

Service Management for IBM iSeries

A single, integrated service solution for streamlining processes, accurate performance analysis, and lower total costs



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Executive Summary

RMB Solutions Service Management for the IBM iSeries offers an efficient, integrated alternative to labor-intensive and ultimately expensive manual methods for managing service departments. Heavy investment has been made into building integration for Service Management with the iSeries ERP platform, to ensure smooth data flow that eliminates the need for inefficient and error-prone duplicate data entry.

Service Management provides frontline workers with a single interface to consult and work from. CSRs, technical support resources, field service technicians, and administrators can consult warranty, customer, product, pricing, and inventory information; create tickets, return merchandise authorizations (RMAs), work orders, manufacturing orders (MOs), purchase orders (POs), sales orders, credit memos, and shipment invoices; and update inventory and other ERP information, all from a single location, all securely, and all without spreadsheets.

Service Management provides a centralized knowledge base for your entire service department, so service personnel don't have to reinvent the wheel with every customer call or repair. It also provides vital reporting and dashboard capabilities, for analyzing warranty expense, service contract profitability, field service performance, and after-the-sale product quality measurements. These key performance indicators, among many others, help you enhance the performance of your department and products and identify revenue opportunities.



Introduction

In a recent Aberdeen survey of 150 service leaders, 69% indicated, “the economic turmoil of the last two to three years has raised the importance of service within their business.”⁽¹⁾

This should come as no surprise, as it’s often in economic downturns that systemic problems in the service department become apparent. When revenues are high, companies tend to focus their attention on other areas of the business. But when managing cost becomes a company priority, manufacturers need to know precisely their cost of operations, in particular service and warranty expenses.

Industry leaders are also employing creative strategies in service. They’re looking for new revenue opportunities in contract and extended warranty sales, thus turning their service center from a cost into a profit center.

This is in addition to the regular responsibilities that service departments must live up to, such as minimizing warranty fraud while all the time ensuring they are meeting contractual obligations with customers.

For the service department, all too many manufacturers today are relying on manual methods to manage their processes, which are increasing turnaround time, jeopardizing future sales, and causing hidden costs to grow inexorably higher.

Data has to be entered twice, even three times, as Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) receive customer calls and send information on to technical resources, who then have to enter this data again in spreadsheets and the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to find and manage parts, track costs, and manage billing.

What’s more, these disconnected islands of information make it virtually impossible to assess performance without a herculean effort from IT and others. More often than not, manufacturers cannot identify where or how they could improve in service or if there are larger quality issues with the products themselves, because data is scattered in various locations.

As a result, too many manufacturers today cannot accurately assess or forecast their warranty expense or service contract profitability — indeed, they could well be selling service contracts that are losing money, and not know it.

Another study by Aberdeen showed just how much some companies are falling behind in their service departments: “Laggard organizations are presently generating annual profits of only 15% for their service operations, compared to nearly twice that (26%) for Industry Average firms, and four-times as much (60%) for Best-in-Class. Rarely do we see variances this great between and among classes of service organizations for this metric.”⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Dutta, Sumair. “The CSO’s Agenda for 2011.” Aberdeen Group. November 2010.

⁽²⁾ Pollock, Bill. “Service Benchmarking and Measurement: Using Metrics to Drive Customer Satisfaction and Profits.” Aberdeen Group. June 2009: 27.

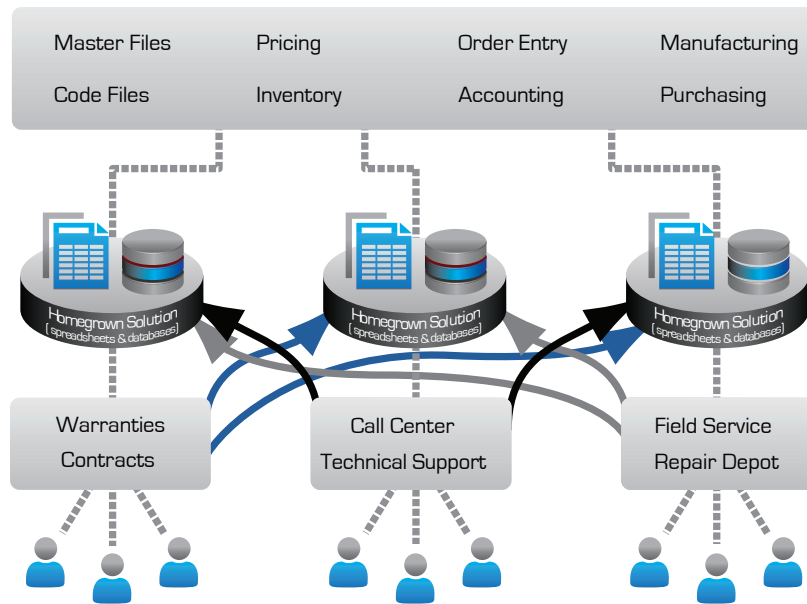


Fig. 1 – Service departments relying on disconnected islands of information cannot function quickly or efficiently, nor gain insight into their performance.

One system for managing many, interconnected service processes

Service Management for the IBM iSeries offers an efficient, integrated alternative to these labor-intensive and ultimately expensive methods. Heavy investment has been made into building integration for Service Management with the iSeries ERP platform, to ensure smooth data flow that eliminates the need for inefficient and error-prone duplicate data entry.

Thanks to this integration, you can replace the myriad spreadsheets, point solutions, work-arounds, and handwritten paper files with a single, powerful system. Service Management streamlines processes, shortens service transactions, and

enhances customer service dramatically, thus reducing total costs while increasing brand value for your products and services.

The software system is in line with industry trends, which are moving toward enterprise-aware solutions. According to Aberdeen’s CSO survey, “Best-in-Class [Service] leaders are looking to tightly integrate service with other business functions, ...in order to equip the entire organization with the right tools to effectively meet and exceed all customer requirements and eventually drive improved profitability to the overall business.”⁽³⁾

Service Management provides frontline workers

⁽³⁾ Dutta, Sumair. “The CSO’s Agenda for 2011.” Aberdeen Group. November 2010.



with a single interface to consult and work from. CSRs, technical support resources, field service technicians, and administrators can consult warranty, customer, product, pricing, and inventory information; create tickets, RMAs, work orders, MOs, POs, sales orders, credit memos, and shipment invoices; and update inventory and other ERP information, all from a single location, all securely, and all without spreadsheets.

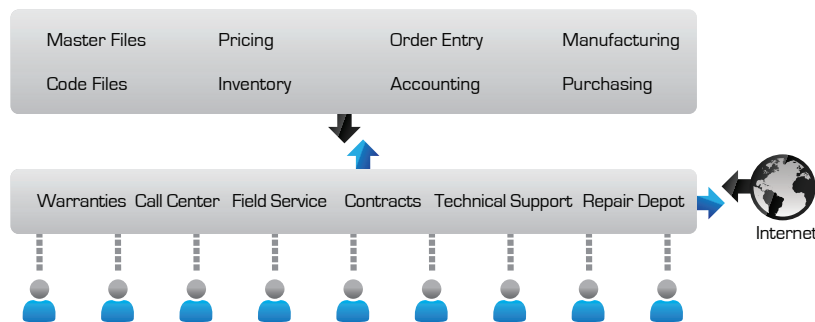


Fig. 2 –Service Management for IBM iSeries dramatically reduces the time it takes to manage service transactions, and makes analysis of key metrics such as warranty expense possible.

Immediate access to data

When CSRs receive a customer call, they can quickly look up whether a product is still under warranty as well as the details of the contract.⁽⁴⁾ They can also look up the customer and see prior purchases and service calls, all from the same user interface.

The CSR can update warranty information directly in the system while the customer is on the phone,

⁽⁴⁾ Service Management also lets manufacturers create a web page where their customers can register products themselves online. The web page is easily integrated with Service Management to automatically update information in the system.

registering the product if it was bought through a separate channel. CSRs and technical support can consult the knowledge base on the spot for quick issue resolution.

Alerts and notifications can be set to automatically pop up for different triggers, such as product names or issues. CSRs can also receive instructions to upsell eligible service contracts.

CSRs and technical support personnel can issue credit memos, enter a customer sales order, request field service, or start the RMA process, all directly from the same, single interface.

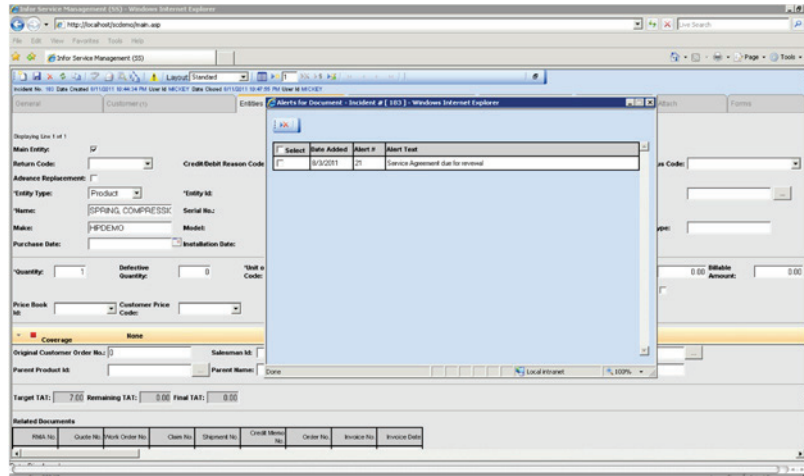


Fig. 3 – CSRs can immediately look up warranty information. Automatic alerts can be set to appear when you want them to.

Streamlined repairs

Service Management mimics the RMA workflow, and can easily be customized to match your particular processes.

Complex processes such as obtaining approvals, sending out loaners or replacements, and making claims from your own suppliers are easily handled.

Service Management provides several powerful features for managing RMAs, including:

- **Receiving:** Service Management can receive a defective part or a vendor replacement without having to mix your assets with your customer's. This makes inventory management much smoother, faster, and more accurate.
- **Work order templates:** Work order templates can be created and maintained in Service Management. Technicians import

One central knowledge base

A single, centralized location for service department data makes it possible to create a powerful knowledge base that all your service personnel can research and add to.

Record symptoms, issues, and their resolution, to make this information available to others throughout the service organization and prevent reinventing the wheel with each customer service transaction.



these templates directly into the work order, resulting in huge time savings, since they don't have to start from scratch every time they start a repair.

- **Import item process record:** Technicians can also import an item process record directly from the iSeries ERP into a work order, to retrieve the list of parts and manufacturing operations required. Technicians simply remove the steps they don't need.
- **Automatic data transfer:** All data documented during the original call is automatically transferred to the work order, eliminating error-prone, time-consuming duplicate data entry.
- **Loaners:** Service Management provides the option to send refurbishment stock as a loaner while the repair is in process – all appropriate inventory is automatically updated in the ERP. Automatic reminders help you keep track of loaners.
- **Vendor claims:** Technicians can research whether a part or product is under warranty with a supplier. The technician can create a PO from the same interface to file the vendor claim.

Optimize resources

Service Management optimizes both inventory and labor with several features, including:

- **Centralized/decentralized work scheduling:** Repair tasks can be sent to a centralized inbox, where technicians

choose their own tasks to work on or to the individual inboxes of technicians.

- **Filter capabilities:** Filter tasks by any number of categories, such as time left on task or type of task, so technicians can take tasks based on their speciality, by time left, by customer priority, or any other category you wish.
- **Inventory visibility:** Technicians can see immediately where specific parts and resources are located, to maximize inventory and resources across your locations.

Greater efficiency for field service teams

Since Service Management is a web-based application, field service teams can easily access the system from anywhere, as long as they have a computer and Internet access.

Technicians can rely on a single system to carry out their tasks, whether they are in the repair depot or out in the field. This reduces training costs and streamlines processes, since technical resources need only learn one system, and learn it well.

Field service technicians have powerful features available to minimize their time spent on tedious paperwork and focus more on repairs:

- **Planning board:** Service Management acts as your virtual planning board, but with far greater capabilities and time-saving features. Quickly match your resources to demand with the ability to see and schedule

everything you need, such as available labor resources by skill type, part availability in various locations, skill assignments, scheduled work orders, etc.

- **Coverage visibility:** Technicians can see immediately the terms and conditions of a customer's warranty and service contract.
- **Work order templates:** Work order templates are created and maintained in Service Management, for technicians to import, modify, and re-use as they need to.
- **Import item process record:** Technicians can also import an item process record directly from iSeries ERP, modifying it within Service Management as they require.
- **Create manufacturing order (MO):** Service technicians can create a MO directly from Service Management- all relevant data

in iSeries ERP is automatically updated and work order data is automatically transferred to the MO.

- **Flexibility:** Technicians can easily revise quotes, with pre-programmed information on the necessary approval steps. Service Management keeps a historical record of all quotes and invoicing is automatically handled.
- **Labor/parts tracking:** All costs associated with a service order, including parts and labor, are accurately tracked for both billing and reporting purposes, with little or no extra effort on the part of the technician.

Field service teams working through a dealer network can submit claims directly to you on a web page that is easily integrated with Service Management. This capability has been shown to dramatically reduce the costs and labor associated with administrating these claims.

