

## Do You Think We Will Have That?

*By Roger Henson, Southwest Training and Consulting*

In an interview last summer that was widely disseminated, Dieter Zetsche, CEO of Mercedes Benz, gave his thoughts on the inventions of the future. His perspective could be a wake-up call for those who think change is not that big in the business world.

Some examples to think about and perhaps discuss:

- Work: 70-80% of jobs will disappear in the next 20 years. There will be a lot of new jobs, but not enough.
- If it doesn't work with your phone, forget the idea.
- Some spare airline parts are already 3D printed in remote airports.
- Most car companies will become bankrupt. Traditional car companies will try to build a better car while tech companies will build a computer on wheels.
- Self-driving cars will become the norm and people will stop owning cars. No need to park a car; you will just call a car with your phone and will only pay for the distance driven.
- Auto accidents will drop significantly, with less need for repairs both for the physical car and the human body. The present car insurance business model will disappear.
- Agricultural robots will allow farmers to become managers instead of sitting in the cab of a tractor or combine all day.
- Because of IBM Watson, you can get legal advice within seconds with 90% accuracy compared with 70% when done by humans.

Think of these: Uber is just a software tool. They don't own cars, but Uber is now the biggest taxi company in the world. Airbnb is now the biggest hotel company in the world, although they don't own any properties.

With these predictions I went back a few years to John Naisbitt. Remember Megatrends?

Some of his quotes still ring true:

- "We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge."
- "Strategic planning is worthless – unless there is first a strategic vision."
- "In a world that is constantly changing there is no one subject or set of subjects that will serve you for the foreseeable future, let alone for the rest of your life. The most important skill to acquire now is learning how to learn."

In looking at the economic forecasts for 2018 and the predictions about the future, it would appear that many companies have great strategic visions and that many business people have embraced the skill of learning how to learn. I certainly see those traits in the companies and people I am aware of here in southern Wisconsin.

Let's go back a few years to the old guru, Peter Drucker, who said, "The relevant question is not simply what shall we do tomorrow, but rather what shall we do today in order to get ready for tomorrow."

A part of being ready for tomorrow is taking the advice of Fred Rogers (Mister Rogers) who said, among other things, "Slow down, Be Quiet and Listen."

If we all look beyond the chaos, discover hope and plan today for tomorrow, 2018 will be a very good year.

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# LASSO Launches New Electronic Signature Solution

Source: LASSO

LASSO Signature, a new e-signature product within LASSO's workforce management platform, enables customers to obtain mobile signatures from crew right from the same system they use to on-board, schedule, manage and communicate with them.

LASSO, a leading provider of workforce management technology solutions, recently announced the launch of a new electronic signature product, LASSO Signature. This new solution which operates seamlessly within LASSO's robust workforce management platform dedicated to helping companies manage their contingent, mobile workforce, allows customers to obtain mobile signatures in order to streamline the on-boarding process and simplify on-going policy management.

"At LASSO, we are constantly innovating and coming up with new ways to help our customers automate their labor workflows and simplify processes for their crew and staff," said Angela Alea, president of LASSO. "LASSO Signature helps customers establish an exceptional experience for their crew, right from the very start. By gaining the ability to obtain mobile signatures during the on-boarding process and beyond as policies and documentation change, LASSO customers are able to obtain higher engagement with their crew as well as increased retention."

LASSO Signature allows customers to electronically complete, review, and sign documents – right from the same system they are using to schedule them, communicate with them, manage them and more. Customers are able to save both time and money during the on-boarding process and after as new policies and documents are created. The system makes it easy for customers to track the progress of all paperwork, at all times.

"Obtaining signatures from crew members that are constantly on the move is a challenge," continued Alea. "Especially if you rely on manual processes for collecting and managing new hire paperwork and other important documentation. Our goal with LASSO Signature is to streamline that process and make it as painless as possible – on both sides."

### About LASSO

LASSO is a workforce management software company dedicated to helping companies manage their project-based, mobile talent – from electronic onboarding and document management, to scheduling, communication, time-tracking, spend forecasting, and more. The LASSO platform and mobile app were created to tackle the unique challenges faced by companies when managing their on-demand and on-the-go workforce. For more information, visit [www.lasso.io](http://www.lasso.io).

