

The State of Pest Control Technology 2019:

Is Your Firm Ready for the Future?

A need to grow, impactful new technology, and higher customer demands combined with a shortage of technicians—pest control in 2019 no longer resembles what it used to, even just five years ago.

**Are you keeping up with your peers when it comes to tackling these new challenges?
Are you preparing for the future at the same pace?**

WorkWave surveyed 129 of your peers from across the country to gain a greater understanding into these answers, and many others. We sought insight into the business challenges pest control companies are facing today, how they are currently using technology, which types they are finding most valuable, and their goals for the future.

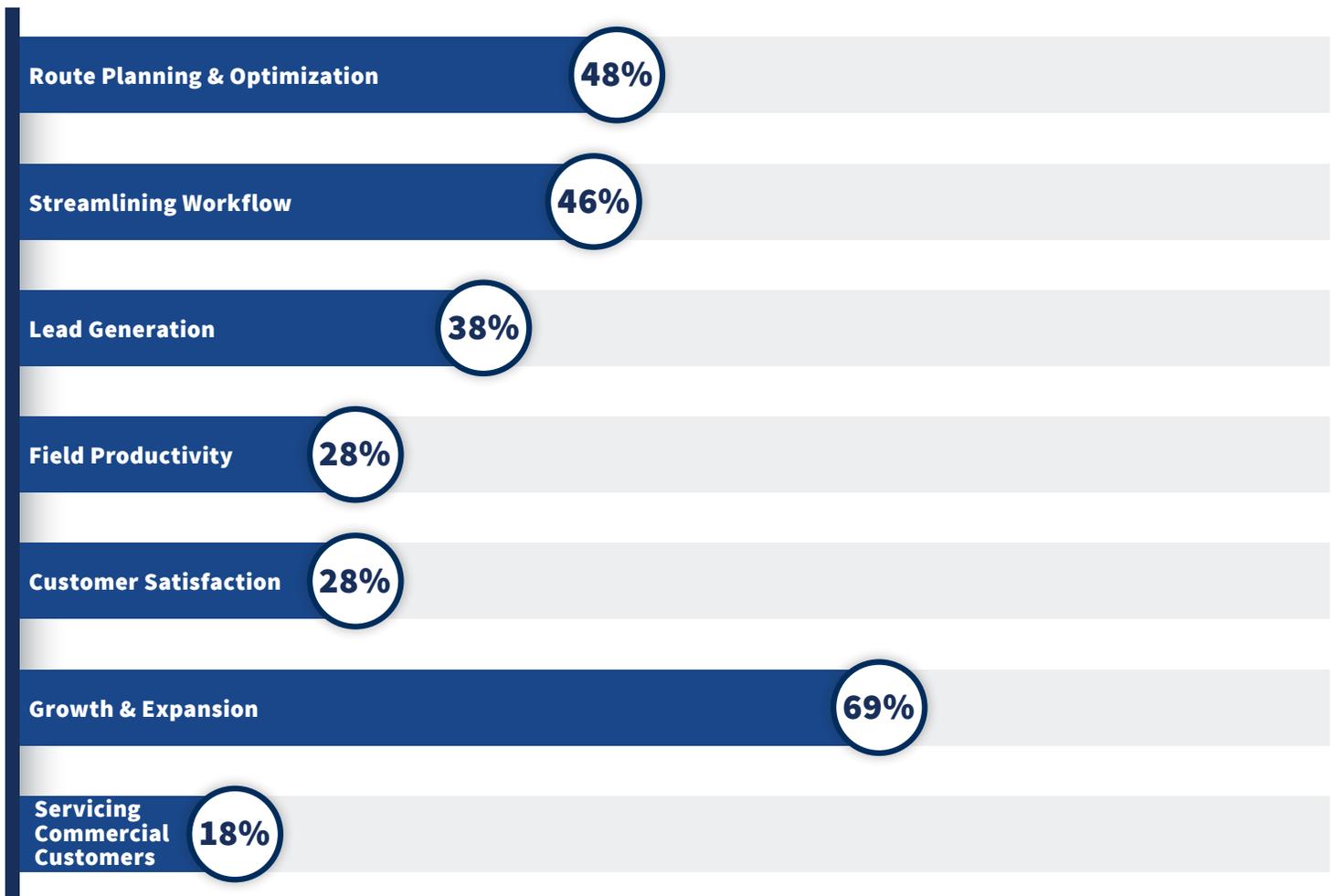
THE RESULTS: Survey respondents put the need to grow and expand their organization far above any other need, but are still struggling to focus on this as a priority due to increased challenges managing field technicians and the need to streamline workflows as a way to meet a wave of new customer demands. Nearly all respondents put a high importance on adopting technology that would help them meet these needs, with most focused on utilizing this technology to drive tangible business results.

