

Driving A Successful Field Service Destiny

Source: Field Technologies Magazine

By Brian Albright, Field Technologies

Field Technologies talks with Zach McGuire of MasTec Advanced Technologies, who explains how a diverse approach to market shifts and self-driven technician practices keep business humming at this third-party service contractor.



MasTec's Advanced Technologies division is a third-party service contractor that provides technology solutions and installations for residential and commercial customers across the United States. The company's 4,000 technicians provide in-home and on-premise service for a variety of communications and other companies, including AT&T, ADT, DIRECTV, Amazon, and

others. In addition to installing technology systems, the company has expanded into other in-home services like assembling exercise equipment and other products.

MasTec AT's president, Zach McGuire, spoke to *Field Technologies* about the challenges of providing third-party services, in addition to the company's technician incentive, upselling, and safety programs.

You do work for a wide variety of companies. How integrated are you with your customers' field service management and other technology systems?

It varies by client. With DIRECTV, which is our biggest client, we are 100-percent integrated with their dispatch and routing systems. In some cases, our technicians' cell phones are even controlled by them. We also have our own system, ClickSoftware, that we lay over top of that to be more efficient. We also use that if we are flexing a technician — if a tech doesn't have a full DIRECTV route for the day, we can route them to an Amazon or ADT job.

Can you describe the software and other solutions that you use internally to manage your field service operation?

We recognized a couple of years ago that when we are 100-percent utilized with a client like DIRECTV, that works well, but we can't really count on just that one customer or work type to keep a technician busy. We needed some way to look at the whole day and look at our technicians by skillset.

We wanted to route multiple customer jobs to a certain technician. That would keep them from driving past each other between jobs. We knew that if we had one technician doing an Amazon job and another doing a DIRECTV job near the same location, we could be a lot more efficient if we knew where they were.

Doing that manually was very painful. Just this year, we got to a place where we now have a full view of all our work by region or market, and we know technician skillsets. We have increased overall efficiency by being able to dynamically route those technicians. That's how we are using ClickSoftware.

Everyone has a smartphone and, in some cases, they have iPads. Our security clients, for example, require more technology. For the most part, though, the technicians use smartphones. They can turn that on and know where their first job is going to be each day.

How has the third-party service market changed? What are your clients looking for now in a partner?

It has definitely changed quite a bit. Originally, DIRECTV outsourced all of their work, and we handled all of that for them. After AT&T bought them, they had their own technicians, so now our coverage varies by market.

In New York, there is no AT&T U-verse, so we do all of the DIRECTV work in the New York area. In places like Dallas or Atlanta, we only have a certain percentage of that work.

We also have another client that has insourced resources, but now they are pursuing a strategy of using more external service resources. They are trying to eliminate truck rolls, but they also realize that we have the ability to perform that service at a lower cost than their in-house resources.

You've launched an upselling program for your technicians. What is driving interest in upselling in the markets you serve?

We just launched that formally in the past 30 days. There are a lot of technology companies like Google that would love to have access to the home when our technician is there. We're in the home putting services together, and the technician is a trusted resource.

The customer views that person as professional in the space. So when they notice that, for example, a customer doesn't have an HDMI cable between the box and the TV, they can say, "I have one in my truck for \$39.99, and here's how it will enhance the picture," and they can take the cable and show them what it does in real time.

Having a trusted expert in the home and products that can enhance the customer experience — and offering that type of "do-it-for-me" service — creates an upselling opportunity that is much greater than we ever thought.

"Having a trusted expert in the home and products that can enhance the customer experience — and offering that type of 'do-it-for-me' service — creates an upselling opportunity that is much greater than we ever thought."
Zach McGuire, MasTec Advanced Technologies

Some clients don't want us to sell anything that is not theirs, but some are more open to it now, just because the market dynamics are changing. It creates longer term customer relationships, so if they need something done in the future, maybe even something like having an additional outlet installed, they can call us instead of going to AT&T or Comcast.

We've had to adopt some technology so we could handle those transactions correctly, including the use of disclaimers and warranty coverage. This way, they don't call AT&T to cover something they bought separately.

How have you made this transition — what type of training is involved for upselling? How have the technicians responded? What tools do they have at their disposal to help with these efforts?

We had to undertake training so they could utilize the new system, especially when they were moving from platform to platform for different clients.

But the bigger part of training is that not all of our technicians are natural salespeople. Some don't like to sell, so we created modules that enable upsell without requiring technicians be great salespeople. They can have a clean conversation about adding to the viewing experience or taking care of equipment without feeling like they're selling.

Different clients have their own upselling programs. One thing we sell for DIRECTV is a protection plan — a warranty on all of the cabling with a free upgrade once a year. We sell that at a rate of 52 percent; warranties are one of the biggest things we sell.

