

Soldier On

By Roger Henson, Southwest Training and Consulting

This spring I was in Washington, D.C. and took the time to visit and reflect on the monuments as I have done on previous visits. This time I spent a little more time at the Korean War Memorial. The Soldiers, an Advance Party of 19, seem alert and ready for whatever lies ahead no matter how great the odds. That war was fought in the early 1950s and today we still have not resolved the differences that caused us to join in that war almost 70 years ago. On my way back to Wisconsin I stopped and spent a day at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio (I served in the Air Force). There I marveled at the advances in aerospace technology, from props to jets to spacecraft. Walking under the wing of a B-36 sitting inside the Space Shuttle, looking at the intricacies of a jet engine and the present-day electronics that control flight is awe inspiring to an Air Force technician who repaired navigation equipment that had the latest technology, miniature tubes. When you were troubleshooting a “set” and the issue was not a tube, you would probably find a bad resistor or capacitor that had to be unsoldered and solder a new component back in quickly and accurately to get the fighter jet back in the air. Soldier On.

Among other things, I am also an avid cyclist. A friend of mine recently attended a discussion session for cyclists. The topic was: “How do you make eye contact with the driver of a driverless car?” At intersections cyclists like to make eye contact with drivers to ensure the driver sees them. The march of technology continues to solve one problem and create a new one. The internet and GPS are great; the effects of being “hacked” are not so great. Soldier On.

After one of my seminars this spring I had a woman come up to me afterwards and tell me that her father had passed away about a year ago and she had given up on pursuing her business dream. Listening to me was almost like listening to her father. She said we both have the same outlook and the same way of emphasizing the importance of service and volunteerism. Soldier On.

In the book *The Bully Pulpit* by Doris Kearns Goodwin, there are many points to contemplate today. Examples:

- “We girdle the land with iron roads, lace the air with telegraph wires; we add knowledge to knowledge and utilize invention after invention. Yet despite such vaunted progress, it becomes no easier for the masses of our people to make a living. On the contrary it is harder.”
- “I’m in a disgracefully healthy condition. I feel ashamed of myself when I look at the poor fellows I brought with me.”
- “I’ve had a bully time and a bully fight. I wish you all could have been with us.”

My point with these snippets is to remind us that technology does not necessarily solve problems and leaders need to acknowledge the followers and their conditions. Through reading and absorbing history we can avoid some mistakes. We can make better decisions, we can make a better world. Soldier On.

Soldier On. To continue to do something in a determined way, especially when you know you may not succeed.

Service is Important, the Better Way is still out there, Soldier On.

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Service Is Becoming Increasingly Strategic — Are You Ready?

By Sarah Nicastro, publisher/editor in chief, Field Technologies

While attending Field Service USA in April, one of the interesting sessions I sat in on was that of Frank Bibens, president of global services at Vertiv. Bibens was speaking about the state of service, and specifically about why — at least for Vertiv — service is becoming increasingly strategic. At this point, for many — if not most — service organizations, the view of service as a cost center is long gone. Organizations have come to recognize the service function’s ability to contribute to revenue, but what Bibens was saying is that service isn’t just a contributing factor of profits — it is a strategic force behind them.



For Vertiv, Bibens said that the company sells eight to 12 dollars of service for every product dollar. So, as you can see, service is a highly profitable aspect of Vertiv’s business. It is also the face of the business — service is Vertiv’s (and your) way to control the customer experience. Service, when done well, enables you to develop loyalty and repeat product sales, as Bibens points out. For these reasons, and others, today’s industry leaders are

viewing service as a strategic differentiator.

So how do you do this? First, be sure you are looking at service for the opportunity it is. While sitting in Bibens’ session, Field Service USA did a live poll of the audience — 91 percent in attendance said that service is now a strategic priority. Assuming that 91 percent includes some of your competition, you do not want to be left behind. Bibens pointed out commoditization as a crucial reason to invest in service. According to him, “upstream investments deliver downstream dividends.”

Words Of Wisdom On Service Strategy

Some words of caution Bibens provided were about the need to create a separate profit and loss center for service. He advised against making blanket decisions by lumping service in with the rest of the company. He gave the example of not cost cutting on service during the Great Recession even though the company was cost cutting as a whole, because they realized that in that situation customers would be looking to service to extend the life of their equipment. Sometimes your service operation does need to be viewed differently from the other arms of your business.

Bibens also touched on the increasingly popular topic of self service — enabling your customers to have access to more information and to participate in their service more actively through portals, applications, and other methods of communication. While self service can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on your business, Bibens also warns that — if not thought through correctly — it can have a negative effect too. The more complex the service operation is, the more room exists for misinformation and miscommunication. In Bibens’ opinion, there is such a thing as too much information, and you want to do your due diligence in thinking through if — and in what form — self service is right for your business.

Source: *Field Technologies Magazine*
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Service Technicians Drive the REAL Economy

By Glen Spielbauer, Optex Systems

Much has been said and written about the so-called “New” or Post-Industrial Economy. Computer software, finance, media, iPhones, the Internet and management consulting have been glamorized. Silicon Valley is declared to be the “New” economy.

