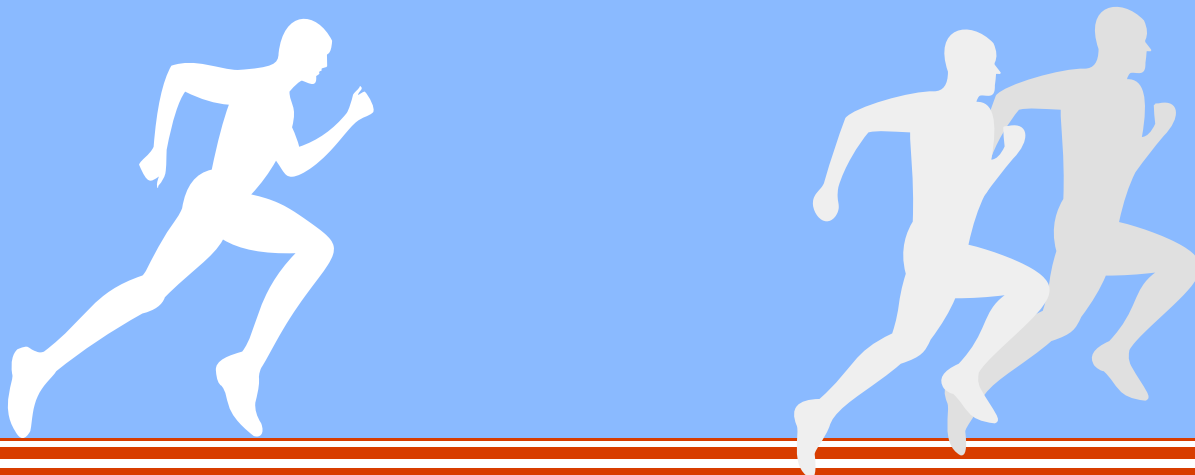commusoft

Training Towards the Trends

Trouble Keeping Up?

A Resource Guide to Keeping Up with the 2018 Field Service Trends

If you were to try to stay on top of every new trend that could affect your field service business—in addition to, you know, actually *running* your business—you'd have to cut out eating, sleeping, and other things we won't mention.
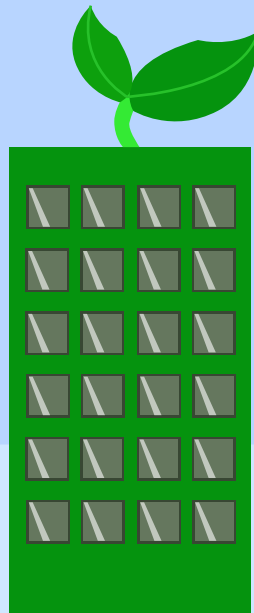
That's why we at Commusoft have created this quick resource guide. We chose the top three trends in field service—the Internet of Things (IoT), green business, and using Software as a Service (SaaS)—and researched ways you can get up to speed.

Don't worry about paying for all this learning and training; we suggest both free and not-so-free opportunities, from informative articles and publications to hardcore training courses. Not only that, but taking the time for continuing education can actually help you earn more. According to *Contracting Business* magazine's 2018 HVACR salary survey, the most significant factor in achieving higher pay is education.

Let's get a jump on those trends right now.

1
Green Building

What It Is: Here we'll turn to that venerable resource, <u>Wikipedia</u> (which, yes, has been proven to be highly accurate): 'Green building (also known as green construction or sustainable building) refers to both a structure and the application of processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life-cycle: from planning to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and demolition. This requires close cooperation of the contractor, the architects, the engineers, and the client at all project stages'.

Why It Matters: 'Green building continues to double every three years, with strongest acceleration in emerging economies, and clients and tenants worldwide are increasingly demanding sustainability – for both energy efficiency and occupant benefit,' according to the <u>World Green Building Trends 2016 report by Dodge Data & Analytics</u>. Even your residential customers are likely looking to you to help them save energy—and the environment.

