A Mobile Company's Guide to

LOCATION TRACKING

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technology on the move

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Introduction

We live in an interconnected world. Constant economic progress results in more companies operating on a global scale. Technology, together with the ever-growing need for a qualified workforce, is changing the way we think about work.

According to a 2018 survey by Flexjobs, 55% of hiring managers agree that remote work has become more commonplace, compared to three years ago. "Remote work" may still sound like a fancy word to some, but in fact, field service companies have been dealing with mobile workforce management for years.

Whatever the case, with more employees working outside of the office, new ways have to be employed to account for the work being done. One approach is to implement location tracking – the automated recording of location data, that can be used or revisited later for various purposes.

In this material, we explore location tracking and its benefits for businesses with assets in the field. We also address the biggest concerns surrounding it and help find ways to successfully implement it in a company.

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Top myths about location tracking

To talk about benefits of location tracking, we first need to address some common concerns and misconceptions. Here are some of the myths you might come across when talking about location tracking software. Let's now take a closer look and clear the air once and for all.

Our employees are not going to like it and we will lose their trust.

It's human nature to be skeptical about change, at least at first. However, if you openly communicate your reasons for change, you might be surprised how cooperative people can be. Not to mention that tracking systems, in general, protect employees as well since they offer proof of work being done. We will delve more into the ways of communicating changes in chapter 4.

We don't need to track our employees, we trust them.

You don't hire people you don't trust, so why should you monitor them, right? Well, location tracking is rarely about looking into one specific person's whereabouts. It's about filling in the gaps by collecting data that can be used to boost overall productivity. Or, it can create opportunities for businesses to react quickly to changing conditions in the field. We will look in detail at possible uses of location tracking in chapter 3 and hopefully demonstrate that none of them are about lack of trust.

We don't need to track our employees, we keep all our logs and reports in paper form.

This is a fitting place for the famous quote attributed to Henry Ford: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." You may not feel like you need anything other than what you already have in place, but chances are you can still benefit from the change. There are objective reasons why paper is a lesser medium - it gets lost, the human error rate when filling out paperwork is much higher, and data is not searchable. Instead, it is much more efficient to handle all your data digitally and print it in the form of reports and invoices only when necessary. Nowadays, even digital signatures can be legally binding, allowing you to digitize your operations completely.

Location tracking doesn't provide enough information for us, it's just dots on a map.

As with any technology, the devil is in the details. Location tracking is merely a tool in your toolbelt. Chapter 3 offers more insight into how it can be used in different ways. In short, it can improve future planning, help with administration, and allow for last-minute requests.
A good location tracking software can even offer future predictions.

Location tracking is interesting only for big companies.

Big corporations often optimize their processes way too late, because up until then they were focused solely on growth. Location tracking helps increase productivity, reduce expenses and improve services, which is worthwhile for any company with a workforce in the field, no matter its size.

Location tracking software is too expensive.

Nowadays, many providers offer volume-based subscription packages. You don't need to cover high flat rates. Instead, you simply pay for the number of users working with the solution. The license fees also differ based on the type of user. The price of a mobile license for an end user is significantly lower than the price of a back office license for managers who schedule work. Also, considering the process optimization possibilities, an investment into location tracking software is definitely worth considering.

Location tracking is too complicated to implement and use.

You can eliminate the need to buy and utilize additional GPS hardware by using mobile devices. Employees can simply download a dedicated app to their phone or tablet. The app then uses the device's GPS module to send location data to the back office without extra configuration. There may be other benefits to this approach as well – the same app can, for example, be used by employees to track time or keep important task-related information in one place. For the back office, working with location tracking usually involves interacting with a web-based tool that can be even integrated with various enterprise systems, such as Microsoft Dynamics 365, Salesforce and many others – something they most likely already know and use.

