management?

WHO DOESN'T NEED INTELLIGENT SCHEDULING?

There are some companies for which intelligent scheduling just will not drive value. Companies who assign all service work for a given customer to a designated account rep may have a hard time benefiting. In these situations, the decision of which technician to send has already been made, so why invest in automation? In other situations, a company will have a single technician in a given region, and again, the decision regarding which technician to send is a moot point.

Companies that strictly schedule third party contractors for service calls may also find intelligent scheduling a poor fit because there will be no visibility of the availability of a given contractor to perform work. To meet these needs, contract management and bid letting functionality within IFS Field Service Management can in fact automate outsourced work. The IFS Field Service Management suite can in fact be used to determine which work to send to a subcontractor based on skills that they do not have internally or to work around constrained capacity. The system can also automate the bid letting process, sending a project to a primary subcontractor and if there is no response or it is rejected, sending it to a secondary or tertiary subcontractor.

In other cases, for whatever reason, a company may look on paper like a fit for intelligent scheduling. They may have a large field service workforce where it is difficult for a human dispatcher to decide the optimal schedule, route or technician. But there is no interest in changing existing practices because they are attached to the status quo. Implementing intelligent scheduling will force changes in processes. In some environments for instance, technicians create their own schedule. Ceding control over their day to an algorithm may not appeal to them.

WHO DOES NEED INTELLIGENT SCHEDULING?

Sometimes though, taking control of the schedule away from the technician is a priority, usually in order to get a better handle on field utilization. Perhaps technicians are arranging their day so they can get paid for their commute home. Sometimes, the ability to track actual drive time can help identify revenue leaks if, for instance, some technicians seem to spend more time in transit than others.

If you are committed to move to drip scheduling, which involves sending a single or a couple of jobs to a technician at a time, and sending them additional jobs as each job is completed, you will need intelligent scheduling. This put management in control.

The scheduling engine will make decisions, based on management priorities, about which technician to dispatch for each job, and can account for weather and traffic patterns. Where there are geographic overlap, and more than one technician could ostensibly be sent to each job, the system will automatically select the right one given obvious criteria like distance, skill set and parts on each truck and other configurable criteria including the need to reduce overtime, reduce drive time, conserve fuel or meet SLAs.

MORE THAN SCHEDULING

As noted above, many field service management tools focus strictly on scheduling, and may lack deeper and broader field service management functionality. Regardless of whether your company requires intelligent scheduling, you may need a solution that delivers:

- Contact center functionality to automate call handling, priority-based routing, issue triage and resolution, dispatch order entry and billing, parts management and case management.
- Spare parts management for full traceability, visibility and control of spare parts inventory, including field locations, multi-bin stock maintenance and serialization. From the time you order or receive parts to when you install them on customer equipment, you will have complete auditability and control.
- Project management for task automation, remote communication for extended service projects, including remote personnel and assets in the field.
- Reverse logistics functionality to handle even the most complex repair depot environments.
- Warranty management software that tracks all warranties throughout their lifecycle to improve customer satisfaction, increase product quality and reduce service costs.
- Embedded analytics to help detect issues and actualize opportunities.
- Extensive access to operational data on customers and products, field force effectiveness, labor management, customer satisfaction and more.
- Service contract management functionality to help you create, execute, revise, monitor and profitably administer service contracts – from initial quoting and pricing, to service level agreement (SLA) visibility, automatic renewal and billing.

Intelligent scheduling is a powerful tool for companies who need it. It helps ensure the right technician is in the right place at the right time with the right skills, parts and tools. But there is more to field service than that. IFS offers a deep solution for the entire service lifecycle.

LEARN MORE

To find out more about IFS Field Service Management, visit ifsworld.com/us/solutions/enterprise-service-management/field-service-management/