This report summarizes the key findings of the survey, and is a valuable tool to benchmark your own readiness to overcome the challenges in this rapidly changing industry.

Increased Revenue and Growth are TOP OF MIND FOR PEST CONTROL COMPANIES

Nearly 79 percent of respondents put the need to increase revenue as their top focus for 2019. At the same time, they recognize the need to grow and expand their business, and generate more leads as their top challenges. When combined, this provides insight into the mind of pest control organizational leaders: they realize the need to grow in order to remain competitive, but are struggling to execute in the two main areas that will trigger this growth—new customer acquisition and expanding revenue from existing clients.

FIGURE 1 Current Business Challenges Pest Control Companies Are Facing

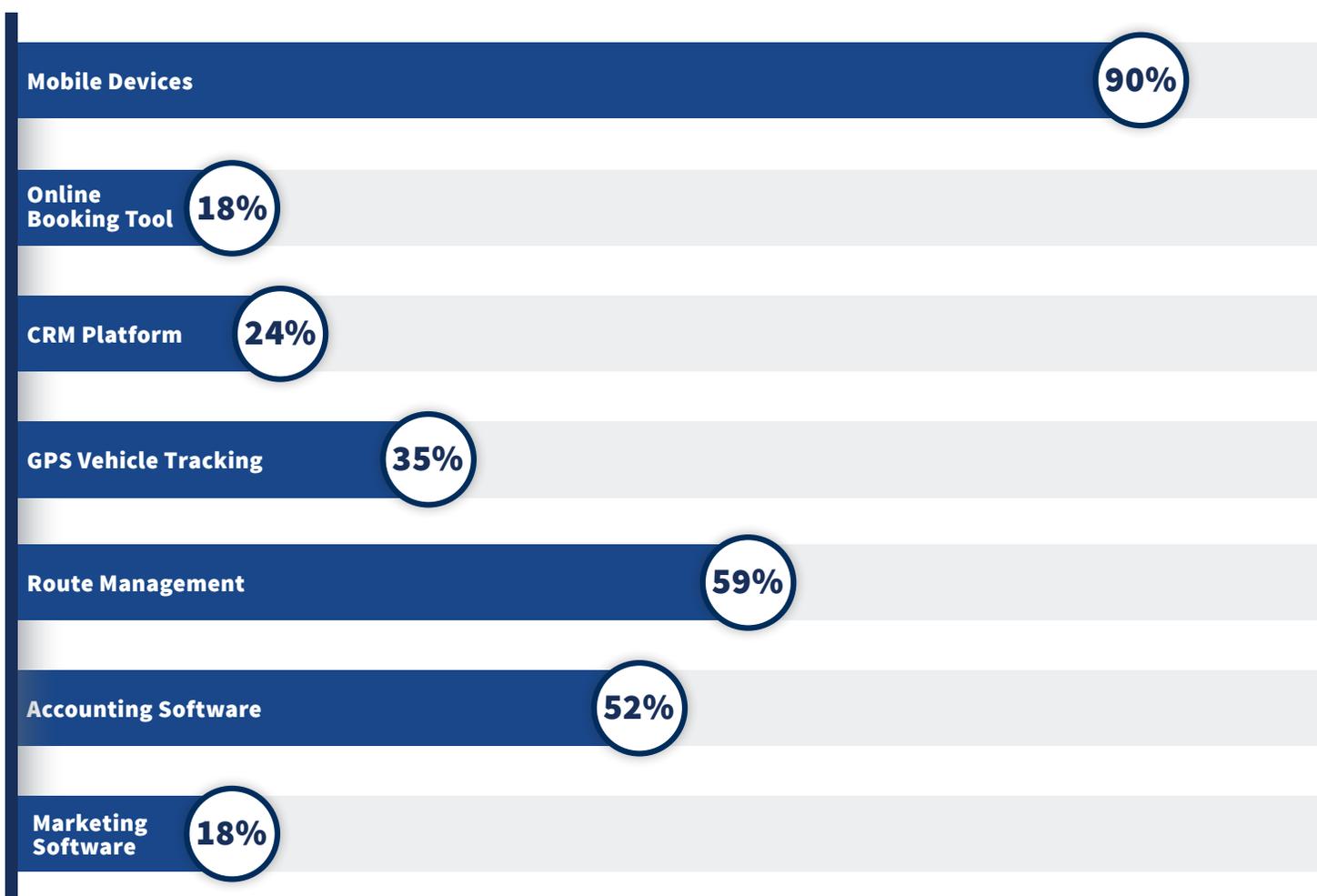


Nearly **79%** of respondents put the need to **INCREASE REVENUE** as their top focus for 2019.