Enhancing field operations: 12 benefits of location tracking

Location-based search is already wide-spread in the consumer sector, with apps that help you find restaurants, cabs, or ATMs near you. Businesses can also use location-based services for proximity advertising or in-store/showroom navigation. Another notable example from the recent past is the use of location tracking for gaming and augmented reality, such as Pokémon Go.

In this section, we will focus on how location tracking can help businesses with mobile workforce management.

Complete more service calls per day

No need to call every driver to see who is near a customer or an incident. Pick the closest employee and save both fuel and time. You can also be notified about accidents, delays and weather – helping you achieve even more.

Proof of location & backtracking options

Sometimes it's your word against the customer's. Or, imagine you have to get back to a task from a couple of months ago, but you can only rely on your team's memory. No problem with the data stored in the system.

Minimize paperwork

A benefit your employees are going to appreciate. By using data the system tracks automatically, they won't have to file reports themselves. This is also good news for your business, since it means fewer errors and saves precious man-hours.

Support your drivers

Your mobile workforce can use their part of the solution for GPS navigation and, if your software supports it, complete route plans. Instead of receiving daily lists with tasks and addresses, they can have all their information handy at the start of the workday, in their mobile app.

Increase driver safety

People tend to obey traffic rules more closely when they know they are being monitored. Give your drivers extra incentive to be careful to avoid tickets and above all, ensure their safety.

Automate repetitive tasks

If you are regularly scheduling field tasks, your software can help you speed things up with location-based rules and auto-scheduling.

Optimize processes

When you see what's really happening outside of the office, you can start making meaningful changes to your business. You can optimize routes and the number of jobs per day. You can justify hiring new drivers. You can redraw assigned regions to redistribute the workload. Knowledge is power and having the data takes the guesswork out of the equation.

Plan visually

If your software includes a map component that also visualizes your data, it can be a great help. The visual aid makes planning easier when compared to working with just a list of drivers and a list of accounts to visit. Plus, if you are utilizing live location tracking and need to make decisions fast, it is a necessity.

Track attendance

Even if you like to give your employees more freedom, you may have to track attendance for legal purposes. A location tracking software can nicely complement office tracking solutions and give you an all-around overview of attendance.

Look into the future

Based on the data it currently has, your software might generate future predictions. For example, if you see someone will be finishing sooner than expected, you can assign them an additional task to relieve the rest of the team.

Easy reporting

Use the data to calculate fuel costs, bill customers, or create invoices for contractors and employees who are paid by the job or hour.

Prevent vehicle down-time

See the real distance traveled by the staff and use this information to schedule vehicle maintenance.

How to pick a location tracking solution

If you've decided that location tracking is something your business can benefit from, it's time to start researching what's out there. Here is a list of considerations that will help you make your choice.

Scope

What are your goals and what exactly do you plan to use location tracking for? This will provide you with a list of must-haves. Do you need simple attendance tracking? Or do you need real-time monitoring with a chance to react instantly to any situation? Do you need scheduling capabilities, or report generation? If you don't know where to start, consider the benefits from the previous chapter. Which were the ones that caught your eye and offered biggest potential for your business? You can start from there and define what exactly you'll be searching for.

Ethical concerns & data storage

Pick a solution that doesn't violate employee privacy. What exactly this means depends on the country and context. We delve more into the topic of legality in chapter 4. Sometimes, it's not just a question of being able to gather the data about your employees. It's about how you store it, protect it, and under what conditions it'll be deleted. You may have to consider whether you'll use a cloud service, or store your data on-premise.

Integration

Since you are going to track, store and work with a new type of data, it's useful to connect it to a backend system you already have in place. It also makes adoption easier for the back office team.

Usability

Don't forget about the people who will actually work with the solution you pick. If you opt for a mobile app for your field staff, make sure it is easy to use and helps them with their work.

Hardware

Your end goal will dictate the hardware you'll use for tracking. You may choose between:

Vehicle GPS trackers

This involves a higher upfront cost, but these trackers can provide you with additional data about vehicle usage (e.g. consumption) and even prevent theft. Some systems may also involve a camera, recording the road and even the driver. But if you want to focus on the actual work being done, this tracking is not sufficient.

