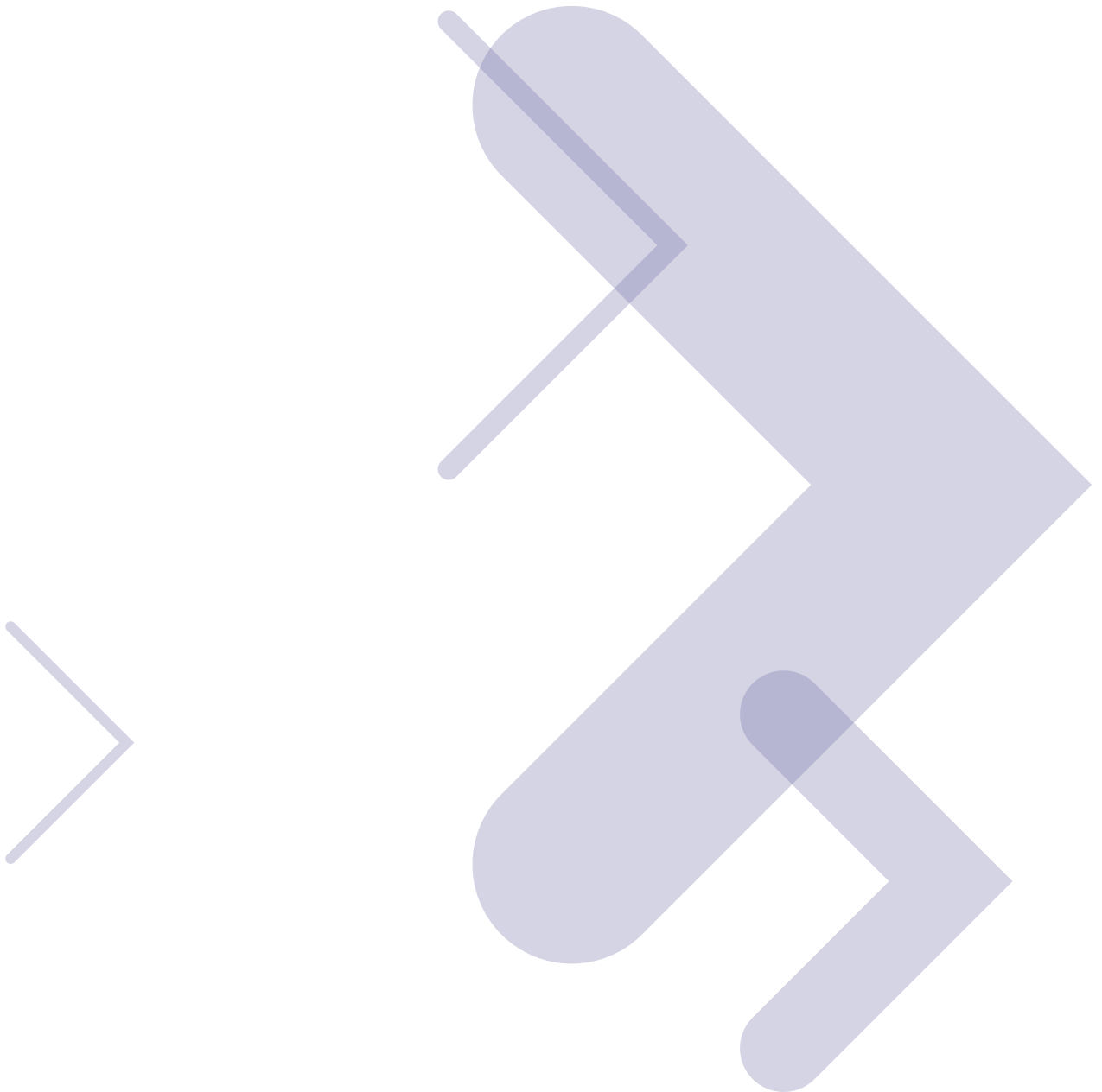




Choosing the Right Asset Management Tool for your Operation



The most vital function of any municipal communications shop is providing effective, communications equipment to government professionals whose jobs—and sometimes lives—depend on optimized and readily available two-way radios.

When a police officer walks into the city's radio communications shop to drop off a radio for repair, the officer must be able to complete the transaction and get back on the street in minutes. When a fire fighter needs a new radio battery, he or she cannot wait in the lobby for a half hour while the right one is located. And if a public works employee breaks an antenna while out on a job, taking too long to get that radio back in service means decreased productivity and increased cost for the city.

But beyond ensuring equipment availability, rapid repair, and efficient maintenance processing, operations managers are also responsible for inventory accountability, which often ranges into millions of dollars – all purchased with taxpayer funds.

How businesses are addressing this challenge


Asset management solutions can be as rudimentary as a log book or a basic Excel spreadsheet, or as expensive as a sophisticated enterprise-wide tool that can cost hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars on the high end. The challenge is to find the right solution that fits your particular business. Following are some of the solutions, challenges and benefits of each.