# Q&A: Insider Advice On Maintaining a Tenured Field Service Workforce

Source: *Field Technologies Magazine*

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

## **Publisher/Editor In Chief Sarah Nicastro talks one-on-one with Bob Latvis, regional VP of field operations at Cox Communications, on keeping techs happy.**

Cox Communications is a privately owned, American subsidiary of Cox Enterprises providing digital cable television, telecommunications, and home automation services in the United States. Bob Latvis is the regional vice president of field operations at Cox and has been with the company for 30 years. In his role, Latvis leads regional residential and commercial field operations and network reliability, accounting for over \$1.3 billion in annual revenues.

I spoke with Latvis recently about Cox’s focus on customer satisfaction (keep an eye out for another article on that soon!), and one of the aspects that came up in our conversation is just how crucial the field technician is in the customer’s experience. In a field service business, success with customer satisfaction lies almost entirely in the field technician’s hands — therefore, focusing on the knowledge, training, and job satisfaction of your field technicians is very important.

One of the accomplishments Latvis is most proud of in his current role at Cox is the tenure of his field service team. The average tenure of the field technicians in Latvis’ region is just under 11 years (10.56). Latvis understands that keeping his field technicians engaged and happy in their jobs is key to Cox’s core mission of providing a great customer experience, and he has some tips to share with you on how to maintain a tenured field service workforce.

### **Nicastro: In your words, explain the importance of field technician engagement and job satisfaction.**

**Latvis:** What I’ve seen through my 30 years in field service operations is that there is a direct correlation between job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. The higher the morale or the higher the job satisfaction, the more engaged people are in ensuring that the customers have a positive interaction.

The positivity of happy employees comes through in our technicians’ actions and words with our customers. It’s contagious almost, this positivity — it makes the customer feel like they’re making a good purchase or decision to come on board with us as a subscriber, because the employee is so engaged in what they’re doing.

I personally spend extra time finding the level of engagement our people have. Are they engaged? Are they satisfied? Are they committed compared to just compliant? That’s kind of the key that I’m looking for: commitment versus compliance.

I’m a big believer in the “manage by walking around” philosophy, formally and informally. I will join technician meetings just off the cuff, do rideouts, go with technicians on customer visits, organize one-on-ones with technicians, even though there are about 600. I can’t meet with everybody, but I’ll do larger-scale focus groups as well where no topic is off limits and we can talk about anything they choose, work-related or industry-related. I want to be viewed as somebody that is very transparent with where we are as a company and what we are doing to improve our customer relationship and our employee relationship.

I think companies fall into a trap of overlooking employee satisfaction because it’s often viewed as just “you’re paid to do your job, so just do your job.” Too much emphasis is put on the extrinsic motivation or compensation — and companies feel the techs should be happy just with what they’re getting paid. Not enough effort is put into empathy, the appreciation of the skill it takes to do their job, and focus on the mutual purpose that you serve, whether it’s in an executive role or a technician role.

We all serve the customer, and from what I’ve seen, when technicians see that the senior leadership is engaged at that level,



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**– Bob Latvis, Cox Communications**

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# Q&A: Insider Advice On Maintaining a Tenured Field Service Workforce

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they know that their going the extra mile makes a difference. Rather than the mindset of “Hey, you’re getting paid well. Just do your job,” it should be, “I care about you as a human being, and I want you to be successful.”

**Nicastro: We discussed how important communication and transparency are in building and maintaining relationships with your field technicians. What are the most successful methods of communication that you use, and what are some examples of using transparency?**

**Latvis:** The most successful method by far is in person, whether that’s in town hall-type meetings or focus group meetings or individual tech team meetings. It’s having the dialogue and having open dialogue, where both sides of the story are told. Whether you’re telling a popular story or an unpopular one, the key factor is that you’re explaining the reason why.

When folks feel that you are being honest with them, whether they agree with the message or not, it’s accepted much better. If you aren’t transparent in your communication, you leave room for speculation and suspicion — the opposite of loyalty and engagement.

