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## Service on Time, All the Time

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*Field Service Scheduling and Routing Optimization*

April 2007

## Executive Summary

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**W**ith one-fifth of the work orders not being completed on-time, service organizations are optimizing their scheduling and routing processes to enhance field service productivity. In fact, best-in-class firms are adopting a more strategic approach to field service by focusing on planning and forecasting field resources based on real-time updates to meet service demand. Instead of simply assigning a technician to a work order based on territory allocation or availability, such companies are taking SLA requirements, customer preferences, traffic conditions, technician skill-set, parts availability and precise technician location into account prior to dispatch resulting in 25% improvement in meeting SLA commitments, 18% improvement in first call resolution rate, 21% decrease in daily miles traveled per technician, 33% increase in customer retention, and 21% increase in service profitability.

### Best in Class Performance

- Best-in-class firms completed 41% more work orders per technician per day compared to their laggard counterparts.
- Best-in-class companies are half as likely as their laggard counterparts to complete work orders late.
- Best-in-class firms reported 103% higher first call resolution rate than their laggard counterparts.

### Competitive Maturity Assessment

- Companies using best-of-breed field service solutions reduced service costs by 24% and improved SLA commitments by 25% compared to 8% and 12% respectively for companies using service modules offered by ERP and CRM providers.
- Best-in-class companies are twice as likely to optimize field schedules and routes based on real-time updates compared to their average counterparts.
- Best-in-class firms are 4 times as likely to adopt schedule optimization technology and 5 times as likely to adopt route optimization solution to improve field service productivity as are laggard organizations.
- Real-time optimization yields 23% higher first call resolution rate compared to daily optimization.

### Required Actions

- Develop a real-time schedule and routing optimization framework, move away from batch updates.
- Reward technicians for performance improvements to enable “buy” in.
- Leverage location based intelligence in route optimization solutions.
- Inform technicians of failure codes and possible resolution scenarios to technician dispatch.
- Leverage analytics and planning tools to provision service resources and forecast service demand.

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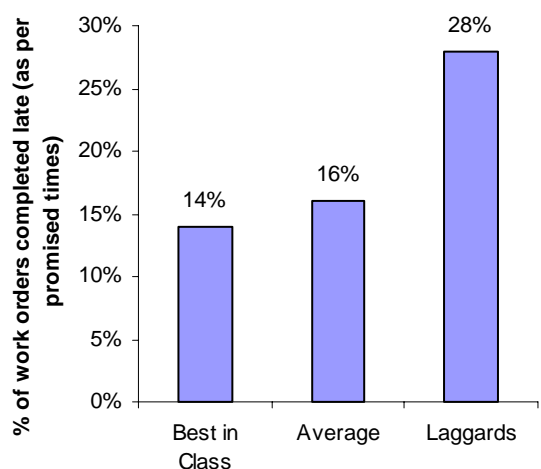
## Chapter One: Benchmarking the Best in Class

### Fast Facts

- 61% of best-in-class firms cited enhancing field productivity to meet customer response times as the top driver for schedule and route optimization.
- Nearly 21% of work orders were not completed on-time across all companies.
- Best-in-class firms completed 25% more work orders per technician per day compared to their average counterparts.

**G**unning for higher productivity and increased profitability, leading service organizations are taking steps to tightly align service demand — the backlog and pipeline of work orders — with service supply — technician capacity, proximity, aptitude and inventory. The ultimate goal: Achieve the most cost-effective, productive, and profitable service chain at all times, in the face of a myriad of constraints and unplanned interruptions. Companies that ignore this critical linkage and continue to provide wide windows for issue resolution are putting themselves at risk to be overshadowed by competition. A recent Aberdeen survey revealed that across all companies, nearly 21% of work orders were not completed on-time.