However, this is a myth, as shown in a landmark book published back in 1999 – *IN PRAISE OF HARD INDUSTRIES – Why Manufacturing, Not the Information Economy, is the Key to Prosperity* (by Eamonn Fingleton, Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

The author was an editor at Forbes and *Financial Times*.

What he says is as true today as in 1999. The reality is that while Silicon Valley tech firms get all the attention, they employ only a tiny fraction of the total working population.

The REAL economy is made of the “smokestack” or “Rust Belt” companies, such as steel, aluminum, plastics, auto manufacturing, and even food processing companies.

With all the advanced high-tech computer controls and machinery in our factories today, SERVICE TECHNICIANS are the people who are the driving force. They keep the “engines” of our factories humming and they are more and more called on to suggest technical improvements.

Today’s manufacturing and processing industries are now as “high tech” as the computer, telecommunications or integrated chip firms. As a spokesman for Frito-Lay said during a television interview years ago, “Making potato chips is as high tech as making computer chips.”

As Fingleton points out in his book, the general public has been misled by the myths of “industrial decline” and the “New” economy. Manufacturing is the real foundation of any regional or national economy. This is true in the United States, the UK, Germany, Japan, China, and South Korea.

Today’s factories are full of the latest advanced high-tech equipment and machinery such as CNC machining centers, programmable laser systems, microprocessor-controlled welders, and computer laser and vision inspection systems that automatically measure dimensions to an accuracy of a ten-thousandth of an inch.

This calls for expert technicians, machinists, and other applied technical experts from our two-year community colleges and state technical schools.

Today’s service technicians who work on the advanced robotic and automated factory and processing equipment need technical training almost to the level of an engineer.

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Welcome New Member

Ken Evans, Design & Integration, Inc.

Kirk Maranto, Redbox Automated Retail LLC

Articles for NASM Newsletter

NASM publishes the newsletter quarterly.

Please submit articles/ information to Ken Cook, Ken Cook Co. (kenc@kencook.com).

Deadlines are:
November 15
for the December issue
February 15
for the March issue
May 15
for the June issue
August 15
for the September issue

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What’s on Your Reading List

Please take a moment to think about what you’ve read lately that would be of interest to your fellow NASM members. Be sure to include the complete title, author’s name, a brief book overview and where it’s available. Send your recommendations to kenc@kencook.com and we’ll include them in subsequent newsletters.

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Service Technicians Drive the REAL Economy

(Continued from page 3)

A growing number of two-year community colleges and state technical schools have associate’s degree and one-year certificate programs that cover the necessary topics at a very high level, such as computer software, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), electronic circuits for process instrumentation and control, and advanced mechanics, along with pump and valve control.

Some technical programs include applied introductory calculus, machine shop math, and software for robotics and industrial machine control.

While service technicians in the past may have been regarded as “blue collar” like the Maytag repair tech in the old television ads, service companies must present their technicians as white collar technical experts. They may have to handle wrenches – but they also are experts in electronic circuit theory, process control, and software.

Reach out to the Next Generation

Too many young people are focused only on four-year college degrees.

High school teachers and counselors, parents and students must be educated about the growing importance of associate’s degree and certificate training programs at two-year community colleges.

The greatest growth in careers is not for four-year college graduates but for two-year associate’s degree graduates and those with specialized certificate training related to manufacturing and industrial technology. Service technicians with advanced expertise in industrial machine and process control are especially in demand.

In addition, about 83 percent of two-year graduates earn as much or more than four-year graduates.

Technicians are the key to manufacturing excellence in design, equipment maintenance, quality control (QC) and customer service.

As companies invest in new advanced technology to improve product design, manufacturing quality and customer service, technicians are as vital as engineers and MBA managers.

During the past several decades, many firms, including manufacturing, decided it was less expensive to expand by mergers and acquisitions – rather than by direct investment in capital equipment and expanding factory capacity. Many high-paying jobs were sent offshore, destroying many communities. Now, there is a renewed mission for rebuilding American industry and leading the world in a global industrial economy.

As today’s manufacturing, chemical and petroleum refining plants install more advanced machinery and process instrumentation, service managers must consider the SERVICE TECHNICIANS as the key people to enhance their clients’ bottom line productivity and profitability.

2017 Events

Note: Dates and locations are subject to change.

NASM 2017 Business / Board Meeting Schedule*:

Business/Board meetings are monthly teleconferences (**1-800-630-9030, pass code 4616060#**), unless otherwise noted. Typical meeting dates are scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of each month, starting at 10:00 a.m. central.

June 27, 2017 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

July 25, 2017 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

August 28, 2017 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

September 26, 2017 . . . 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

* With some exceptions, there will be face-to-face meetings that coincide with other NASM events. The face-to-face meetings will have available phone-in to the teleconference for those unable to attend.

NASM Looks Forward to 2017

NASM will be a media partner with World Business Research events in 2017 including:

Field Service Fall 2017
September 25-27, 2017
Omni Amelia Island Plantation
Resort, Florida
www.fieldserviceeast.wbresearch.com

Members will receive a **25% discount** on registration fees for these events. Use discount code: NASM25.

We are also in discussions with Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) and Society of Service Executives (SSE) on possible joint meetings for 2017. Stay tuned!

Publishing Provided by:

Ken Cook Co.

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