How does the training work for upselling?

We have classroom and hands-on training. We did a one-day training session where they ran through the modules for each product. We are not only training them to sell, but we also do product training so they know what each product does.

We're also doing work for Amazon and providing a lot of different services. As we add SKUs, we have to have training for those products. We added exercise equipment, and the technicians needed guidance on how to put together a particularly tricky elliptical machine. That's something we can push out in a short video that the technicians can see on their phones.

We also use the SmarterU learning management platform. You can put content on there so the technicians can access it. If they are at an Amazon job and they aren't familiar with a specific brand of elliptical trainer, for instance, they can reference their phone to pull up little videos that show tips and tricks.

How do the technicians balance upselling with providing good service and making sure the customer feels comfortable (i.e., not pressured)?

That is one part of the training. We also picked products that don't take much time. If upselling adds an hour to a job, then you could put the next job in jeopardy.

We have to keep a fine balance. At the same time, if we do have something to extend that job, that's where dynamic routing comes in. The technician can add time to the job, and the system will reroute the next job if it's in jeopardy. Another technician can take it. We like to fill white space, but we also need to create white space, so it's a load-balancing mechanism.

You've also launched an incentive program. How important is that for your business? Can you describe how you have structured the program?

That involved a lot of discussion around whether we should do points-based incentives, cash, or other things. We came out of the gate for the initial launch with cash, and we did two things. They get a commission for selling a particular product,

and we use a piece-rate system, so they get paid for the labor portion as well. That creates two opportunities for the technician.



Overall efficiency has increased for MasTec Advanced Technologies with the help of dynamic routing capabilities provided by its field service software.

We know some technicians were doing some of this on their own — they would have products on their own truck to sell. This really formalized it, and the technicians have really taken to it. We're in a tight margin business, so there's not a lot of opportunity to give everyone a raise. This can give them more compensation, and it's a win-win for the company and the tech.

We also established weekly incentives. If they sell three TV mounts in a week, they could win a new drill, or we create some kind of competition around the product of the week. We do drawings for rewards. We have a scorecard that we use to track sales.

What we haven't done is make this mandatory. It's optin. We don't want people to feel like they have to leave if they aren't selling. If they are focused solely on selling, that can impact customer satisfaction, and we can get into trouble with our clients. I really feel that not putting sales targets in place was the right way to go. In the first week after training, 53 percent of our people have had at least one sale, so that's a pretty good take rate.

What are some of the key challenges you face in making sure the incentive program remains effective?

The most important thing is getting feedback from the technicians and making sure that the sales are tracked accurately and that we are paying them accurately. They can see it called out on their pay stubs by both the sales and labor component, and if they think there is a discrepancy, they can dispute it and get it resolved quickly.

Can you describe the safety program you've implemented? How often do you refresh or retrain when it comes to safety?

That has been our single biggest focus over the past couple of years. We originally had a top-down safety program. We have GPS in the trucks, and we'd point out if they had two hard braking incidents and tell them to not do this or not do that. It was really a sort of "Big Brother" approach.

We've changed that now. We now take a "safety starts with you" approach, and we have the technicians fill out a voluntary safety commitment card. They write down why they are going to work safely every day: "I'm working safely to support my family," for example. We put those up on a wall at our locations. They make a pledge to themselves to work safely.

That was a big shift. Safety is your responsibility, and you need to be safe because it is important to you. The improvement in all of our safety metrics the past two years has been dramatic. It really is a culture shift. Everyone wants to be safe, and they are looking for ways to help each other, rather than having management continually harping on them about driving or being on ladders.

We also do huddles. Once or twice a week they come into the office. We start every meeting with a safety share. It can be something really simple. For example, I mentioned that at a recent conference I was at, a lot of people took an Uber or a Lyft to get there, but many don't buckle their seat belts. But there is a high risk of injury in an accident in the back seat without a seat belt.

We also send specific alerts to different markets based on weather. We have weekly reminders about driving, ladders, insect bites, whatever is relevant at that time.

What other initiatives are underway at MasTec AT?

A lot of our work is very straightforward. People understand what's involved with installing a security system or the work we do for DIRECTV. The shift we're making as a company is understanding that we will not exist in the future by just providing cable TV installation.

I never thought we'd have technicians putting together exercise equipment. We looked at our strengths. Our people are our number-one asset. We have warehouses, and we can hire and train technicians at a high volume. What other things can we do in this home space, besides the services we provide for our traditional customers?

We knew we needed to change to work in different spaces, like with Amazon. Now we're installing office white boards or restroom baby changing stations. We're still working with technology; we're just now getting into different markets. What else do people need help with in their homes? That's the need we're trying to address.