At the same time these leaders recognize the need to improve the top-line, they are still actively working to improve the bottom line. Increasing route optimization and streamlining workflow are two of the three major areas where pest control operators can make a direct and tangible impact on expenses because they both improve efficiency. The third area, and perhaps the most potentially impactful, is improving the efficiency and effectiveness of technicians while performing the actual service calls. These improvements are predominantly driven by mobile technology, more specifically mobile applications on smartphones or tablets. Both provide direction to actively shape the technician's behavior. It is therefore no surprise that 90 percent of respondents rated mobile technology as significantly more important to them than any other technology they employ.

When used effectively, mobile technology also has a major impact upon the customer experience (and the resulting customer satisfaction score, internal service survey results, and increasingly important online business reviews posted by customers on sites such as Google and Facebook). Best-in-class pest control companies are also actively using mobile technology to improve lead generation, and to induce technicians to cross-sell, up-sell, and resell while in the customer's location. All three of these areas were highly rated as top challenges by survey respondents.

FIGURE 2 Top Three Most Important Pieces of Technology Used Within Your Business

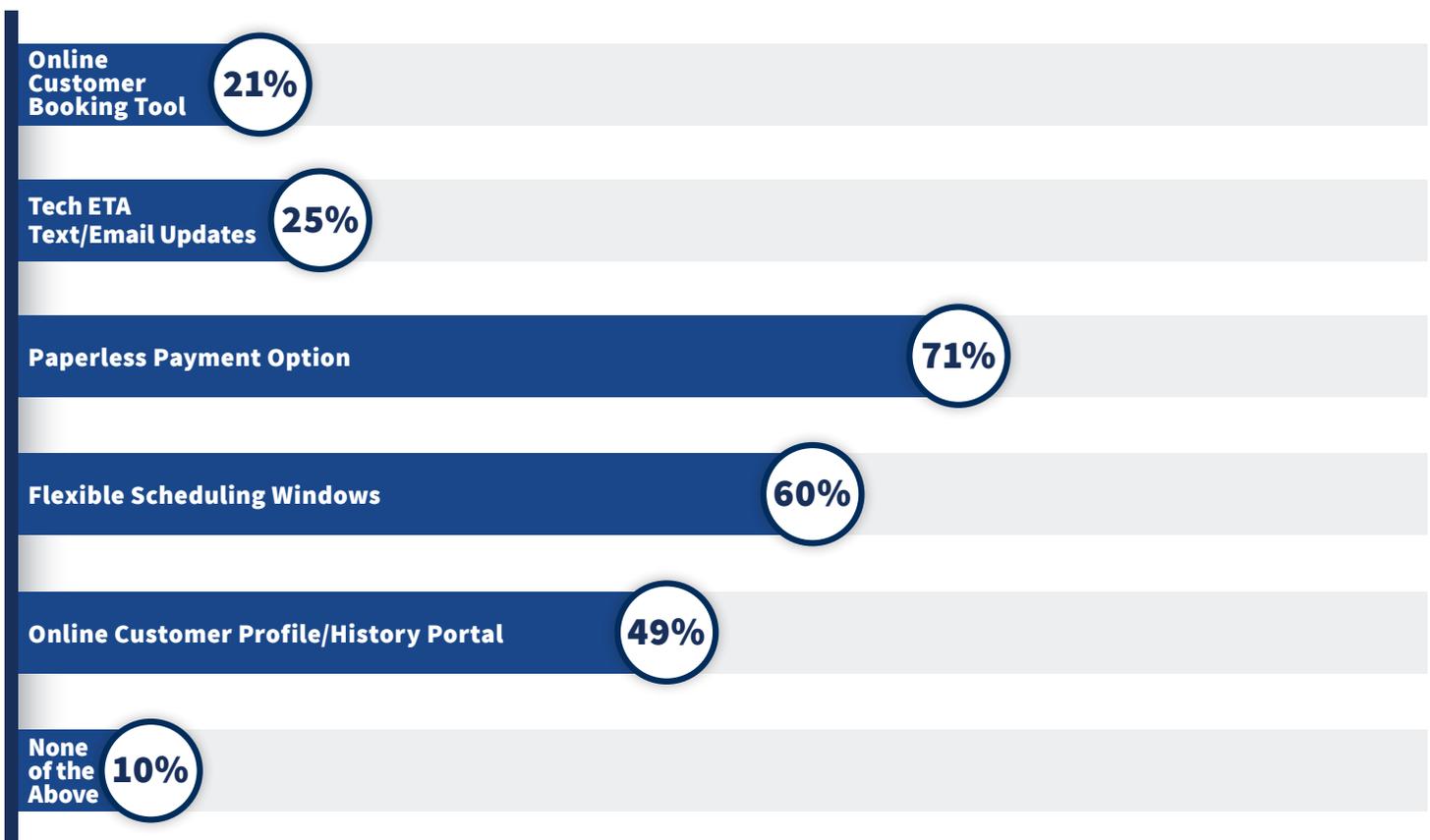


Customer Experience is Key as CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS ARE CHANGING

According to a [Nielsen](#) survey, 83 percent of consumers say they either completely or somewhat trust recommendations from family, colleagues, and friends about products and services. In a world where consumer expectations are continuing to evolve to a more personalized, flexible, and on-demand experience, pest control companies must ensure they are providing a level of service expected by today's consumers who have the potential to be their main source of new growth.

The WorkWave State of Pest Control Technology 2019 results support these trends. According to the survey, 67 percent of respondents identified delivering best-in-class customer experience as a top business goal for 2019, just behind the expected goal of increasing revenue. Nearly every area of their business that pest control operators identified as influencing the customer experience is greatly enabled by technology. From paperless payment options to online booking tools, the availability of new digital tools has created opportunities to improve service outcomes and impress customers ever more accessible.

FIGURE 3 Tools Pest Control Companies are Using to Deliver Best-in-Class Customer Service