**Figure 1: Laggards 2 Times More Likely to be Late**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2007

This sub-optimal field service performance stems from a lack of planning, forecasting and coordination among dispatch, scheduling and routing processes. Typically, dispatchers open service tickets based on a complaint filed by a customer. Subsequently, they assign a technician to that work order based on territory allocation and existing workload. Oft-forgotten are other pieces of the puzzle such as SLA requirements, customer preference, technician skill-set, traffic conditions, and available spare parts resulting in low first call resolution rate, penalties due to missed SLA commitment and long issue resolution time. Needless to say such results not only increase service costs, but also reduce customer satisfaction and retention.

To address this, leading firms are adopting a more strategic approach to field service by focusing their efforts on planning and forecasting of field resources to meet service demand. In other words, they are aligning supply with the demand so that the “right” technician gets to the “right” place at the “right” time with the “right” part. In a recent Aberdeen survey, a majority of the firms stated that their top action to improve field service

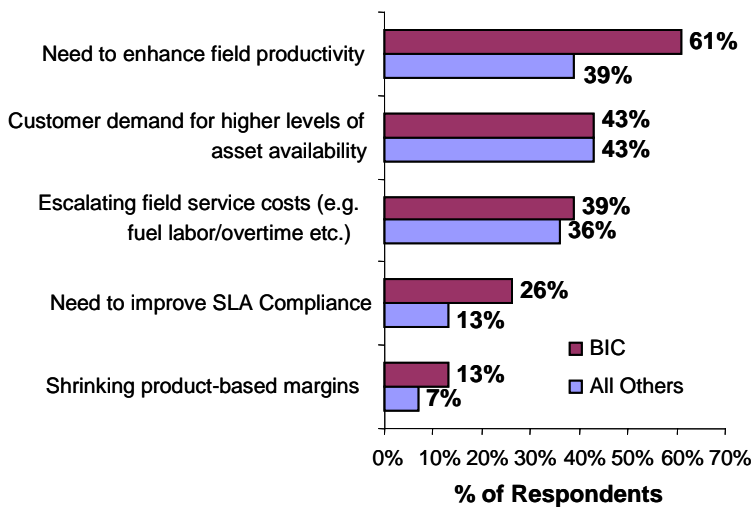


performance was to assign revenue and profitability targets. To help the technicians meet the targets, firms have improved technician access to data such as equipment maintenance and repair history, parts availability, asset failure codes, traffic conditions; GPS/AVL based tracking and interactive mapping tools. While only 29% of firms indicate that they are currently leveraging technology to enable such transformation – nearly half of all respondents stated that technology adoption is a top priority.

### Maturity Class Framework

The value of optimized scheduling and routing can be assessed by measuring the resulting change in financial and operational performance. Aberdeen used five key performance metrics to distinguish best-in-class companies from industry average and laggard organizations. The key performance indicators (KPIs) used in this analysis included operational metrics such as work order completion, first-call resolution, service level agreement compliance and percent of work orders completed late as well as financial metrics such as service profitability (Table 1, Table 5). Besides absolute performance, the evaluation also included a company's ability to improve such

**Figure 2: Productivity Pressures tap Best Organizations**



Source: AberdeenGroup, April 2007

operational metrics such as work order completion, first-call resolution, service level agreement compliance and percent of work orders completed late as well as financial metrics such as service profitability (Table 1, Table 5). Besides absolute performance, the evaluation also included a company's ability to improve such

metrics over a period of two years.

**Table 1: Best in Class Differentiation**

Metric	Average Performance		% Improvement
	Best in Class (Top 20%)	Laggard (Bottom 30%)	
Daily Work Orders Per Technician	4.5	3.2	41%
First Call Resolution Rate	81%	40%	103%
Work Orders Completed Late	14%	28%	100%

Source: AberdeenGroup, April 2007

### Best in Class PACE Model

An accurate view into near- and long-term service workload and technician capacity is a critical supporting element for an optimized field service schedule. Even the most sophis-

ticated approach to prioritizing field service schedule constraints will fall short of optimal performance levels without preemptive forecasting and planning of both service supply and demand. As stated earlier, best-in-class companies have addressed their key pressure of meeting customer requirements for faster issue resolution by focusing their efforts on planning and forecasting field resources to meet service demand in real-time.