How to Learn: We researched the options so you don't have to; here's a generous handful of resources and classes that will help your business jump on the green trend.

FREE

Want to participate in the Green Deal as an assessor, provider or installer? The UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy has a free, detailed guide called <u>Becoming an authorised Green Deal organisation</u>.

PAID

Logic4training provides training courses and assessments for the gas, oil, electric, plumbing, refrigeration, renewable energy and smart meter industries. Their live, one-day <u>Energy Efficiency for Domestic Heating</u> training lets heating installers who work in domestic properties 'self certificate as required by the Building Regulations Part L'. (£195.00 Ex VAT)

NICEIC is a voluntary regulatory body for the electrical contracting industry in the UK. They run several renewables courses, that range from £150 to £540 for members (£170 to £600 for non-members). They also offer Domestic and Non-Domestic Green Deal Training to both qualified assessors and new entrants. (£955 for Domestic, £1,250 for Non-Domestic.)

The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation that helps consumers save energy. Their Infact service is a knowledge resource that shares the latest energy saving data and insights—not only to help you learn, but to use in your promotions and marketing campaigns.

You can license the 'Verified by EST' brandmark for use on approved materials, and even hire EST to do custom research for your business, which you can then use to create customer-attracting marketing campaigns. Contact EST to discuss your needs and their pricing.

2

The Internet of Things

What It Is: The IoT is the concept of devices, vehicles, home appliances, machine components, and other items that are connected to each other or to the internet. For example, smart thermostats let homeowners control the temperature of their homes when they're not there, and smart boilers can identify warning signs of failure and transmit the data to the HVAC repair company.

Why It Matters: The IoT is pretty hard to ignore. The IoT Global Network lists (so far) 46 HVAC-related IoT products and 57 lighting-related IoT products; go to any industry trade show and you'll be treated to demos of all kinds of IoT-connected equipment and devices. If they aren't already, your customers will soon be expecting you to be able to install, set up, repair, and advise on these products for their homes and commercial applications.

Be proactive in learning about the IoT, and you'll be able to 'deliver new value-added services to customers with higher margins, competitive benefits and a closer relationship to their typical SMB customers than in an "install and go" scenario', says an article on the i-SCOOP website.

The IoT can also help you work more efficiently—for example by telling you when to order more stock, tracking orders, and letting you identify (and fix) problems in your customers' installed systems before they reach crisis level.

How to Learn: Thankfully, the IoT is such a big deal that you can easily find massive numbers of helpful tutorials, classes, publications, and more online. Google 'IoT training' and 'IoT guides' to find loads of options, or read on for the ones that stood out for us.

Free

edX is a MOOC (massive open online course) provider, which hosts university-level courses online—often for free, though there's an upcharge if you want a verified certificate. Check out edX's course Introduction to the Internet of Things (IoT) through Curtin University. According to edX's course page, you'll 'gain a deep appreciation of the IoT, understand what constitutes an IoT design solution, and start to grow the seeds of IoT ideas within your field and area of expertise'.

Stay up-to-date on all things IoT through the IoT Global Network, which offers a directory of IoT products, news, and events.

Download the free PDF 'Internet of Things' – what the tech does it mean?', which is focused on boiler manufacturers, from Maintenance Online.

IoTUK is 'a programme of activities that seeks to advance the UK's global leadership in the Internet of Things (IoT) and increase the adoption of high quality IoT technologies and services throughout businesses and the public sector'. Check out the IoTUK blog for news and reports.

i-SCOOP offers an article on 'How electrical contractors become more profitable with IoT and the cloud'.

Paid

Udemy offers 65,000 online courses taught by experts in their fields. Looking to throw your field service business into the smart home trend? Udemy's course Make a Living as a Smart Home Installer 'takes you from zero to launch of your new smart home automation & Internet of Things (IoT) installation business'. ($199 USD, but Udemy offers frequent discounts.)