Paperless payment leads the pack here, reinforcing that each interaction with a customer should be fast and simple. Paperless payments are another example of how customer-facing technology can be a win-win for the operator. Customers get what they want, a quick paperless transaction that often uses pre-stored information, and the operator benefits from a greatly reduced invoice-to-cash processing time, improved customer satisfaction ratings, positive online reviews, and improved auto-renewal of services. Paperless payments also automate the overall billing process, creating a streamlined process for technicians, taking the guesswork out of billing so new technicians make less mistakes, and all technicians can focus on delivering exceptional service. This allows the company, as a whole, to focus on acquiring net-new customers that will meet their primary need of increasing revenue through growth and expansion.

The second option, flexible scheduling windows, allows the customer to request the time windows that work around their schedules. When a business makes the effort to put customer preferences first, it positions the customer for a more positive interaction during the service call, ultimately leading to a customer referral or additional services. Without technology, these types of customer-facing offerings become cumbersome and mistake-prone.

As the Industry Struggles with SERVICE TECHNICIAN TURNOVER, TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

With many organizations putting a focus on route optimization and streamlining workflow as key to their success, it reflects a broader issue impacting field service organizations globally: service workforce turnover is high and firms are trying to optimize processes to do as much as possible with what they have today. WorkWave's study has explicitly shown that a remarkable number of pest control firms—74 percent—struggle to recruit and train new technical talent. Not only can optimizing internal processes help maximize efficiency when bandwidth might be tight across the organization, it can also help streamline the new technician onboarding that has resulted from this high turnover. The survey results show that organizations are looking to technology to reduce back office functions, create a more simplified workflow and help to manage staff, which can all play a role in onboarding and retaining new talent.



74% of Pest Control firms **STRUGGLE** to recruit and train new technical talent.

Each of the technologies rated highly by survey respondents has a role to play in helping a technician who might have little experience. Mobile applications with good workflow that make information readily available and route planning, for example, simplify a new technician's day, giving them more headspace to focus on learning and the tasks at hand. Back office technologies, such as GPS tracking, allow supervisors to keep an eye on these new technicians to intervene when they might be falling behind. These technologies not only help monitor new technicians so an owner can be sure they are following processes and protocol, and successfully completing each appointment (often the first thought of what these technologies do), they quiet the noise for these new technicians, getting them up and running quickly and successfully, and giving them the peace of mind that will improve employee retention over time.