**Table 2: Best-in-Class PACE Framework**

Pressures	Actions	Capabilities	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to enhance field productivity</li> <li>• Customer requirements for faster response time and asset availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign Revenue and Profitability targets for the service organization</li> <li>• Develop criteria for prioritizing customer requests</li> <li>• Enhance technician's field-based access to data such as parts availability, product failure diagnosis, directions</li> <li>• Purchase and/or upgrade technology solutions to optimize scheduling and/or routing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work assignments are made considering all service order requirements, constraints, technician skill set and capacity</li> <li>• Plans for resource allocation based on historical service demand</li> <li>• Work schedules and routes are updated in real-time throughout the day</li> <li>• Ability to diagnose probable product failure prior to technician dispatch</li> <li>• Technicians can update service tickets throughout the day</li> <li>• Territory planning for technicians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Intelligence/Analytics</li> <li>• Dispatch Management Tools</li> <li>• Planning applications (Territory, Resource, Multi-day planning)</li> <li>• Dynamic Scheduling based on Applications that include Optimization Engines</li> <li>• Route Optimization and Mapping based on Precise Technician and Vehicle Location from GPS/GIS/AVL solutions</li> </ul>

Source: AberdeenGroup, April 2007

### Aberdeen Insights – Part 1

Unplanned service demand is a part and parcel of post sale service. Companies that are able to quickly adapt and meet this demand with the least impact on costs and customer operations are the ones that have truly embraced the notion of being strategic. Aligning service demand with resources based on historical demand patterns addresses only part of the problem. Real-time information on technician availability (both employees and contractors) allows a service organization to appropriately address demand fluctuations and meet SLA commitments.

With real time visibility into service demand and resource availability in place, companies can cost-effectively make field service scheduling and routing decisions resulting in optimized service performance.



## Chapter Two: Benchmarking Requirements for Success

### Fast Facts

- Best-in-class firms are **twice** as likely as laggards to optimize their field routes and schedules in real-time.
- In terms of technology usage, best-in-class firms are **4 times** as likely to use schedule optimization applications as laggards and **nearly 5 times** as likely to have route optimization solutions.

There is a direct relationship between the pressure to enhance field service productivity and the tools and strategies used by best-in-class companies to optimize the schedules and routes of their field service resources. Strategic actions taken by best-in-class firms are aimed at developing specific capabilities which can be prioritized using Aberdeen's proprietary competitive maturity assessment (Table 3).

### Competitive Maturity Assessment

To better understand the business capabilities that precede best-in-class performance, Aberdeen examined service organizations on five key organizational attributes: process, organization, knowledge management, tech-

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*"It is absolutely impossible to push 5000 cases a month and meet your SLA requirements without the assistance of a scheduling tool."*

Richard Bainbridge, Field Team  
Leader, Vodafone UK

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### Case Study: Vodafone UK

With over 16 million customers, Vodafone UK offers a wide range of voice and data communications. The field service team with over 200 technicians, completes nearly 5,000 work orders per month at over 15,000 sites across the UK. A dramatic increase in the service demand prompted the field service team to look for a solution to improve resource utilization while meeting SLA requirements. In addition, the complexity of the solution offering necessitated aligning the appropriate engineers with the work orders while allowing the company to minimize travel time.

The company deployed a schedule optimization solution in 2,000 to replace its manual scheduling processes. The new system allowed Vodafone base technician selection on 77 skill requirements. Offsite technicians started receiving the work order details on their handhelds and as such could take on new tickets without having to manually check with the home office. In order to optimize resources to capture same day SLAs with 6-hour response times, the company moved from updating schedules once a day to twice a day.

Due to its improved scheduling capability, the company has improved jobs completed per engineer from 1.65 to 2 including jobs that take over a day to complete owing to the long travel time. The firm also improved its SLA compliance, reduced travel time and increased overall engineer 'time on ticket' utilization by 65%. Moreover, the company has reduced its dispatch staff from 12 to 3 resulting in significant overhead savings. Interestingly, post deployment, the dispatchers exclusively monitor exception handling.

nology adoption and performance management. In each of these categories best-in-class firms are compared to industry average and industry laggard companies. Table 3 highlights some key strategic differentiators.

