

The Big Discussion: Augmented Reality

In the Big Discussion we bring together a panel of industry experts and focus on one key topic within the field service sector.

This time we turn our attention to Augmented Reality and our panel includes Stephen Jeff-Watts, Senior Advisor Service Management, IFS, Francesco Benvenuto Product Marketing Manager, SPACE1 by OverIT and John Bishop, President, Librestream...



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John Bishop, President,
Librestream



Overit
Information Technology

Francesco Benvenuto,
Product Marketing Manager, OverIT



Stephen Jeff-Watts,
Senior Advisor, IFS

Why should Field Service companies deploy an augmented reality solution if they already have a peer to peer video tool (such as Facetime or Skype) already available and free to use?

John Bishop, President, Librestream

Choosing a video chat product as a remote expert augmented reality (AR) solution can seem like an easy path to fulfilling an immediate need.

As AR platforms and capabilities like remote expert guidance have matured, enterprises have developed clear requirements for security, IT controls, usability and performance. Requirements that these kinds of tools are not able to meet. For example, how will the solution perform in low bandwidth environments? Can IT control how much bandwidth will be consumed?

How can I quickly engage supply chain experts and customers? How can I be sure my content is safe and meets privacy requirements?

We deployed the first AR remote expert solution in 2006 – long before remote expert guidance was part of AR. Over the past 12+ years, our enterprise customers like Rolls Royce, NOV, Colgate-Palmolive, SGS, and hundreds more have guided the development of our solution to solve these difficult challenges.

Francesco Benvenuto , Product Marketing Manager, SPACE1 by OverIT

Augmented Reality does not imply the use of a mere Remote Support solution but of an advanced tool aiming at supporting field technicians in their daily tasks through advanced collaboration and content sharing features. AR solutions, such as OverIT's product SPACE1, offer both real-time remote assistance and access to pre-built AR work instructions simultaneously.

In this way, support means collaboration and remote problem solving, but with a groundbreaking concept in mind: when assistance was guided by standard videos, both field technician and remote operator had to rely solely on voice instructions, e.g.: "Remove the two screws on the cover to access the electrical panel" Pause. "No, not those ones. The other ones, on the right. No,

not those ones. Yes. those ones." SPACE1 is one step ahead, allowing experts to make marks and drawings to be displayed on the user's point of view while supporting him. Moreover, it enables to share digital twins to be set where the remote expertise is needed, thus broadening traditional field working modalities and creating a brand-new cooperative virtual environment.

By using AR products users can capture images, record live support sessions to retain and share the expert assistance (both verbal and supported by visual annotations) in the future or even generate reports and offer actionable insights into improvement opportunities while providing additional employee training.

Stephen Jeffs-Watts, Product Manager, Service Management, IFS

AR is a far broader topic, with wider use-cases and implications than simply being used for video calls and ad-hoc collaboration.

AR solutions, embedded in the service delivery process can greatly enhance and enrich the customer experience.

One of the most compelling use-cases is in service call avoidance; where AR, when implemented in a seamless manner, empowers contact agents with enhanced diagnostics capabilities and tooling – being able to see and remotely guide the customer in triage with directive instructions, document

sharing and image mark-up. These capabilities can reduce down-time, avoid the need to send a field technician to site and thus directly improve customer satisfaction. Additionally, compliance obligations can also be met through integrated session recording; which isn't possible in the peer-to-peer space.

That same capability can then be deployed in the field; giving the technicians and the remote experts guiding them much wider capability with a resulting increase in effectiveness and efficiency. In this way, the technology increases first-time-fix rates, improving cost-to-serve and providing another dimension in improving the customer experience.

What role can AR play in helping field service companies overcome the ageing workforce crisis that they may be facing?

John Bishop, President, Librestream

As the ageing workforce continues to challenge field service operations, the need to transfer and harness the knowledge of these experts is undeniable.

With statistics like 10,000 workers retire every day in the US market, it is clear why this trend is a major driver for AR within field service.

The ageing workforce challenge is also compounded by the introduction of millennial workers. One of our industrial customers shared that it costs up

to \$1M and 9 months to train a new worker to the previous SME standard. With millennials staying an average of 3 years, doing things the old way is not sustainable.

Using AR to provide 'just in time' training instead of 'just in case' training is essential. This 'just in time' training is achievable with AR solutions like digital work instructions to step them through a process and remote expert guidance to access advice on the job.

Francesco Benvenuto , Product Marketing Manager, SPACE1 by OverIT

AR makes it easier for companies to move from an employee-centric approach to a wider and constantly evolving enterprise-centric approach where knowledge and know-how transfer are the core elements.

Every company should aim at equipping both technicians and operators with a user-friendly solution which does not require any coding skills for generating new content but instead creates a collaborative working environment where knowledge is easy to be shared.

Customer satisfaction plays also a pivotal role when it comes to determine the success of a company and the ability to provide the technician with the expertise needed at the right moment sure helps reaching this ambitious goal.