Saving time in the field and effectively empowering employees are both key ways to limit downtime, increase utilization rates, and ensure that you are getting the most for every dollar spent on your mobile workforce. But improving back office technology and functions are also rated high among survey respondents—52 percent of survey respondents note accounting software as one of the most important pieces of technology used within their business today. Good accounting software that is calibrated specifically for service will have capabilities such as auto-invoicing tied to the mobile application, it updates a customer’s account in real-time, it keeps all workers in sync, and it reduces friction across the organization. Taken as a whole, survey respondents are seeking simple technology that can be thoughtfully deployed to allow technicians to spend more of their time doing what they should be—providing high-quality services and a great experience to customers, while looking for ways to expand the business.

This research study highlights the tools and technologies integral to succeed in today’s highly competitive pest control industry. Collectively they are the “must-have” capabilities required to compete effectively now, or in the near future. It is important to remember that these technologies are not the only ones that are available, and best-in-class pest control companies are more solidly focused on technology that actively grows their business, and allows them to become the top competitive player in the industry and in a potential customer’s mind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WorkWave’s pest control study provides a window into the overall state of organizations in the pest control industry today, but each individual organization will have its own strengths and weaknesses.

Consider these steps when benchmarking your own firm’s performance:



Identify business challenges that are hindering growth

The survey results are clear. Pest control companies want to grow, but cannot focus on growth. Consider what is hindering your company from several angles: management processes and insight, field technician processes, back office functions, and customer requirements. Within these areas, think through the standard full service life cycle, from customers submitting orders, through scheduling and dispatch, out into the field with technicians, and invoicing and collections. It is important to not only consider how specific pain points are affecting your team, but also how they reflect onto your customers’ experiences.

Not every business will encounter the same challenges - while the industry as a whole is struggling with talent acquisition, your biggest concern might be the impact this bigger trend is having on improving first-time resolution rates, customer or employee satisfaction, or onsite knowledge management. Often challenges can be managed or mitigated by simply using what technology you already have differently, or changing internal processes, especially if you are not striving for perfection. It is great to aspire to be industry leading, but for most organizations, a 10 percent growth in new customers will make a significant impact and provide the resources necessary to then take that next step toward best-in-class. But one thing is sure, if you do not put the time into identifying pain points that are hindering growth, they surely will never go away.

STEP 2

Evaluate your current technology solutions and how they are bettering (or interfering with) your customer experience

To compete you will have to focus on the customer experience. Given the demands of a busy schedule, the need to resolve vendor and partner issues, or a constant stream of customer concerns, it is easy to set this aside as something you will get to at some point in the future—but your customers do not feel this way. Every time one of your technicians enters a customer's home or place of work, it could be their last. The customer experience is that important—and customers know it.

The customer experience might seem intangible, but it isn't. Think in terms of how many of your customers would recommend your business to their friends and family. Do they trust your technicians to be honest and genuinely concerned about their problems? Will they feel you not only performed services in a timely and efficient manner, but also that you were easy to do business with? Nearly every answer to these questions will involve technology that can create a win-win for both you and your customer. While some solutions might seem like they will only affect how you streamline processes or create a more efficient back office, consider that these types of implementations will help enhance the customer experience as well. An optimized route plan will ensure that your customer received timely service, mobile apps will allow your technicians to access customer information right on site, and even the right marketing tools can enable you to promote the right services to the right customers, providing value to them in their moment of need.

STEP 3

Look for solutions that can simplify the job for new technicians

With one of the major pain points for field service companies in every service industry being service technician turnover, it is important to consider how technology can be used to not only help streamline the onboarding process for new technicians, but also create processes that make it easy for current technicians to get their jobs done—fostering long term retention. Today, any organization that can improve employee retention has a natural strategic advantage over their competition. Solutions such as paperless payments, route planning and optimization, online booking tools, and mobile customer databases can make otherwise cumbersome, manual processes simple and streamlined for a technician in the field.

With these recommendations in mind, you can evaluate your current challenges, solutions and technology to better understand how they are influencing the growth of your company. If you are not at a place where you can focus on growth, then understand how you can use technology and solutions to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to retain as many customers as possible. The upside of the growing importance of the customer experience is that in an industry where word of mouth and online reviews are so influential, simply providing a great service experience will positively impact growth. From there, it is time to build out your overall technology strategy, and build an infrastructure that will set you up for long-term success.

Respondent DEMOGRAPHICS

WorkWave surveyed 129 pest control professionals across the U.S. in Q4 2018. The majority of respondents came from companies with 1-100 employees, with 12 percent over 100 employees. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported revenue over \$1 million, with 21 percent between \$100,000 and \$500,000, and 20 percent between \$500,000 and \$1M.