Prefer to learn on your own? Take a look of this comprehensive list of the best books on IoT from Postscapes.

SaaS

3
Software as a Service

What It Is: Remember when you had to install software from a CD or download it from the internet? It could be prohibitively expensive, especially if you also had to purchase special hardware to run the program and buy multiple software licenses for your growing business.

Now, though, we have Software as a Service, where 'a service provider hosts applications for customers and makes them available to these customers via the internet,' according to InfoWorld.

Why It Matters: If you're not taking advantage of SaaS for your business, you're spending too much. SaaS offers a pay-as-you go structure, usually comes complete with tech support when you need it, and doesn't require any special hardware. In fact, you can usually access the software from any device, as long as you're connected to the internet. SaaS providers provide automatic updates so you don't need to do it yourself—or, worse, pay for the newest version of the software.

Finally, SaaS covers pretty much any need your business might have: 'There are SaaS offerings available for a variety of business applications,' reports InfoWorld, 'including email and collaboration, customer relationship management, billing/payroll processing, sales management, human resources management, financial management, database management, enterprise resourcing planning, content management, and document editing and management.'

(We should also add field service management to that list—Commusoft lets you do everything from creating estimates and gas certificates to sending invoices and reminders.)

This extreme functionality can help your field service business grow while keeping your costs steady, not to mention you'll impress your customers by always being on the leading edge of the technology that helps you serve them better.

How to Learn: Here we have a failure of organisation, because you really never have to pay to learn about SaaS, what SaaS solutions are out there to help you in your business, or how to select a SaaS provider. So enjoy these free resources!
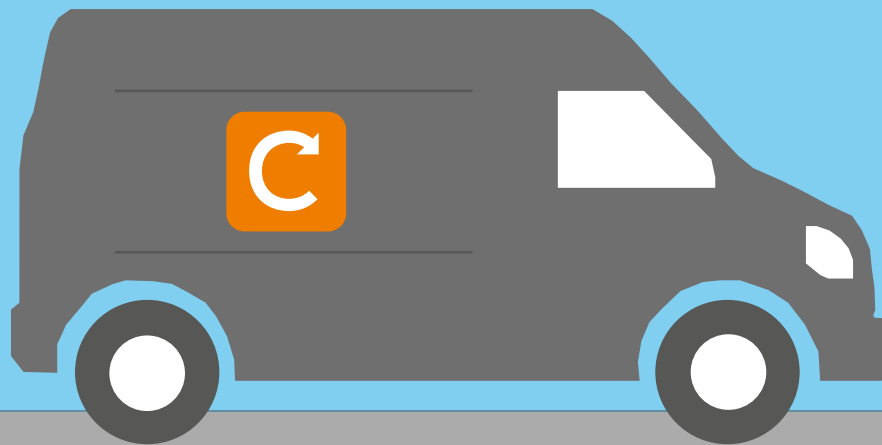
Free

If you're wondering which SaaS solutions might work for your business, check out this list of the top 25 SaaS apps, which includes a graphic of the fastest-growing SaaS applications as well. Here at Commusoft, we use

Not enough for you? PC Magazine lists the 50 best cloud services for SMEs, from communications tools to financial apps. (One of them is Mailchimp, which integrates with Commusoft!)
Cost is always a concern for businesses of any size. This article from your friends here at Commusoft will bust your top six excuses for not spending on technology.

Nuvem 9 offers a free downloadable report on Productivity Tools for Startups, which includes some SaaS options.

Commusoft Can Help You Keep Up

Spending so much time running your business—scheduling jobs, raising POs, tracking engineers, and more—that you don't have any left over to stay on top of the trends that will increase your profits?

Let us help. Commusoft gives you an efficient, streamlined way to manage your business so you'll no longer be wasting time on piles of paper, lost work orders, and forgotten invoices. Watch our 15-minute demo today, or call us to find out how we can help.

Get in touch