- **Log Book:** For a business with few assets that are replaced as needed, such as office furniture, a few laptops, and limited inventory, a simple log book could provide a suitable solution to manually managing assets. It is cheap, effective, relatively easy to keep current, and requires very little training. However, if the business begins to grow and the assets multiply, the process quickly becomes inadequate.
- **Spreadsheets:** Another relatively basic and inexpensive method of asset management is to create an Excel spreadsheet where assets, serial numbers, and status can be electronically listed, cross-referenced, and tracked. However, once the number of assets approaches a thousand or more, all but the most complex, customized spreadsheet proves cumbersome and difficult to manage.
- **Home-Grown Applications:** Given the importance of tracking and managing Communications Assets, an organization might end up developing a home-grown tool to track those mission-critical assets. They are often developed with older coding-techniques, simple spreadsheet tracking mechanisms and perhaps an Access database in which to store the information. Challenges that arise from this type of solution include security; ability to provide enhancements to the solution; multi-user, multi-tasking limitations and most important security of the information. While it is usually relatively inexpensive and quick to create a simple home-grown application, any environment other than a very small operation will likely run into severe constraints on what they can do, and how they can use it.
- **Off the shelf software:** There are literally dozens of asset management software tools on the market. Some are very good, but most have little customization flexibility that enables them to easily meet the specific business needs of a radio communications organization. These solutions tend to take a generalized approach to asset management, often combining several departmental functions, such as fleet maintenance, equipment/building maintenance, and fixed asset maintenance.
- **Enterprise-level asset management:** Companies like SAP, Oracle, and the acquisition of Maximo by IBM/Tivoli build high-end, customizable asset management solutions for Enterprise customers that help complex operations locate, track, and manage millions of dollars worth of assets. These large scale tools are beneficial in that environment, but not every customer requires that level of software. These solutions tend to be geared toward addressing the entire Enterprise's fixed assets, with a strong focus on the financial aspects associated with cost and depreciation values. Often they also include a costly professional services component in the proposal.

All of these solutions fit the need for businesses to track and manage assets for a variety of different businesses. But none fit the unique needs of a public safety or public sector radio communications shop. The best solution for a radio operations shop is one that actually mimics the operation itself and tailors the solution around the specific needs, daily operations and work processes of public sector communications agencies.

Advantages of a radio-centric asset management tool

Think about how your shop operates. If you are the communications manager of a municipal public safety organization, you need to make sure that your first responders have the equipment they need when they need it. And you need to ensure that the equipment – every piece of it – needs to be operating at peak performance. This could mean portable radios, mobile data terminals, laptop computers, or even the light bars mounted on top of police cars.



If you are the communications manager of a municipal public works facility. When a lineman comes in to the shop with a damaged radio, the longer he or she has to wait for a replacement to be located, programmed, tuned, and logged out, the longer he or she is off the job and the higher the cost to the city.

The ability to keep your shop running efficiently, keep things moving steadily in and out, and keep your service level high is much more than just counting assets.

If you do radio repair on-site, it means managing work orders and monitoring parts inventory. It means having the ability to track service histories so your repair service technicians can use that information to identify root cause failures. It means being able to quickly discover why your labor costs have spiked and find ways to increase efficiency and work flow. And it is a way to provide accountability in order to allocate costs to the appropriate department.

Even if you outsource repair, you still have the responsibility to track those assets from acquisition through disposition, transfer the assets between departments and personnel, arrange for preventive maintenance, and track warranty and billing.

Dramatic operational improvements

With more than 1,700 sworn police officers and a fire department with 37 stations, a large metropolitan city in the U.S. was trying to manage its assets using Excel spreadsheets and Access databases to track equipment and repairs. Adding to that complexity, the communications manager led a team of 20 technicians housed in two separate locations on opposite sides of the city, as well as an outsourced repair partner. "It was a constant challenge to keep track of the equipment and maintain accurate repair records on all of it," he said. "It reminded me of the old baseball comedy routine, 'Who's on First,' except in our case it was 'What's on First' and often we didn't know."

Recognizing that they needed not only an automated, integrated asset management system, but also one that was suitable for their operations, the communications manager opted for the radio-centric Motorola Asset Management solution in a hosted environment. Hosting eliminated the need to impact the IT department and enabled the shop's technicians and other department personnel to use the system, including their external repair partner, eliminating the need to setup a costly server and support. The solution was set up to allow access regardless of work location and included Radio ID Management, which integrates seamlessly with several other applications, including Agency Management, Asset Management, and Work

Orders module. The solution also included Motorola bar-code scanners and Signature Capture Devices to increase efficiency even further.

With one centralized database, the department can track and report on information ranging from the specifics of an asset to a complete work order history. When equipment comes in for service, the technician can quickly scan the barcode label and the system will auto-fill data fields within the work orders, allowing technicians to quickly identify the equipment and partially build a work order for tracking labor and materials. This information then becomes part of the service history on that equipment and positions that work to be automatically billed if that is part of the shop's process.

