

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BETTER MOBILE WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE SERVICE PROVISION IN THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Executive summary

IDG Research Services and Skedulo surveyed 50 IT and C-level managers in Australian healthcare organisations to gauge where they are on their mobile workforce management journey; expected growth areas; workforce management technology; and the top three challenges and benefits of mobile workforce management.

The study also looked at how digital transformation is expected to impact existing processes over the next 12 months, with the significant findings being:

- Nearly half (**46%**) of respondents expect their at-home and residential care business to grow over the next 12 months
- A high **76%** of organisations surveyed do not have a modern workforce solution
- About **18%** of organisations have staff doing field work, but the systems are office-based and are not field-enabled highlighting a big gap in the technology available to care providers
- The biggest challenge in nearly **20%** of organisations is the disconnect between staff needs and technology use
- More than **one in five** respondents indicated that a customer self-service portal would go a long way to reducing customer service efforts.

Introduction

Field health and aged care workers are busy people and need to make quick decisions every day. The COVID-19 pandemic has also made their jobs much more challenging, both in the field and at work in fixed locations.

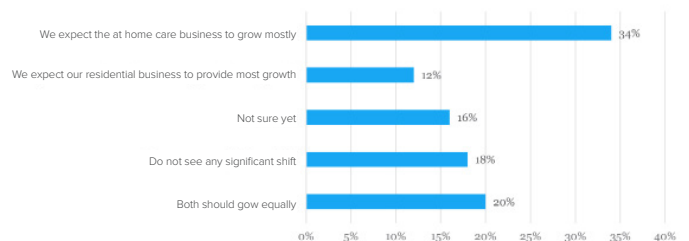
How can IT leaders enable their staff to be more efficient and compliant without technology getting in the way? The answer lies in better workforce automation and systems that enable staff to spend more time supporting people and less time on administration.

Furthermore, as the research shows, high levels of administration and compliance requirements can directly impact client healthcare outcomes, which, in turn, can adversely affect the provider's reputation.

Nearly half in sector to see growth in home-based care

With recent shifts in the regulation and the industry and custom expectations over the next two years the survey asked respondents where they see the growth in their support staff business between residential facilities based and at-home care?

With recent shifts in the regulation and the industry/customer expectations, over the next 2 years where do you see the growth in your carer business between residential/facility based and at-home?



A strong 34% of respondents indicated they expect their at-home care business to grow the most and a further 12% expect the residential business to provide the most growth taking the total to 46%. This is a solid indicator that home-based and remote care is vitally important for the future of the industry. Furthermore, 20% of respondents reported that both facility-based and at-home care should grow equally. For companies looking to grow in the sector, they will need solutions that transcend both facility-based and at-home care.

It is time for technology to keep up: 76% without modern workforce tools

To get the most out of both home and facilities-based staff, organisations must have the best technology to support them. The survey investigated the type of workforce management technology organisations are currently using and any associated gaps.

When it comes to what type of mobile workforce management tools and technology organisations currently use, nearly one in four (24%) use a specialist mobile workforce management app for staff while they are working. This leaves a high 76% of organisations without a modern workforce solution.

This is followed by 20% of organisations that do not have a dedicated app for mobile workforce management. Instead, they are using a mix of existing apps and devices which staff can use remotely. Other technologies in use include generic mobile workforce management apps and manual spreadsheets.

About 18% of organisations have staff doing field work, but the systems are office-based and are not field-enabled and hence have no mobile app functionality.

These interesting results show there is a big gap in the technology available to care providers. A specialist mobile workforce management app can provide organisations with a much more streamlined user experience and integrate data into corporate systems, which can then be used for other applications.

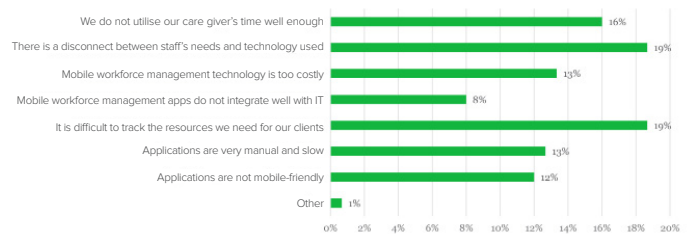
Best practise workforce solutions also extend the process to field workers who can then perform their duties without referring to an office-based solution.

Workforce management challenges remain: One in five have staff-tech disconnect

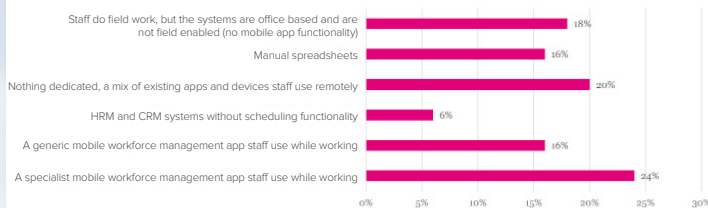
In addition to technology opportunities, the survey also looked at the top three challenges organisations face when it comes to mobile workforce management.

The biggest one – and a challenge in nearly 20% of organisations – is the disconnect between staff needs and technology use. While this is a perennial problem for IT in general, when it comes to caring for people, it is important to have staff who can use the technology and have their needs met by the technology.

What are the top 3 challenges your organisation has seen when it comes to mobile workforce management?



What type of mobile workforce management tools and technology does your organisation currently use?



Furthermore, the same rate of respondents identified it is difficult to track the resources needed for clients. These results show a combination of the right technology and resource tracking will go a long way to helping staff care for people better.

This is seen in a further result where 16% of respondents indicated that they do not utilise caregivers time well enough. With the right technology and resource tracking caregivers time can be better spent for caregiving and not managing technology.

Other problems include applications not being mobile-friendly in 12% of organisations and workforce management apps not integrating well in 8% of organisations. In addition to the high cost of mobile workforce management technology, 13of respondents indicated that applications being manual and slow is a challenge.

The customer is number one: The benefits of workforce management

The research shows industry leaders recognise the challenges with workforce management, yet they are also acutely aware of the benefits.

When asked what the top three benefits their organisation stands to gain from better mobile workforce management the vision is clearly better customer service, which was the top response.



In health and aged care, the “customer” is an aged-care resident or someone receiving home-based care and this ties into having better access to technology and a better user experience for staff.

Other benefits IT and business leaders see include improved administration operations, which can be a burden for field workers, and reduced operating costs. If time is better utilised – from resource management to transport – operating costs also go down.

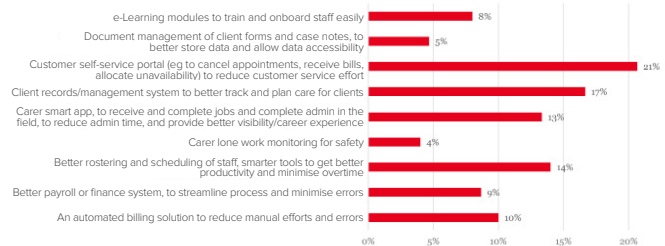
At 13%, respectively, higher staff utilisation and the ability to grow the business are also seen as areas of benefit from better workforce management. This is particularly the case in regulated industries where improving margins is not simply a matter of raising prices.

Margin improvement needs to come from cost efficiency and most organisations in the industry are operating on fairly small margins and the significant cost is labour, so any improvement to the workforce efficiency directly benefits the bottom line. Backoffice and labour efficiency are two of the biggest levers to improving business margins.

Digital transformation to drive positive change

When it comes to digital transformation, respondents were asked which top three digital transformation outcomes would have the most positive impact on current processes over the next 12 months.

Which 3 digital transformations would have the most positive impact on your current processes in the next 12 months?



More than one in five respondents indicated that a customer self-service portal, including the ability to cancel appointments, receive bills and allocate unavailability, would go a long way to reducing customer service efforts. This finding highlights another gap in the industry where those delivering customer service are not helped with automated self-service portals.

IT and business leaders also see digital transformation helping with a client records management system to better track and plan care for clients, which was highlighted by 17% of respondents.

Care providers cannot move to digital without the right records and client management to track their caregiving workflows.

Third on the list is better rostering and scheduling of staff. Smarter tools can deliver better productivity and maximise utilisation. Digital transformation is critical for automating manual processes and providing the right information for better decision making.

Summary

The time is right for smarter applications for the healthcare industry. Australian industry leaders are aware of the acute challenges faced by staff without the right workforce management technology by their side.

IDG Research Services and Skedulo have identified a clear shift to more home-based and residential care, which calls for more mobile applications that will function seamlessly regardless of the location.

The main challenges for the sector relate to workforce management technology gaps and staff utilisation. To address this, IT leaders see the need for better technology and believe better customer service will be the big winner.

With staff retention and churn also major challenges, people will look to work with organisations that provide an easier work environment and supporting technology. If staff and supervisors are able to see appointments out in the field and better manage resources, administration time will reduce and better customer care experiences result.



Respondent profile

Respondents were from healthcare-related industries including aged care; hospital and healthcare; hospital-lab services; national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) care providers; and other similar Industries. The size of the organisations were between 50 and 10,000 staff.