The spread of consumers' devices and user-friendly AR products is smoothing such transition providing all employees, from millennials to more senior operators, with the necessary skills to make the most of them.

An AR solution should always adapt to the company information architecture employed and each user should be able to access the data needed to augment the real world with rich and intuitive content.

Choosing an integrated platform, which is flexible and can be easily connected to the existing systems, such as ERP and IoT, will allow enterprises to quickly see the benefits AR can offer to pave the way for their success.

Stephen Jeffs-Watts, Product Manager, Service Management, IFS

The key use-case in this area is the remote expert whose expertise can be leveraged across multiple field technicians to rapidly increase competency in the field.

This is critical in supporting the next wave of service technicians which the industry needs as more experienced technicians leave the workforce.

This use-case also provides a potential way to extend the career of some technicians, redeploying field-based workers as remote experts whose specific objective is to increase competence and transfer their extensive knowledge, gained through years of in-field experience, to the next-generation of technicians.

Do you think AR will become a mainstream /commonplace part of field service operations within the near future?

John Bishop, President, Librestream

This question is an interesting one. AR is a large bucket. If you look at proven capabilities such as remote expert guidance and digital work instructions, AR is already a mainstream capability for market leaders.

Other AR capabilities such as 3D modeling and cognitive services, while important parts of the digital transformation journey, are further out in maturity. For these proven AR tools, we've experienced a shift from Operations to IT led sourcing to deploy at scale across an enterprise.

At scale, these enterprises report strong operational results such as:

- 30% Productivity gain from 'just in time' mentoring of field techs
- 5-10% Increase in asset uptime
- 50% Reduction in support call duration
- 20% Acceleration in time to resolution

In addition to these tangible results, our customers describe how AR also provides them with competitive differentiation, worker safety, premium service offers, and worker retention opportunities.

Francesco Benvenuto , Product Marketing Manager, SPACE1 by OverIT

Most consulting firms agree that by 2022 over 50% of field service providers will offer a specialized digital customer experience enabling both two-way interaction and workflow initiation through multiple human and nonhuman channels.

Such prediction is confirmed by the fact that OverIT, as an AR product supplier, is no longer reaching out to potential customers to make them aware

of the power of such technology, but instead is proactively contacted by prospects who have already developed a well-defined AR strategy for their business.

We are facing the ROI era and Augmented Reality is no longer a proof-of-concept.

Stephen Jeffs-Watts, Product Manager, Service Management, IFS

The current technology inflection point, where technologies like AR, Artificial Intelligence and machine learning will become pervasive, makes it one of the most exciting times to be working with Service companies.

Many use-cases that, only a couple of years ago, seemed aspirational at best, are becoming more real and accessible every day.

We are certainly seeing more interest in this area from the industry as cost

and complexity reduce – making the technology more accessible to a wider range of organisations.

The Feasibility of AR in Service report produced by the Service Council in 2017 found that 33% of respondents were already using AR, with 43% evaluating it. From what we see in the market, this upwards trajectory has continued and momentum is continuing to build.

What is the one key question you would advise a field service director to ask an Augmented Reality vendor when potentially seeking a solution to implement within their business?

John Bishop, President, Librestream

There will be many questions the field service director will be asked by colleagues, customers, or supply chain partners. Addressing the questions upfront is very important and the AR vendors should all be able to answer them. For example, you need the answer to questions like 'how do you handle privacy issues'? Or, more basic than that, 'when I move beyond the pilot phase, will IT let me deploy?'

We felt it was important to identify the common challenges we've

experienced with customers during deployment. We worked with customers and analysts to develop the Remote Expert Industry Guide. You can explore this RE Industry Guide at <http://bit.ly/2MTnQ22>.

Our longevity in the AR space has made it clear that sharing video or capturing data digitally can be a touchy subject, especially when end customers are involved. Field service directors and their colleagues need reassurance that the vendor they choose can provide the solution.

Francesco Benvenuto , Product Marketing Manager, SPACE1 by OverIT

I would like them to ask: "Do you provide an AR App or an Augmented Reality product?"

An Augmented Reality product, such as SPACE1, is a no-code authoring platform, which allows non-technical users to create intuitive and visual work instructions, making them virtually available to any technician. Furthermore, it enables collaboration for training and maintenance purposes.

Any company, looking into AR, should consider only products offering cross-platform support for handhelds, desktop and AR wearables where both real-time remote assistance and access to pre-built AR work instructions can be

served simultaneously, in one single application.

Moreover, decision-makers should select only solutions providing secure data handling in compliance with IT requirements and online/offline capabilities which make the information technicians need available, regardless of any potential connection issue.

Last but not least, features to capture images, annotations and screenshots, add documentation and record live support sessions under the expert guidance (both verbal and supported by visual annotations) are particularly useful in view of future use and sharing.

Stephen Jeffs-Watts, Product Manager, Service Management, IFS

"What areas of my service delivery organisation will be affected by deploying AR technology and how do I manage change effectively to ensure successful adoption of your product?"

with thanks to:

