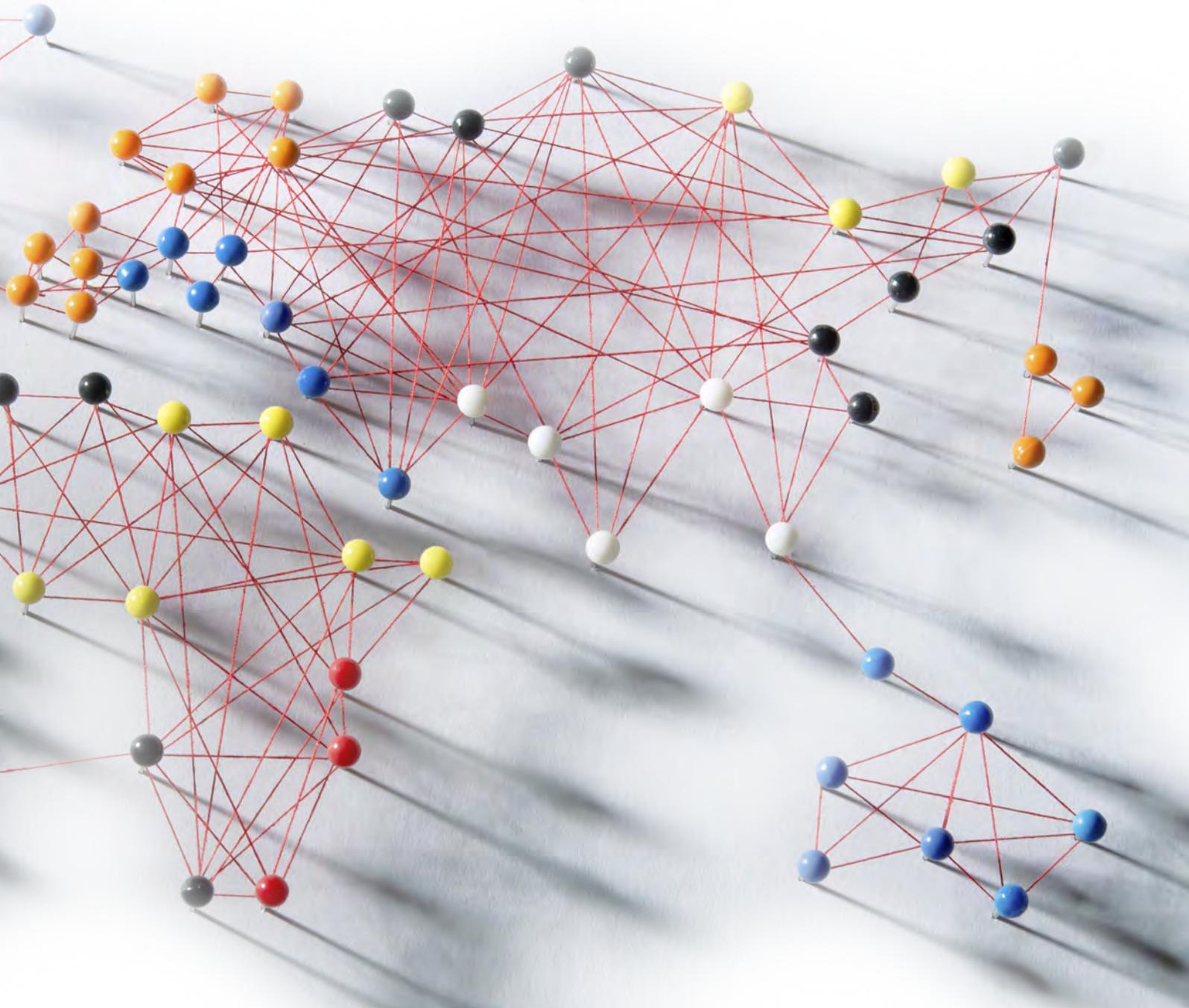


# FIELD SERVICE NEWS

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## Connections

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# Tough at the top?

**Scott Berg, ServiceMax's COO certainly seems to be enjoying life and after yet another year of growth then why not writes Kris Oldland...**

It was a cold early morning in Paris towards the tail end of last year when I met with Scott Berg. For me having flown in late the night before the famous Parisian coffee brought the welcome caffeine boost required to focus my sleep deprived brain.

However, when Berg entered the room, looking fresh in a crisp suit and bounding with a relaxed and jovial energy, it was clear that for him no such shot of espresso was required. Despite what had been a pretty hectic schedule he was clearly the type of guy that gets up raring to go every morning. And why shouldn't he be, as COO of ServiceMax he was clearly in a good place.

It seems that almost every other company I speak to at the minute has recently moved to their field service management platform. If that sounds like an exaggeration here's some interesting statistics to consider.

They have just finished their sixth year with a 100% year on year growth and added 125 customers to their roster within the last twelve months. They operate in a highly competitive market and as far as I am aware at least, nobody is making that kind of progress and taking that kind of volume.

As Berg himself acknowledges "We've won more business in the last year than some of our competitors have done in the last 15."

And these customers come in all shapes and sizes, from all verticals across every corner of the globe.

"The really fun thing for us is to see the variety of companies that we are working with." Berg begins in an enthusiastic manner "We recently ran a Chief Service Officers summit, the first event that we had ever tried like that and there were 6 Global Heads of Service with the likes of Coca-Cola and Becton Dickinson and so on there.

So on one hand we were working with these massive companies and then on the other hand

there are companies like Service2 which is a husband and wife owned company that have gone from having five technicians to 10 since they employed ServiceMax - so it's a kinda cool thrill a minute kind of energy in the market right now" he adds.

This has always been one of the fascinating things about field service, there are so many parallel challenges across disparate industries and this is something Berg elaborates on further as we talk.

**“All day it was the same story and it didn’t matter whether you were curing cancer or showing the latest movie at the cinema, it was basically the same sets of conversations we were having with people”**

"That was completely the case yesterday, there was the Head of Professional Services for the Sony group, the man in charge of service for everything except their consumer brands. So movie theatre camera systems and BBC News and all of the big news network type of things " he explains "and he had the same talent acquisition issues as everybody else, he had the same political challenges internally of getting a seat at the boardroom table to enable him to pursue some initiatives, even though he was the only growing part of the business."

"All day it was the same story and it didn't matter whether you were curing cancer or showing the latest movie at the cinema, it was basically the same sets of conversations we were having with

people."

And it is easy to imagine Berg being able to hold such conversations with these Global Heads of Service or equally with an owner of a small SME such as Service2 who are just taking the first steps in growing their business. He comes across as an approachable and enthusiastic but there is also an earnestness about him as well.

However, it's easy enough to talk about all the good things ServiceMax have achieved but what about the things that they haven't. Is there anywhere that Berg felt remained a work in progress for what is lets not forget still a relatively young organisation in it's market segment.

"I think we've done a phenomenal job when it comes to capitalising on the mobility space" he begins, "We've developed our Android platform and we've revamped our iOS solution which has been positive. It's been somewhat of a surprise in how ready and willing the market is to take on these high-end portable devices. "

"One of the things that still perplexes me though is how slow the uptake on Internet of Things, and machine to machine communication. " he continues.

"It's funny, I use solar panels on my house and from my phone I can tell you if they're working and then through my Nest thermostat I can turn the heating up and down from my phone also. Yet here are these massive, powerful, hi-tech intellectual property companies and they can't figure out how to get an Ethernet connector jack plug into their devices?" he adds with a laugh.

The thing is he has a point. Widespread adoption of IoT in field service is behind where it should be based on the technology available. And to be fair to ServiceMax for those clients that are set to take advantage of M2M connectivity they are pretty much ready to go .

"We are very eager to jump on this [IoT]" he



comments “We do have some customers like Elekta who have a full offering which we call IntelMax for machine to machine connectivity and Johnson Controls made huge investments in the area, but it still strikes me how hard its been for industry. I have a little hundred dollar consumer device on the wall of my home that can do it and yet industry can’t?”

## “All this predictive stuff and data science is all great but somebodies got to get it into the hands of a technician in order to benefit from it”

So is the ServiceMax product all set to go for Internet of Things?” I ask “Is it just a case of waiting for the market to catch up?”

“I think it is” Berg replies “There are certainly relationships we are trying to build. We’re in discussions with people like Cisco and others to try and bridge that last mile of connectivity and we’ve explored some of the Apple iBeacon technology; sensing people, locations and the physicality with the device.”

However, it is the other significant technology trend, Big Data that made the headlines coming out of the ServiceMax CIO summit a few months earlier. As our conversation turns to this Berg begins nodding agreement. “We think we are in quite a unique position to make Data actionable.” he says. A pretty bold claim.

He begins to expand further “These Data lakes and all the other terminology around Big Data, all this predictive stuff and data science is all great but somebodies got to get it into the hands of a technician in order to benefit from it. To maybe direct their next step or predict their next move. There will always be people involved in the chain, so we think its really our unique place to play as we make Big Data actionable.”

“We have a configurable process, we have the mobile device, so if there is going to be any directing or leading or sharing and tapping into knowledge its probably going to be done on a disconnected mobile device under ground at the top of a scaffolding or something like. So our interest in it is trying to connect data science and Big Data into that actionable footprint that you can put in front of the technician.”

This focus on the end user leads us to another current topic of conversation in software circles – is customisation the root of all ills or an acceptable process to refine off the shelf solutions.

“I think the whole nature of customisation has changed” answers Berg as I put the question to him “As you know we are on the Salesforce.com platform, and I don’t think that customisation is necessarily a bad word because its so controlled and its such a configurable and extendable experience anyway.”

“We certainly do stress configuration to the extent that this year we’ve really tried to repackage our implementation and delivery offerings. For small businesses we have something called Express, which is an out of the box ‘trust me this is what you need’ solution. If you work with us in three weeks you’ll be live and it’ll look just like the demonstration.” He says

“So we’ve tried to get certainly more prescriptive about it but I do think that peoples notions of customisation are ERP. So obliterated unrecognisable sets of code that drop you off at the road map and that quite frankly it’s a large part of our success I think. Because there is so much of that in Siebel today, one of our big customers has three versions of Siebel all of them deprecated so their off support and they’re faced with this problem its unrecognisable, its un-upgradeable they may as well just go buy another solution.”

“I think that the Salesforce platform has really changed everything. The way that we have to operate in that platform as an independent software company on someone else’s cloud means everything has to go through vulnerability, security and compatibility automated checking.

So anything your customer would do on top of that, or anything we would do for a customer, basically inherits that stability. I think that’s just a radically different technological model than traditional ERP”

Of course Salesforce.com ended up proving a lot of their far bigger competitors wrong and now it seems that there is a rush to catch them up. It’ll be interesting to see if in the future all companies will follow their route.

As Berg himself outlines “ I think you’ll see a lot of the vendors out their trying to follow Salesforce’s lead and trying to follow some of Salesforce’s approach and try to become that ‘platform as a service’ provider. You see them all launching market places and trying to attract people.

Microsoft have been making a lot of noise around this and trying to launch the Dynamics platform. “

“But as somebody who jumped into the Salesforce.com bandwagon early on and as someone who every year we periodically reassess our situation I can say that nobody has really built the breadth and depth of a business application platform that those guys have.”

It is obvious to all that the connection between Salesforce.com and ServiceMax is particularly close. But is it too close? How reliant is the continuing success of ServiceMax on the Salesforce platform I ask.

“Having been involved with several start-ups in the past I think that they [Salesforce] were extremely critical for us especially in the early days.” Responds Berg.

“If you think of what it would have taken for us to launch a data centre and secure it, to build all the platform capabilities and redundancy, also that some of our first 12 customers were in the Middle East and Europe and there we were with two founders selling everything themselves out of northern California... how could that be right?” he pauses leaving the question hang for just a second before continuing.

“All because of the global reach and the global acceptance level of the Salesforce.com platform. So yes it was very important early on.” He concludes.

However as Berg explains the relationship has changed overtime as ServiceMax themselves have grown to stand on more of an equal footing.

“Overtime I think that the value of the relationship has shifted a bit.” Berg concedes “Salesforce has become much more of a platform, and we don’t tend to get as many outright business referrals from them as before.”

## “I can say that nobody has really built the breadth and depth of a business application platform that those guys have.

“And it is certainly a big credibility statement to pass our EU safe harbour framework certifications and things because we’re in it butwe’ve expanded so much in our own intellectual property investments around the mobile devices,

iPad, and frameworks for our configurable workflow that I think when you stack up all the functionality in our product today, its heavily tipped to us now." He admits.

However, whilst not afraid to identify the strong position ServiceMax have established, of which he is clearly proud. He also goes to great pains not to diminish the respect and thanks he has for Salesforce.

"I can't say enough about what an enabler it was." He adds quickly "For a company like us, and I've been there six years, we should be nowhere by now. We should have just blown the first three years just trying to get this thing running and begging to get those first twelve customers." He says only half joking.

"Here we are getting a hundred and something customers a year. And 40 a quarter so I think it has been a really unique experience because of that."