Mobile devices

This usually means lower upfront hardware costs, because companies either already have company devices, or employ a BYOD program. Downloading an app is also a pretty quick way to get the ball rolling, even for new employees. Mobile apps can also do more than simple location tracking – they can include route plans, navigation, daily agenda, all material related to the task, time tracking, etc.

Wearable GPS badges

These are perfect for cases when you need to track the position of your staff while keeping their hands free. For example, a medical facility may track nurses to optimize floor plans. Big corporations can provide an open system where employees can look for each other and check if the person they need to talk to is currently sitting at their desk before they make the trip.

Implementing location tracking in your company: Where to start?

Since tracking personal data can be a tricky subject, some matters need to be looked into beforehand. One of the crucial steps in a successful utilization of location tracking is the compliance with the law and making sure the privacy of your staff isn't violated. Another is bringing them on board and easing the concerns that may arise. Let's look at how to handle both these subjects.

Legal obligations

The legal aspects of employee tracking depend on country's laws and exact usage. Different rules may apply if:

- You are installing software on company-owned devices vs. on personal devices.
- You allow employees to use company-owned devices for personal purposes and take them home.

In some cases, you may require employees' written consent. Or it may be completely illegal to track employees during off hours, even if you are not using the data. Luckily, some solutions give you an option to define working hours and then only track position during this timeframe.

It's a good idea to speak with an attorney familiar with these matters before implementing any GPS tracking system. GDPR can make you consider the type of data you are going to store, the purpose for which you'll use it, and ways to ensure it is protected. After familiarizing yourself with the law and crafting all needed legal documents, make sure the software you are going to choose enables you to track your employees legally and ethically.

Working with your staff

Introducing a new policy that feels as personal as location tracking is probably going to raise concerns with your staff. The key here is to be transparent about your reasons and plans. Here are a few steps you can take to make the transition as smooth as possible:

Communicate your reasons for the change

What made you decide for location tracking in the first place? Businesses usually look for ways to optimize their operations in one way or another, not for ways to micromanage or even chase individuals. When you present your reasoning to your staff, they are more likely to accept the change.

Educate on policy

Inform your staff about the policy. Explain what sort of data you will collect and how it will be used, stored and protected.

Emphasize benefits

Are there any clear benefits for employees? Lay them out. Some examples include:

- Since everything they do is properly logged into the system, it can protect them from being overworked.

- The system may provide evidence in cases of customer and traffic disputes.

- It can ensure they are being compensated for the time on the road.

- It can reduce paperwork from their side, which is an especially enticing benefit if they have to file a report after every task.

Allow room for questions

Introduce the change in advance. Allow people time and space to process the news and keep an open-door policy for the ones who wish to ask questions.

Train your team

Organize trainings for your staff. Teach them how to use the back office part and, if the solution includes a mobile app, do a walk-through of that as well.
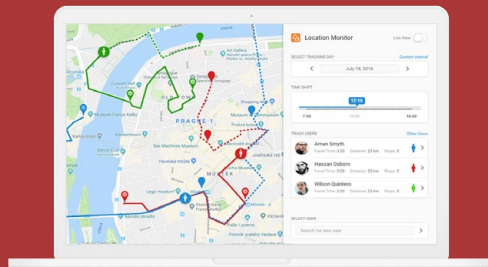
Resco Routes:
Route planning solution
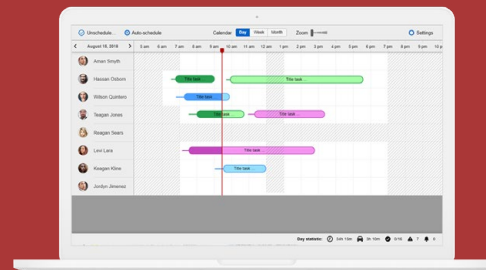# with live location tracking