If there is any message to be told or something that’s going to affect or impact a large group of employees, we make sure that the message is delivered at an intimate level: smaller groups of people having the interaction, and certainly asking for and listening to feedback. The message doesn’t change, but exploring the “why” behind the conversation is important to the employee.

You also need to ensure feedback is acted upon. We keep an action item list and, as questions come up, we have either a white board or a flip chart where questions and feedback are documented for everybody to see, along with who owns the follow-up and the date by which we’re going to follow up.

This process ensures we maintain our credibility. Whether it’s an answer people want to hear or they don’t want to hear, it’s an answer that we committed to and followed through on, and employees respect that. If you ask for feedback and don’t follow through, the next time you find the room shuts down. When you really need their feedback, people just won’t even bother because it’s like, “Why bother? Nobody’s listening anyway.”

That said, you also need to clarify ground rules about what you’re going to act on and what you’re not. You have to tactfully let employees know that nonconstructive or unrealistic input won’t be addressed.

**Nicastro: That’s great input, but face-to-face communication won’t always be an option. What have you found works best when you can’t talk to techs in person?**

**Latvis: We have done video messaging, and it’s OK. It’s still more of a push of information out, but those are more effective than mass email blasts with four or five different topics on it.**

If you’re not doing in-person communication, you need to limit the amount you’re going to be sharing at one time. You can’t pack four or five different topics in an email — it has to be very specific and targeted. If you put together a monthly newsletter and put 30 things in it, by the time people read the second article, they’re done.

Keep it narrow, keep it specific, keep it targeted, and add a human element to it as well. That will ensure that attitude you’re trying to convey in a face-to-face comes through.

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# Q&A: Insider Advice On Maintaining a Tenured Field Service Workforce

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**Nicastro:** You mentioned that your directors conduct monthly one-on-one meetings with managers, who conduct one-on-one meetings with supervisors, who conduct one-on-one meetings with each field technician to discuss performance and create individualized development plans. This is a major investment of time, but you feel it is worth the payoff — can you explain why?

**Latvis:** We've seen it be successful because it shows that the leader is engaged in that employee's continued development, whether that's into leadership, to make them more technically astute or competent, increasing their financial acumen, or making them a more marketable employee.

Having a really good individual development plan increases that employee engagement. It shows that the company's invested in their future. Time put into these one-on-ones is another demonstration that we want you here for the long haul, not for a one- or two-year spin. We want you to plan your career with us. Secondly, it also allows us to identify talent for succession planning. When we talk about succession planning, we say, "OK, which technician on their individual development plan said they'd like to go into leadership?"

Lastly, it builds another level of loyalty. You'll find that when you need to call on people to go the extra mile, there's goodwill you've created by investing in them and their long-term career. They've not forgotten. It's not something you hold over their head, but it's a memorable experience for them, so when the company calls on folks to go the extra mile, there's never a push and pull. It's always, "Sure, where do you need me to sign up?"

**Nicastro:** We spoke about the importance of leaders being relatable. Why do you feel this is important, and how can leaders accomplish this?

**Latvis:** It's very important because the technicians need to have a feeling that you really understand what they do. The more credibility you're able to bring to the table, the more effective you are. I'm a firm believer in that, because I've seen it backfire tremendously, like with folks coming from other companies with big titles. People can be very relatable without having done the job; they just have to have really good people skills.

You're just not accepted "just because." You have to build that relatability, meaning I can empathize with you because I understand what you go through every day. It builds rapport, and it builds an environment where people will open up to you because they trust you.

In order to be successful, you have to show your humility. Even though you may be the vice president and you're coming in to a bunch of technicians, be humble. Be willing to listen and not be the biggest voice in the room. Just be there as a sponge. Think of it as asking for help in your own development. When you show that vulnerability and you're comfortable with that, people embrace that. You don't have to have street credibility; you can build your credibility up by saying, "I need your help to be successful."

Once you're relatable and people are comfortable approaching you, they can really help you with your business problems or even your business strategy. Because they have a direct pipeline to your customers, they see them every day and talk to them every day — they are gold mines of information of what our customers think of us. They'll tell you how to improve your business because they trust that you are interested in what they have to say, because they can relate to you. Where they may

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## 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](mailto:kenc@kencook.com) and we'll include them in subsequent newsletters.