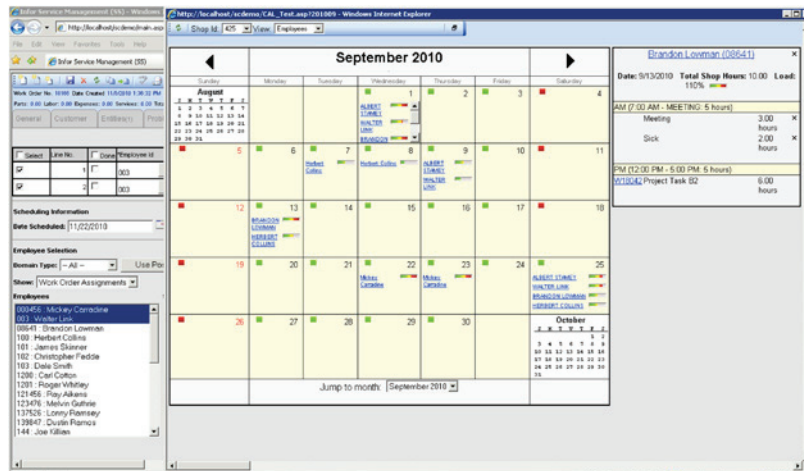


Fig. 4 – Service Management acts as a powerful planning board that lets you quickly match resources to demand, when, where, and how you need them.



Sophisticated capabilities for project manufacturing

Service Management provides sophisticated capabilities for managing large, complex projects that require extensive scheduling, shipments, services, specialized labor, parts, and other requirements.

Project manufacturing capabilities help you ensure you get the right materials and the right labor to the customer site at the right time. It also provides accurate tracking of all costs associated with the project, so you can manage billing and payments along the way.

Service Management shows the critical path - the relationships between various sub-projects - to keep sub-projects moving along in the right order. Sub-projects can be rolled up to higher levels for invoicing purposes.

Technicians can view the entire project in a Gant chart, which shows the hierarchy.

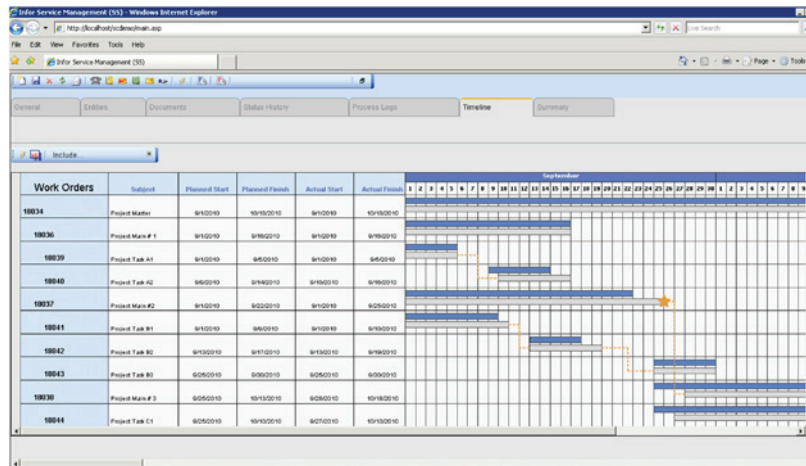


Fig. 5 – A Gant chart shows the relationships between sub-projects for complex project manufacturing.



Key metrics for better management

With Service Management, you no longer need to burden IT resources with ad hoc requests for reports that can take days or weeks to produce. All the data you want on your service department is tracked and available for viewing in different reports in your centralized system.

The centralized data in Service Management makes metric tracking possible. This information is critical for managing and improving your service department, and lets you identify issues such as bottlenecks before they turn into serious problems, as well as revenue opportunities for turning your cost center into a profit center.

Research firm Aberdeen strongly advocates performance measurement for effective management of service departments: “Best-in-Class firms distinguish themselves from all others by routinely benchmarking and measuring their service performance; implementing effective measuring, monitoring and tracking systems; integrating service KPIs with company-wide CRM or ERP systems, wherever possible; and establishing a formal process for automatically collecting and disseminating data.”⁽⁵⁾

To this end, Service Management allows you to monitor vital indicators for your service department, including:

- Warranty Expense

⁽⁵⁾ Pollock, Bill. “Service Benchmarking and Measurement: Using Metrics to Drive Customer Satisfaction and Profits.” Aberdeen Group. June 2009: 2.