If you have assets in the field, location data can offer new ways to optimize your processes, handle the administrative part of your business, and oversee your workforce. Let's look at how Resco Routes helps you keep up with your staff and manage their work seamlessly.
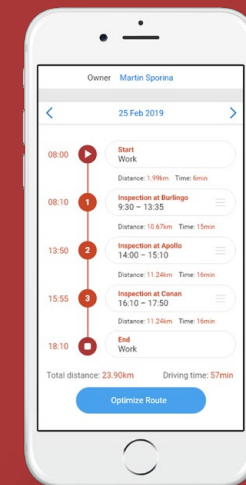
How it works

1

Use the Location Monitor to keep track of your team's progress and to respond to the situation in the field

2

Plan work assignments with the fully interactive Schedule Board

3

Field reps receive assignments in their mobile app. They can also use it to plan routes and manage their work travel.
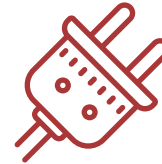
Resco Routes offers:

Live location monitoring enabling you to respond to the situation in the field in real time

No need to buy additional GPS trackers – tracking is performed using mobile devices

Future predictions to help you make informed decisions

Native integration with Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Salesforce as well as a standalone version

Monitoring and scheduling in one solution, so you don't have to use spreadsheets, shared calendars and other ineffective solutions

A full-featured app for your mobile workforce including route planning, time tracking and timesheet management, so they can get reporting out of the way and focus on the job

Visit product website

Case Study:

Orangebox boosts field operations while saving £100 on hardware per vehicle

Business challenge

Orangebox wanted to replace the incumbent vehicle tracking, with a mobile device tracking solution that would pair users' schedules and job specifics from Dynamics 365 with their actual movement.

To deliver an improved customer experience, they were looking for a solution that would be tightly coupled with their core Dynamics 365 planning tool – giving them a platform to automate notifications to both customers and internal teams.

Furthermore, Orangebox also hoped to eliminate additional location tracking hardware, required for track trucks and vans.

> *"With our engineers working to specified dates and times of site visits, it is increasingly important to keep both customers and our back-office staff informed of estimated time of arrivals and work progress. Particularly if unforeseen events unfold such as traffic delays,"*
>
> **Tim Loring, System Improvements Project Manager at Orangebox**

About the Company

|	
Name	Orangebox
Industry	Furniture manufacturing
Size	450 employees
Headquarters	Parc Nantgarw CF15 7QU Cardiff United Kingdom

Solution

Resco Routes provided the integration with Dynamics 365 combined with location tracking capabilities that Orangebox was looking for. And on top of that, it enabled them to reduce vehicle tracking hardware costs by having a mobile device tracking system alternative running on engineers' phones.

"The features enabling to track and interrogate live positions of devices as well as view historic points in time, ensure there is a great audit trail of activity available to us. Resco Routes is also seamless to the end user and can be installed at virtually any mobile device, providing great flexibility and control to system administrators. We have only been using it for a few months, but we've been seeing its added value right from the start,"

Tim Loring, System Improvements Project Manager at Orangebox

Benefits
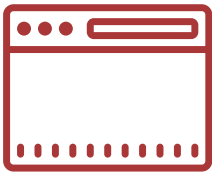
Complete information in a clear-cut interface

Orangebox most praised the possibility to display scheduled jobs and all related information on the map view. The handy interface includes scheduled times of jobs, durations to the user's actual time of arrival/departure, and more.

Accurate analysis & planning with Time Shift

Time Shift is a feature that allows Orangebox to see the past movement of engineers and how much time they've spent on each job. Having this information readily available contributes to improving schedule analysis efficiency.

£100 saved on hardware per vehicle

With no need to install extra location tracking equipment into trucks and vans, Orangebox are now also saving at least £100 per install/maintenance/removal of additional hardware on each of their vehicles.

Do you want to optimize your field operations and mobile workforce management?

Let's talk.

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