## **“There is definitely a cool factor. Even looking at the various mobile devices its been kind of eye opening for us to identify what are each customer going to use these devices for?”**

Of course whilst things have panned out rather nicely for Berg and the ServiceMax team, with such a close alliance there was always the danger that unless if they didn't evolve their own IP as swiftly as they have that their rapid rise to prominence could have been stunted, with the company being dismissed as simply an add on for Salesforce.

Was this part of their thinking when they took such an aggressive development path, was it always a case of needing to establish their own clear identity within a specific timeframe? "I don't know that we thought about it deliberately that way but I think its sort of ended up that way in hindsight." Explains Berg

"I think honestly what we were responding to was the demand of the market. Our focus, our mission has really been about that field service engineer, that end user, the guy in the van or on the end of that ladder so that drove us to do some things that Salesforce wouldn't do like offline data

## **The accolades just keep on coming...**

Whilst of course the biggest accolade a company can have is the backing of clients, and ServiceMax seem to have that in spades at the moment, it's always nice the industry take notice too. Fortunately for Berg and the team the accolades keep coming in lately too. Gartner have named them as a leader in their most recent Magic Quadrant report, Noventum have acknowledged them as the first service automation solution to be distinguished a Service Capability and Performance (SCP) Standards, Compliant Automation Solution and Berg's colleague Dave Hart has been named in the inaugural #fns20 a list of the twenty most influential people in field service.

synchronisation, and the kind of configurable process that you could run across a variety of devices and schedule optimisation.

Mathematical optimisation is not really a feature of the Salesforce website so I think its really user driven demand"

He pauses a moment before continuing "But then you can look back on it and say wow we built all that stuff because we really needed to. It just so happens that is fairly independent intellectual property value specific to our market."

This focus on the engineer brings us onto another topical and somewhat controversial topic, namely wearable computing.

"We've been working for several months now on a Google Glass prototype, and showed it around a couple of our smaller user groups." Berg begins when I ask him if the advent of Salesforce Wear has spurred ServiceMax into developing solutions for wearable devices.

"A lot of customers of ours are in safety conscious environments. Where there are lots of checklists, where the engineers are working in real hands-free, high risk environments. We've been looking at Google Glass as a compliment to mobile phone apps, where you can get into a hands free series of procedures, or check off certain standards, action the completion of certain tasks that is required for maintenance in regulated environments and things like that." He adds.

But is there an interest amongst their client base for wearables at all? "We've had a few projects around this and we've run it by a few customers." Berg starts.

"There is definitely a cool factor. Even looking at the various mobile devices its been kind of eye opening for us to identify what are each customer going to use these devices for? Let's take Google Glass as an example, battery life is not outstanding, and many of the visual cues still involve tapping your temple to get it to do some things. So whilst the promise of a hands free, see what I see, remote eyes and ears kind of thing is out there, you've still got to think of the practical reality of how is somebody going to use this on a job site."

"It's been an educational process for us more than anything. How do these gadgets interplay with each other, in a course of a day?"

This of course has been one of the big challenges for the widespread adoption of wearables. Whilst the hyperbole that has surrounded such devices, particularly Glass has focussed on the devices as a replacement mobility tool, this is not how Berg sees it.

"I think it's definitely a complimentary device, that's the way that we see it. I don't know if its going to be right for everybody any more than I could tell you everyone should use an android phone or everyone should use a tablet."

For ServiceMax it seems that the emergence of wearables just means further ongoing developments for yet more platforms, which is just par for the course.

"I think one of the things we've embraced smartly is we're not going to be able to dictate to every customer how they want to operate, so we've got a windows laptop version that works disconnected." Berg explains

"This is a big deal in medical regulatory environments because they plug in peripherals and download diagnostics and reprogram cancer surgery equipment and things like that."

"However, Coca-Cola said 'look I want to take calls and log my work pretty simple work process – iPhone only.'" He continues.

"I've got other customers that are deploying a number of devices. They've got laptops, they've got online web-presence and then they've deployed our iPad solutions as well. So I think they [wearables] are just another compliment and we need to be ready to make our experience happen across all of those because we won't be able to dictate to people 'oh yeah we're the Google Glass guys and you have to do it this."

For the time being I don't think Berg and the team at ServiceMax need to worry about that. Infact I don't think they need to be worried about being pigeon holed as anything other than 'Oh yeah ServiceMax, they're the guys that everyone seems to be talking about'.