Spark Power

Streamlining Field Operations with FieldAware

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Company Profile

SPARKPOWER

Company:
Spark Power

Industry:
Electrical contracting, operations, and maintenance services

Location:
Oakville, Ontario

Website:
www.sparkpowercorp.com

Company

Spark Power is a leading provider of end-to-end electrical service and operations and maintenance services, to the industrial, utility and renewable asset markets in Canada and the United States.

Presently, 400 technicians are active on the FieldAware platform. Once launched in Canada, it is estimated to increase to 800 users.

Benefits

Michael Mah, Vice President of IT at Spark Power, is leading Project Darwin, which is part of Spark Power's broader strategy for growth and value creation. The project involves the implementation of NetSuite ERP and FieldAware as part of a company-wide technology transformation. Spark Power is transitioning from their original implementation of NetSuite with some custom-made solutions and field service applications to a fully integrated NetSuite instance, which includes FieldAware as the field service platform. The project aims to standardize and streamline business processes, reduce operating costs, and support the company's future growth. The project team includes various members from Spark Power, Appficiency (the NetSuite Alliance partner), and FieldAware. The first phases of the project have been completed, which has resulted in all US operating companies being brought onto one platform with standardized processes and operating protocols. The final phase, which involves the Canadian operations, is planned for future months.

Spark Power sought a solution to standardize its field operations, including time and task management, across its operations in the United States and Canada. The company needed a comprehensive platform that could streamline its workforce and improve resource utilization.

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To do this, they chose FieldAware. Spark Power uses FieldAware for scheduling and dispatching field technicians to customer job sites, capturing time and updating task statuses.

"It's really important for us as part of our technology transformation initiative to have a solution that works for all of our lines of business both in the US and Canada," said Mah. "We really needed to standardize the way we capture time, the way we capture our tasks and our statuses in a consistent manner across the organization."

Implementing FieldAware has helped improve resource utilization and standardize scheduling and dispatching processes. FieldAware's advanced features, such as Live Map and Drive Time calculations, will further optimize resource scheduling, support workforce planning and asset planning efforts.

While challenges may occur during the rollout, Spark Power employees have had a positive experience utilizing FieldAware.

"We've had positive responses from both our project managers and our field technicians who said the mobile app is very useful," Mah said. "It's quite intuitive, and what we're asking them to do is straightforward."

Technicians appreciated the convenience of capturing time and tasks directly at the job site, eliminating the need for manual paperwork or weekly timesheets. The solution provided employees with clear visibility into their assigned tasks and activities.

"This was a significant change for our technicians," he said. "Originally they were submitting weekly timesheets, and now we're truly asking them to capture their time right at the job site before they leave. So it has been quite a bit of a change management exercise, but once folks get used to punching in and punching out from their clock, it should be a relatively smooth process."

Visibility

FieldAware enabled Spark Power to gain better insight into overall resource use, which resulted in more effective deployment of field technicians. The solution allowed project managers to schedule and dispatch jobs based on real-time availability, reducing time spent on manual coordination and phone calls.

"It's around better understanding of our resource utilization," Mah said. "People are our largest cost, and we want to make sure they're

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deployed as optimally as possible. It's about understanding where our resources are. We have job sites across North America, and so it's important to know where they are at any point in time."

Spark Power also understands the importance of job satisfaction.

"From an employee satisfaction perspective, it's really important to give them comfort," Mah said. "They know what they're going to be working on throughout the week. They want to ensure that they're fully utilized - and so it's really important to give that visibility not only to our project managers, but also to the employees themselves."

Reporting

"One of the most substantial benefits is we are now able to produce utilization reports," Mah said. "We can really understand how much billable time is being used - which is the most important thing for a company - but also non-billable time like travel and training. So it's really important for us to best utilize our finite resources, especially in a market where finding good tradespeople is really hard right now across North America."

Reports provide the team with a comprehensive understanding of employee utilization across the organization. With this data, they can dispatch and schedule projects more efficiently, as they have estimates of the time that should be spent at job sites. The utilization reports enable them to make better decisions regarding resource deployment for their most valuable resource – their employees.

"Our branch managers, our regional managers, and certainly our senior managers are analyzing utilization reports," Mah said. "Our senior leadership team now has insight into utilization for all of our employees who are using FieldAware. So it's been really important for them to have a common understanding because the way our projects are dispatched now and scheduled, we have estimated the approximate amount of time that should be spent at the job site. This gives us better insight into how we can most effectively deploy our resources. And as I mentioned, people are our biggest resource for the company."

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Mobility

By adopting FieldAware, Spark Power standardized time and task tracking across all branches, eliminating the use of methods such as paper timesheets or manual tracking. The mobile app provided field technicians with a convenient, intuitive and consistent tool for capturing time, tasks, and statuses.

"It's about simplicity using the mobile app," Mah said. "So whether you are an Apple user or an Android user, it is the consistency in the user experience in terms of capturing time and understanding what tasks they're being assigned, and integrating to our ERP system. When the time, status or task is captured, it is integrated directly into our NetSuite ERP system, which gives our project managers better insight, more real-time access, and the ability to schedule and dispatch accordingly."

The transition to real-time data entry significantly improved the accuracy and timeliness of information.

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> Spark Power

and so we have a little bit more standardization," Mah said. "We had a number of companies or a number of branch offices doing it differently. So the standardization will encourage other branches to share resources and to do it in a consistent manner so that we have the right metrics, and the right reporting, so that we can evaluate how our business is truly doing."

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Savings

FieldAware has improved communication and resource allocation among project managers at Spark Power. It is now easier for project managers to identify available resources, such as personnel, across the country. This streamlined process reduces the time managers spend contacting each other to determine resource availability.

In addition, the company's plan is to expand the use of FieldAware beyond the workforce and include scheduling for other assets, including fleet vehicles and heavy equipment. This broader implementation will provide a comprehensive understanding of resource use and help efficiently deploy assets across the organization.

"As we move forward with integrating the rest of the organization onto the platform, this will exponentially reduce the amount of time that our managers are spending having to call and find out if someone is available," Mah said. "Secondly, our plan is not to just focus just on our workforce, but ultimately we plan to schedule all of our assets, all of our fleet vehicles, and all of those solutions through FieldAware to truly understand how we're utilizing resources and where we should be deploying all of our assets."

Implementing FieldAware helps by adding consistency to the entire Spark Power project execution process. By using the scheduler, they plan to effectively use resources more systematically.

"Across the branches, we have seen employees utilize Excel, notebooks, or phone calls to track time spent and resource allocation," Mah said. "These inconsistent processes lack standardization, which is something the scheduler will assist in to effectively deploy our resources."

Resource use

Spark Power is working on a long-term plan to improve operations, and FieldAware is one of the tools that will assist in the execution.

"We're launching a new three-year strategy, which focuses on workforce planning, continuous improvement, and operational excellence," he said. "That focuses on how we take our finite resources and utilize them more effectively."

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They're depending on FieldAware features to provide real-time visibility and aid in better planning.

"Live Map could now be displayed in all our branch offices, so we can see where our job sites are and where our resources are deployed," he said. "We can incorporate drivetime calculations, to help plan where our technicians need to go. If their job sites are all geographically located within 20 miles, then it makes it easier for us to plan what their routes are going to be. We will also look at integrating with our other systems to make sure that we're incorporating and reducing the amount of double entry."

Asset planning

FieldAware's features like Planning Mode will also help Spark Power create a comprehensive plan for future activities and initiatives. Plus, they aim to enhance forecasting and planning through the integration of field data into business intelligence systems.

"Workforce is our largest cost, but our next largest one is our fleet vehicles," Mah said. "How do we effectively deploy our fleet, and when do we need to start moving them to another location? I know Planning Mode would be a great way to help do that. There are a lot of features and functionality that we want to be able to use. Obviously this collects a lot of data, and all that data we want to push into our business intelligence reporting systems to do better forecasting and in short-term and long-term planning."

Additionally, Spark Power aims to complete the platform rollout across all branches, enabling faster scalability and improved efficiency.

"The journey is just beginning," he said. "We started with our US operations, and so we are looking to expand and now finish our implementation. It's been quite a journey. This is now 18 months in, and we've got probably another six to 12 months to get the rest of the organization onto the platform. I think from there we can truly scale a lot faster now that we'll have everybody onto the same system."

Partnership and integration

Spark Power works with Appficiency, a NetSuite Alliance partner, specializing in NetSuite implementation and support. Along with FieldAware, the companies worked collaboratively to define the future business processes, systems configurations , and conduct

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testing. This close partnership has been important to ensure the success of the implementation.

"I joined the organization in July of 2020, and it was my mandate to build an IT roadmap that demonstrated how we can create an environment and a platform that can scale with the business," Mah said. "So working with Appficiency, who focuses on the NetSuite, and FieldAware, it truly was a partnership between all three of us to come up with the future state business processes, how the systems and integrations would be designed, and then ultimately partnering to fully test and understand it and roll this out."

The companies have worked closely together throughout the entire process and will continue to do so in the future.

"It has been a partnership of all three groups to make sure we've been as successful as we have been to this point," he said. "As we wrap up this implementation, we anticipate that we'll continue to rely on that partnership between Appficiency, FieldAware, and Spark Power."