With the Radio ID Management application, they can control and manage a vast array of Radio IDs, eliminating duplicate assignment and enabling re-assignment of the unassigned IDs within a specific range. The solution includes very strong intuitive functionality through the use of user-defined templates that make data entry quick and consistent, while the user-defined browse feature quickly and efficiently finds information in the centralized database.

Operational efficiencies achieved rapidly and effectively

A radio-centric asset management process combines all the necessary tools to effectively manage a communications radio shop, from tracking equipment inventory transaction history to recording service history and will allow you to:

- Store asset identification, location, and ownership information
- Monitor daily service shop activities
- Record and invoice for labor and materials on work tickets
- Manage preventive maintenance activities
- Maintain custom-defined information about your assets
- Monitor parts inventory levels and associated purchase orders
- Track detailed costs and funding sources associated with individual assets
- Retrieve comprehensive reports at all levels of detail
- Create ad-hoc reports and queries to address questions as they arise
- Store documents, images and templates for easy retrieval

Accountability that takes minutes, not hours or days

Perhaps one of the most time-consuming and possibly painful aspects of your job is preparing the operations report. While critical to your ability to manage budget, request additional resources, and keep things running smoothly, it requires a level of detail and accountability that can take an enormous amount of time. However, with the right asset management tool, work that used to take hours and even days can be done in minutes.

An asset management solution should provide you with the ability to prepare custom reports that represent the data most relevant to your operations. Sample reports include:

- **Work Orders/Work in Progress:** Quickly identify open work orders to identify who is working on them, how much time is being invested, and the status of the repair
- **Work Order History:** Find the history of an asset with a click of a button and use the information to identify the root cause (i.e. abuse; environmental damage, etc.) and decide when it is time to replace an asset
- **Preventative Maintenance:** Schedule notifications of preventative maintenance checks on equipment to ensure maximum performance and reliability
- **Time Management:** Review and manage technician time spent on all activities related to a work order, asset, or other activities in order to increase operational efficiency

From a management perspective, a radio-centric Asset Management Solution enables communications directors to monitor expenditure of time and materials in financial terms, as well as report on inventory levels, service history, operating statistics, and so forth, all as quickly as clicking a button.

The bottom line

Based on best practices and proven processes from public sector communications shops across the nation, an effective Asset Management Solution manages the life cycle of equipment from “cradle to grave,” tracking all transfers, maintenance and repairs along the way. Scalable, modular, and easy to use, the solution must deliver a fully integrated asset, inventory, and work order management solution designed specifically for the Government & Public Safety market.


The radio shop is one of the most critical departments within a company or municipality. Without reliable communications, first responders and those they are sworn to protect would be at great risk. Without reliable communications, public service workers would be less productive. Without reliable communications, a company's effectiveness in serving its customers would be drastically reduced. Cities and companies spend millions of dollars in assets. It is your job to optimize that investment and managing it with log books, spreadsheets, or off the shelf software designed for a retail, distribution or manufacturing environment compromises your ability.

“We were surprised at how easy the system was to learn and use, but what impressed us the most was that the training was based on best practices used in shops similar to ours. The trainer made sure that we knew how to use the system to our best advantage, not just click the buttons.”

- Greg Holcomb, Communications Technologies Division Director, Lake County, FL

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An asset management solution designed for your unique daily operations will save you money, increase productivity, provide accountability, and ensure that when your users need communications, it will be in their hands.

Remarking on the Motorola Asset Management Solution deployed in his radio shop, Greg Holcomb, Communications Technologies Division Director for Lake County, FL, said, "We were surprised at how easy the system was to learn and use, but what impressed us the most was that the training was based on best practices used in shops similar to ours. The trainer made sure that we knew how to use the system to our best advantage, not just click the buttons."

From a management perspective, the Asset Management Solution will automate compliance with Lake County's annual 100 percent inventory verification policy and enable Holcomb to monitor work order expenditures, inventory levels, operating efficiency statistics, and more - all at the click of a button. "We were highly impressed by the functionality and workflow specific to radio system operations," Holcomb said. "It was obvious that the Motorola Asset Management Solution knew how a communications shop operates."

The Motorola difference

Motorola believes that developing the right tools for operational efficiency requires in-depth insight that can only come from experience and familiarity with the operation. With over 80 years designing, manufacturing, and supporting mission-critical communications systems, Motorola knows first-hand the challenges of working in a public safety or public service environment and the critical nature of reliable, available communications.

The Motorola Asset Management Solution was developed by working closely with public sector communications managers and spending time learning the intricate details and daily operations of a radio shop in order to sign software that mimics those operations. Motorola has devoted a significant amount of resources to continuous development and constantly works with customers to create enhancements to our solutions that fit your world.

The result is a product that has been proven to significantly increase productivity. The Motorola Asset Management Solution provides the ability to easily allocate costs or bill agencies for worked performed. It provides accountability when you need to justify additional resources. But most importantly, it helps you keep your operations running smoothly and keeps radios and other mission critical equipment in the hands of your users.



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