**Table 3: Competitive Framework**

	Laggards	Average	Best-in-class
Process	Work Schedules are re-optimized in real-time throughout the day. Decisions are made considering all service orders, constraints and technician capacity.		
	35%	59%	79%
	Technicians have access to schedules and updates and can update and close tickets throughout the day.		
	33%	61%	56%
Organizational Structure	Vice-president or higher level executive oversees service chain operations as a P&L.		
	45%	58%	80%
Knowledge/ Data Management	Plans for resource allocation are based on historical service demand trends.		
	44%	56%	78%
Technology Usage	Planning and scheduling technology currently in use:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22% Business Intelligence/Analytics</li> <li>• 9% Field Service Automation</li> <li>• 23% Location-Based Services including GPS/AVL</li> <li>• 18% Planning Applications</li> <li>• 10% Schedule Optimization</li> <li>• 5% Route Optimization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37% Business Intelligence/Analytics</li> <li>• 16% Field Service Automation</li> <li>• 28% Location-Based Services including GPS/AVL</li> <li>• 26% Planning Applications</li> <li>• 27% Schedule Optimization</li> <li>• 24% Route Optimization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58% Business Intelligence/Analytics</li> <li>• 38% Field Service Automation</li> <li>• 52% Location-Based Services including GPS/AVL</li> <li>• 43% Planning Applications</li> <li>• 41% Schedule Optimization</li> <li>• 25% Route Optimization</li> </ul>
Performance Management	Field service performance is captured and measured with operational, financial, and customer-facing metrics.		
	22%. 5% Measure in Real-time	53% 12% Measure in Real-time	78% 33% Measure in Real-time

Source: AberdeenGroup, April 2007



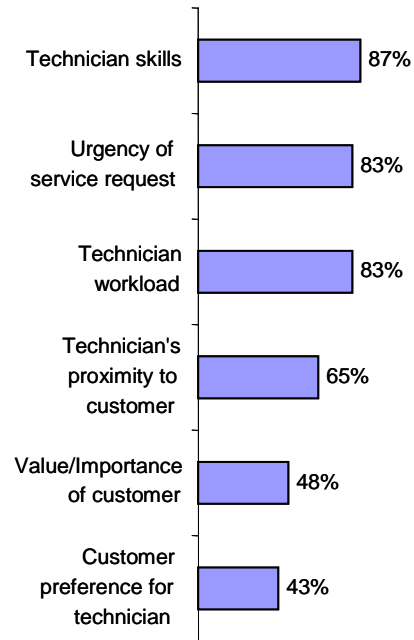
### Organizational Support and Technology Enablers

Best-in-class firms, as highlighted in Table 3, are not only the most likely to adopt technology solutions, but also the most likely to adequately structure business processes, adopt measures and controls to maximize the impact from technology usage. Technology enhances the ability to capture and collect data, but without appropriate use of this data in terms of schedule or route optimization, the additional data will serve little value.

Best-in-class firms are more **than three times as likely** as laggards to actually capture and measure field service performance data and **six times more likely** to measure performance in real-time. While this allows the firms in realigning their service schedule in real-time, it also places them in a better position to build future usage trends based on this data. As such, best-in-class firms are **twice as likely** to be able to accurately forecast future resource usage.

Nearly, 80% of leading firms have changed business processes to support real-time schedule and route optimization. While the data reveals that daily optimization yields a higher number of daily work orders completed, firms that updated information in **real-time** are substantially more efficient in resolving issues on the first visit (23 basis points higher first call resolution rate) – reducing the need for additional dispatches (Table 4).