Spark Power has had a positive experience with integrating FieldAware into their business processes.

"We've had good success with both NetSuite and the tight integration capabilities with FieldAware starting this journey with the Spark team," he said. "We fully believe that the NetSuite solution as a base platform will help us and support us moving forward."

Customer service

Spark Power has had a positive experience working with the GPS Insight team. This extends to support, where they have continued to work together.

"It starts all the way at the top as we were starting to do the initial demos and evaluations of a field service management solution, and they have been completely open, transparent, and clear about some of the capabilities and some of the successes," Mah said. "Now that we have our US operations, we continue to use FieldAware support for questions, clarifications, and new releases, which are always coming down the pipeline as part of the product roadmap. We've had good experiences both from the implementation side as well as from the support side."

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Possibilities

Spark Power appreciates the user-friendly experience and integration capabilities that make using FieldAware a valuable solution.

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"I recommend it because of the sheer power and simplicity from a user experience standpoint, but also the power of the integration capabilities with an ERP solution...plus, we have the ability to capture a lot of data and utilize that data in a lot of ways," Mah said. "I think there are infinite possibilities once we've captured the data and use it consistently to make decisions in the future or leverage further functionality in the system."

Spark Power, and service businesses alike, are particularly invested in resource utilization. FieldAware provides them with powerful tools and functionalities that enhance their planning processes.

"I think we've only scratched the surface at this point," Mah said. "In a services business such as ours, where resource planning is so important, I think it is truly a tool that we should be using and could have used a lot earlier."

By leveraging the FieldAware benefits, Spark Power is optimizing their operations, providing exceptional service, and gaining a competitive edge.

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FieldAware has successfully transformed Spark Power's field operations, bringing standardization, efficiency, and enhanced resource utilization. The collaboration between Spark Power, Appficiency, and FieldAware has been key in achieving the desired outcomes. With the ongoing expansion and utilization of advanced features, Spark Power is poised to achieve greater efficiency, cost savings, and improved decision-making capabilities.

"With GPS insight, there's a lot of power now that there's a good partnership and good relationship," Mah said. "I look forward to what the future brings."

In summary, FieldAware benefits include:

Standardization and efficiency: By adopting FieldAware, Spark Power achieved standardization in time capture and task tracking across all businesses, eliminating the use of methods such as paper timesheets or manual tracking. The mobile app provided field technicians with an intuitive and consistent tool for capturing time, tasks, and statuses. The transition to real-time data entry significantly improved the accuracy and timeliness of information.

Resource utilization and visibility: FieldAware enabled Spark Power to gain better insight into resource utilization, resulting in more effective deployment of field technicians. The solution allowed project managers to easily schedule and dispatch jobs based on real-time availability, reducing time spent on manual coordination and phone calls.

Enhanced collaboration and reporting: The utilization reports generated by FieldAware facilitated informed decision-making by providing comprehensive data on billable and non-billable time, travel time, and resource allocation. The system integration with NetSuite ERP allowed seamless transfer of data, allowing project managers and senior leadership to analyze resource utilization and make data-driven decisions. The standardized approach to field operations also promoted collaboration among branches, encouraging resource sharing and fostering a consistent workflow.

Employee adoption and satisfaction: Although the implementation brought significant changes for field technicians, the user-friendly nature of FieldAware and its mobile app minimized resistance and facilitated a smooth transition. Technicians appreciated the convenience of capturing time and tasks directly at the job site, eliminating the need for manual

Highlights

- Standardized operations across all lines of business

- Seamlessly integrated with NetSuite

- More effectively used resources and deployed technicians.

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paperwork or weekly timesheets. The solution provided employees with clear visibility into their schedules, ensuring optimal utilization and enhancing job satisfaction.

Future goals and expansion: Spark Power plans to leverage advanced features of FieldAware to further support its business goals. The integration of drive time calculations, asset planning, and workforce planning modules will optimize resource allocation, particularly for fleet vehicles and heavy equipment. The company aims to enhance forecasting and planning through the integration of field data into its business intelligence reporting. Additionally, Spark Power aims to complete the platform rollout across remaining businesses, enabling faster scalability and improved efficiency.

Product Links

- Field Service

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About GPS Insight

GPS Insight helps fleet and field service businesses by delivering innovative solutions and actionable insights. Organizations across the globe turn to GPS Insight when they have high operating costs, are worried about safety on the roads, and struggle with fleet and field inefficiencies that waste valuable time and money. GPS Insight offers best-of-breed technology for organizations with drivers and technicians in the field, fleets of vehicles, trailers, and other mobile assets. GPS Insight provides many solutions that include vehicle and asset tracking, fleet management, AI-enabled smart cameras, field service management, and regulatory compliance solutions.

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