- Service Contract Profitability
- Field Service Performance
- Repair Revenues
- Inventory Churn, overall, and by location
- All costs associated with the repair of a customer’s product
- Service Revenue (repair, field, other)
- Service Margin
- Failures within the first 30 days of installation
- On-time Shipping Performance
- On-time Delivery Performance
- Turn Around Time (TAT)
- Repair Supplier Scorecards
- Warranty Recovery from Suppliers
- Repair Cost Ratio (cost to repair the part divided by cost of a new part)
- Mean-Time-To-Repair (MTTR)
- First Time Fix Hit Rate
- Tech Phone Fix Hit Rate
- Mean-Time-Between-Failures (MTBF)
- Material Usage by Service Engineer
- No Fault Found (NFF) percentage
- Dead-on-Arrival (DOA)
- End-of-Life Failure (ELF) percentages (for repairs)
- Out-of-Box Failures (for new installs)
- Repair Cycle Time
- Cycle Time to Return Defective Material from the Field

Product information that Quality Departments can easily obtain

Quality departments often struggle to get important information on products after the products have left the manufacturing facility. They want to better understand the customer experience, and, if a product is failing, how quickly it is failing, why



it is failing, and what part of the manufacturing process underlies the issue.

The centralized database provided by Service Management makes it possible to gather this data and develop metrics that automatically measure and show after-the-sale product quality. Quality departments have access to life cycle metrics such as return rates, failures, mean time to failures, and reasons for failures, among many others.

With Service Management, your Quality team no longer has to make long, manual efforts to gather up key information to better understand the product life cycle and end-customer experience.

Customizable dashboards for every user

Service Management provides interactive dashboards so everyone can have a quick snapshot of the information they need at any time. Users personalize their dashboards, so that every service member can make the most of the power of dashboards, the way they want and need it.

Dashboards help users better manage their functions. With real-time access to information, displayed visually in graphical form, your frontline workers can be faster, more efficient, and provide new insights into your operations.

Fully autonomous dashboard creation

Users create their own dashboards from the Service Management interface. They can select from a list of available database items to put into their dashboard, such as any of the previously mentioned

metrics, or other useful items such as scheduled work orders, work orders pending, RMAs pending, project progress, repair turnaround time, call center turnaround time, warranty expense, and repair revenue.

Users can customize their dashboards with a variety of filters, such as date ranges or type, as well as multiple graph types, such as pie chart, bar, line, etc.

Users can drill down on information presented in a dashboard, right down to transaction level. Users see real-time information every time they refresh their screens.



Fig. 6 – Fully customizable dashboards provide a quick snapshot of different aspects of your organization, at a detailed or overview level.

Enhanced customer service

Single ticket for entire lifecycle of repair/RMA

Service Management provides a single ticket for every repair or RMA, so that everyone throughout the organization, from a CSR to a field service technician, can know the status of a repair/RMA at any time, from any location.

Service Management issues a ticket number when a call is opened, which is attached to all transactions associated with the call. Customers and service personnel can know the status of a repair/RMA at any time, and see immediately the history behind the ticket.

Multiple methods of communication

Email: You can interact with your customers via email, sending all your forms, such as RMAs and quotes, and include a link that customers can click on to view the status of the RMA/repair at any time.

Web: Service Management also integrates with a company web page, providing you with another point of communication with your customers and partners. Customers can register their products for warranty, request an RMA, or check on an RMA status on your web page, providing them 24/7 access to the information they're looking for.

You can also vastly reduce the effort of managing your dealer network. Dealers can submit warranty claims online on your integrated web page, to make receiving and verifying claims faster and processing credit more efficient.



Conclusion

To reduce customer service costs, and move toward turning your customer service center into a profit center, you need to standardize your processes on a single system that everyone in your service department can access and rely on.

Service Management for the IBM iSeries provides just this, with a single system that eliminates the need for cumbersome spreadsheets, training on several systems, and periodic reconciliation of data between your service department and the ERP.

The single system not only streamlines processes, it provides a centralized knowledge base for better tracking and dissemination of product/service information, and makes analysis of your entire department possible.

Advanced technology

- *100% web-based software — fully accessible, no need to install, maintain, or upgrade software on every machine.*
- *Customizable layout and navigation lets you fit the system to your unique manufacturing processes.*
- *A truly global solution with multiple language and location capabilities.*
- *Integration eliminates need for duplicate data entry and for reconciling data between departments.*
- *End reliance on extremely labor-intensive, inconsistent, un-auditable spreadsheets for critical information.*

For more information

To get a personalized demonstration of how Service Management can help you improve profitability in your service department, contact RMB Solutions at sales@rmbolutions.net or at **(303) 791-5775**.

RMB Solutions

RMB Solutions is a company where our only focus is developing and delivering Industry Leading Service Management Solutions. For more information, go to www.rmbolutions.net