Figure 3: Schedule Optimization Inputs



Source: AberdeenGroup, April 2007

Table 4: Optimization Maps to Field Efficiency

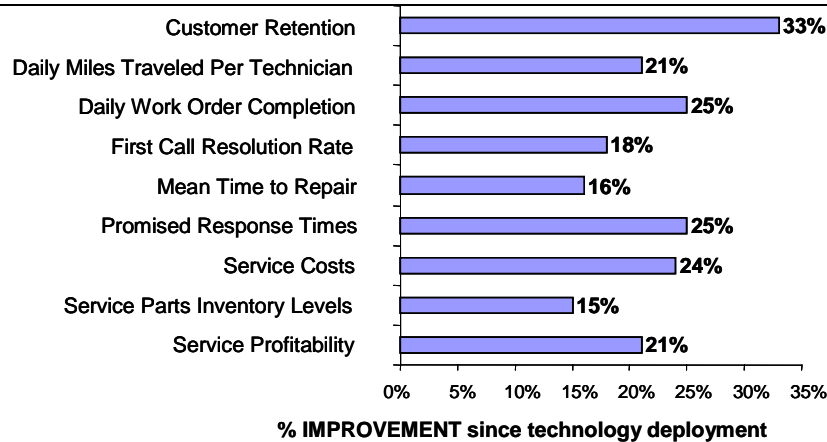
Performance Metric	Daily Update	Real-Time Update
Daily work orders per worker	4	3.8
First Call Resolution Rate	60%	83%
% of work orders completed late	20%	16%

Source: AberdeenGroup April 2007

In terms of technology usage, spreadsheets have traditionally been a popular tool for dispatch and schedule management. Best-in-class firms are taking the lead and are **4 to 5 times as likely** as laggards in replacing such tools with scheduling and routing applications with in-built optimization engines as well as analytics and planning tools to appropriately align demand and supply (Table 3). The improvements in financial and operational metrics due to schedule and route optimization solutions range from 18% higher

first call resolution rate, 33% increase in customer retention to a substantial 24% reduction in overall service costs (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: BIC Performance Driven from Technology**



Source: [AberdeenGroup](#), April 2007

## Aberdeen Insights – Part 2

In terms of scheduling and routing automation, Aberdeen research reveals that best-in-class firms have realized much higher gains from adopting best-in-breed point solutions than the service modules within ERP and CRM solutions. The difference in key performance metrics has assisted such companies in making an effective ROI case for the deployment of best-in-breed point solutions.

Metric	% Improvement Since Deployment		
	Spreadsheets	ERP or CRM Service Module	Schedule and Route Optimization Solutions
Customer Retention	13.0%	17.0%	32.5%
Daily Work Orders Completed	12.2%	13.7%	24.8%
First Call Resolution Rates	11.4%	12.8%	18.3%
Promised Service Response Times	13.1%	11.9%	24.8%
Service Costs	8.9%	7.7%	23.9%



## Chapter Three: Required Actions

### Fast Facts

- Develop a real-time schedule and routing optimization framework, move away from batch updates.
- Reward technicians for performance improvements to enable “buy” in.
- Leverage location based intelligence in route optimization solutions.
- Inform technicians of failure codes and possible resolution scenarios to technician dispatch.
- Leverage analytics and planning tools to provision service resources and forecast service demand.

Whether a company is trying to improve its performance in field service productivity and profitability from “Laggard” to “Industry Average,” or “Industry Average” to “Best in Class,” the following actions will help spur the necessary performance improvements:

### Laggard Steps to Success

1. *Establish measures to track field performance.*

The first step to empowering the field service organization is the ability to track performance. This entails establishing key metrics such as first-call resolution rate and mean time to repair. With this in mind, steps need to be taken to gain access to field service performance. Currently only 22% of laggards have measures in place to systematically capture and measure field service performance information.

2. *Develop an executive service champion.*

4 out of 5 Best in class firms have senior executive oversight over service P&Ls, almost two times more than laggard firms. An executive champion for field service not only establishes accountability but also develops a budgetary roadblock remover for key field service initiatives. 36% of laggards state that limited budget is the key obstacle to technology adoption

3. *Consider ‘modular’ deployments of technology solutions to overcome budgetary restraints.*

In relation to budgetary constraints, nearly 30% of laggards state that existing solutions are too expensive to operate and deploy. Solution providers have modular offerings wherein functional applications such as route optimization, GPS tracking, planning or analytics can be easily added on to a pre-existing scheduling deployment. This can greatly reduce the investment burden of an end-to-end solution and also reduces the chance of investment beyond ones needs.

4. *Leverage location based intelligence in route optimization solutions.*

77% of laggards are looking to invest in route optimization solutions. Use of these solutions without proper visibility into technician information with regard to job load, precise location, status, parts and tools reduces their overall value. A technician with the best route and accurate directions might not be the best suited for one who is ten minutes away with the right parts and finishing his work early.

### Industry Norm Steps to Success

1. *Inform technicians of failure codes and possible resolution scenarios to technician dispatch.*

Prior Aberdeen Research indicates that the cost of a technician dispatch is approximately \$209. Companies can realize substantial cost savings by arming CSRs or dispatchers with information such as fault codes and resolution scenarios prior to dispatch - thus improving first-visit resolution.

2. *Leverage analytics and planning tools to provision service resources and forecast service demand.*

As highlighted in Table 3, in terms of solution selection, best-in-class are in the lead with respect to planning tools and analytics. In the case of Vodafone UK, the company has now added a reporting/analytics tool which allows Vodafone UK to assess performance either by engineer, by team, or by geography while allowing the company to monitor compliance with business policies. The analytics tool has also enabled Vodafone to realize that they would benefit from running their schedule optimizer twice per day so as to improve SLA performance.

3. *Reward technicians for performance improvements to enable “buy” in.*

41% of best-in-class firms are looking to reward and/or penalize their technicians for meeting or missing performance targets. These targets may even take the form of rewarding technicians for actually using the route selected by the route optimization solution to show them the value of optimized routes, not only on corporate performance, but also on end user satisfaction.

4. *Develop a real-time schedule and routing optimization framework, move away from batch updates.*

The numbers don't lie. Firms that update schedules and routes based on information secured in real-time from GPS/GIS/AVL tools see marked improvements in key metrics when compared to those that follow a daily schedule. Gains from improved scheduling applications are not only seen in productivity and efficiency improvements, but also in cost improvements from reduced service costs.

### Aberdeen Insights – Part 3

In the final analysis, best-in-class firms are looking to minimize the unplanned work orders as a percentage of their overall work portfolio. Aberdeen's research indicates that nearly 50% of jobs for best-in-class firms are planned compared to only 28% for all other firms. While emergency service requests cannot be totally eliminated, their occurrence can be significantly reduced through a well-planned, predictive approach to service planning and delivery. This, in turn, reduces the stress and cost burden on the



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field service organizations and enables higher customer satisfaction and retention.

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## Appendix A: Research Methodology

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In March and April 2007, Aberdeen Group and its publication partners, Directions Media and VertMarkets captured 185 qualified respondents in a quantitative survey launched to evaluate and report the impact of effective field service scheduling and routing on a company's financial and operational metrics.

The business executives completed an online survey that included questions designed to determine the following:

- The importance of field service schedule and route optimization to the organization's overall financial performance;
- The change over the previous two years;
- The major challenges and pressures organizations face in managing and improving their field service performance;
- The actions and strategies organizations have used to improve the effectiveness of their field service teams;
- Current and planned use of software solutions and technologies to aid business processes; and
- The benefits realized from implementing new business processes and solutions.

Aberdeen supplemented this survey effort with telephone interviews with select survey respondents to gather additional insights on pressures, actions, experiences, and results.

Survey respondents can be characterized as follows:

- **Job title/function:** The research sample included respondents with the following job titles: C-Level (CEO, CFO, CIO, COO, etc), vice president, director, manager, staff, and other. 20% were C-level, 20% were vice presidents or directors, 33% were managers, and 27% were staff or other.
- **Industry:** Responses were received from 26 different industry sub-segments. A sampling of responses includes: Construction – 6%, Hi-Tech – 22%, Manufacturing – 8%, Telecom – 12%, Transportation – 7%, Utilities – 10%
- **Geography:** Responses were received from all geographic areas of the world – 54% from North America, 21% from EMEA, 20% from Asia/Pacific, 5% from South and Central America.
- **Company size:** 20% from large enterprises (> US\$1 billion); 29% from midsize enterprises (revenues between \$50 million and \$1 billion); and 51% of respondents were from smaller businesses (annual revenues of \$50 million or less).

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**Table 5: Companies With Top Performance Earn “Best-in-Class” Status:**

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<b>Best in Class:</b> Top 20% of aggregate performance scorers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.5 Work orders per technician per day</li> <li>• 81% First Call Resolution Rate</li> <li>• 87% SLA Compliance</li> <li>• 14% Work orders completed late</li> <li>• 21% Service Profitability (as a % of service revenues)</li> </ul>
<b>Industry Average:</b> Middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.6 Work orders per technician per day</li> <li>• 56% First Call Resolution Rate</li> <li>• 81% SLA Compliance</li> <li>• 16% Work orders completed late</li> <li>• 20% Service Profitability (as a % of service revenues)</li> </ul>
<b>Laggard:</b> Bottom 30% of aggregate performance scorers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.2 Work orders per technician per day</li> <li>• 40% First Call Resolution Rate</li> <li>• 66% SLA Compliance</li> <li>• 28% Work orders completed late</li> <li>• 15% Service Profitability (as a % of service revenues)</li> </ul>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2007

**Table 6: PACE Framework**

PACE Key
<p>Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:</p> <p><i>Pressures</i> — external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations (e.g., economic, political and regulatory, technology, changing customer preferences, competitive)</p> <p><i>Actions</i> — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures (e.g., align the corporate business model to leverage industry opportunities, such as product/service strategy, target markets, financial strategy, go-to-market, and sales strategy)</p> <p><i>Capabilities</i> — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy (e.g., skilled people, brand, market positioning, viable products/services, ecosystem partners, financing)</p> <p><i>Enablers</i> — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices (e.g., development platform, applications, network connectivity, user interface, training and support, partner interfaces, data cleansing, and management)</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2007

**Table 7: Competitive Framework**

Competitive Framework Key
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The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the three following levels of FIELD SERVICES practices and performance:

*Best in class (20%)* — Scheduling and Routing practices that are the best currently being employed and significantly superior to the industry norm, and result in the top industry performance.

*Industry norm (50%)* — Scheduling and Routing practices that represent the average or norm, and result in average industry performance.

*Laggards (30%)* — Scheduling and Routing practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry, and result in below average performance

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2007

**Table 8: Relationship between PACE and Competitive Framework**

**PACE and Competitive Framework How They Interact**

Aberdeen research indicates that companies that identify the most impactful pressures and take the most transformational and effective actions are most likely to achieve superior performance. The level of competitive performance that a company achieves is strongly determined by the PACE choices that they make and how well they execute.

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2007



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## Appendix B: Related Aberdeen Research

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Related Aberdeen research that forms a companion or reference to this report includes:

- [\*Service on the Move: Driving Profitability via Fleet Management\*](#) (March 2006)
- [\*The Mobile Field Service Benchmark, 2007 and Beyond\*](#) (December 2006)
- [\*Location. Location. Location. Does it Matter in Mobile Field Service?\*](#)  
(October 2006)
- [\*Service as a Profit Center: The CFO's View\*](#) (August 2006)
- [\*Best Practices in Service Chain Performance Management\*](#) (August 2006)
- [\*Best Practices in Mobile Field Service\*](#) (June 2006)
- [\*The Field Service Scheduling and Routing Solution Selection Report\*](#) (March 2006)

Information on these and any other Aberdeen publications can be found at [www.chiefserviceofficer.com](http://www.chiefserviceofficer.com) or inquire by e-mail at [memberservices@aberdeen.com](mailto:memberservices@aberdeen.com).

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