# Q&A: Insider Advice On Maintaining a Tenured Field Service Workforce

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see four or five things that could really improve your business, they may not approach you because they could be afraid or be scared that you would take that as criticism versus, “Wow, your idea could really save us time, save us money, could improve our customer satisfaction.”

Anyone can create a compliant work environment, but doing so will give you the bare minimum of performance. If you work toward creating a committed environment, you’ll get much more because people are committed to doing a great job versus just compliant to doing the bare minimum.

**Nicastro: How can a company effectively use compensation to promote job satisfaction and retention?**

**Latvis:** Pay for performance is paramount: You reward the people based on merit, not solely based on a completion of a task or time. Secondly, you need a variable pay component to allow people who want to go above and beyond the opportunity to make more money as well. Variable pay doesn’t have to be just straight-out monetary; it can be gifts and prizes and contests and things like that. The idea is, as long as there’s a carrot out there, folks will stretch to obtain that.

The other thing is, you have to pay a fair market value for the skills that field service does. I say that because the science of what field service is has changed so dramatically over the past five, 10, 15 years. You’re now competing with trades, shipbuilders, plumbers, things along those lines — this is a career.

The third component would be a really good career path that shows, along with base and incentive compensation, what does the career growth look like?

**Nicastro: What are the three biggest mistakes you see companies make in how they treat their field technicians?**

**Latvis:** The first step is that they need to break the stereotype that field technicians are one-trick ponies. I say that to mean that they only have one specific task that they do, repeated over and over again. In field service in today’s world, you have to be multidimensional and be able to problem solve several different items or products or consumers at one time.

Secondly, people don’t put enough emphasis on the people/communication skills that the field service technician needs to have. I would make that the priority. The most important thing is focusing on the communication skills. These folks are truly the face of your company, representing you. It’s a mistake to undervalue the need for these folks to be excellent communicators. Listening skills are just as important as communicating the total value of the service that they’re providing.

Lastly, you must understand that your field technicians are the ambassadors of your brand. Whether that is working for a customer, whether it’s driving around town, or whether it’s walking through 7-Eleven with their uniform on, these folks have a tremendous presence in the community. They are walking billboards, and that’s why it’s so important to invest in your field service people as complete employees, because they’re going to come in contact with the community every single day, hundreds of times a day. You want to invest in them and their skill sets, their career desires, because they can make or break your customer loyalty any day of the week, if they want to.

**Nicastro: If you were to summarize your best advice for maintaining a tenured field service force, what would it be?**

**Latvis:** The key comes down to making yourself accessible. I’m a realist, so I understand the email box is filling up left and right, and you’ve got your financial statements you need to look over, and you have your business priorities you need to track down. But you have to make yourself accessible so people see you as somebody that is really invested in them and their job experience, whether it’s in larger groups, whether it’s walking through the parking lot, or whether it’s walking through the smoke shack. Hey, a lot of stuff gets said at the smoke shack! You want to be a regular there. You want to be part of the grapevine.

That happens by making yourself accessible and not, “Oh, no, here comes Bob.” It’s just you walk up and people know you and keep talking, even if it’s about the Yankees last night, let your ego go. Let it go. You’re not all that important. It’s much more important to understand what’s on the minds of the people who are talking to your customers than it is to think how important you are.

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# 2018 Events

*Note: Dates and locations are subject to change.*

## Field Service USA 2018

April 17-20, 2018  
JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa  
Palm Springs, CA  
[www.fieldserviceusa.com](http://www.fieldserviceusa.com)

## Field Service East 2018

September 25-27, 2018  
Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort  
Amelia Island, Florida  
[www.fieldserviceeast.com](http://www.fieldserviceeast.com)

## NASM 2018 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.

**March 27, 2018** . . . . . 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

**April 24, 2018** . . . . . 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

**May 22, 2018** . . . . . 10:00 a.m. (cst)

**June 26, 2018** . . . . . 10:00 a.m. (cst)

\* 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.

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## Welcome New Members

**Tom Murrah**, Hunter International

**William Nygaard**, Echo Incorporated

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Election Results April 28, 2017

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