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✅ A Checklist to Streamline Fiber-to-the-Home Rollouts

Introduction

It's no surprise that fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) has become an incredibly hot market. With the fast-growing bandwidth needs driven by the rise in working from home and the rising bandwidth consumed by playing from home, the days of home networks that top out at 20 mbps have become a thing of the past. Whether you need fast file transfer for work or real-time photoreal gaming or immersive AR/VR experiences, if you don't already need the speeds that are only possible with fiber – 10X to 50X the speed of traditional coax connections – you'll need them soon. Like next week.

And the business of providing FTTH has become a new gold rush. There's a race to be the first to build out and install FTTH networks, and to beef up the communications backbones needed to support them. There's also competition from 5G cellular networks. While 5G can't match FTTH speeds, it's enough of an improvement for some customers, and can be deployed with little or no setup or installation hassles.

So service providers (and the third-parties that are often contracted to provide installation and maintenance services) struggle to balance the pressure to deliver quickly while also maintaining high quality standards and providing exemplary customer service.

But you don't need to choose between the two objectives of speed and quality. You can offer fast deployment and deliver a high level of customer satisfaction. Zinier customer Community Fibre, for example, offers the fastest full-fiber service in London, boasts a 5-star rating on Trustpilot, and has been recognized as the UK's best consumer internet service provider for two years in a row.

After talking with many in the thick of the FTTH revolution, we've created a checklist to help service providers in their race to achieve their FTTH goals, whether they're building out the network infrastructure or getting new business and residential customers online.



FIBER-TO-THE-HOME

Deployment Checklist

- [ ] Field Assessment and Survey
- [ ] Field Operations System
- [ ] Effective Coordination of Contractos and Full-time Employees
- [ ] Asset Views for Field Team
- [ ] Constant Communication
- [ ] Customer Engagement
- [ ] Optimized Execution

Field Assessment and Survey

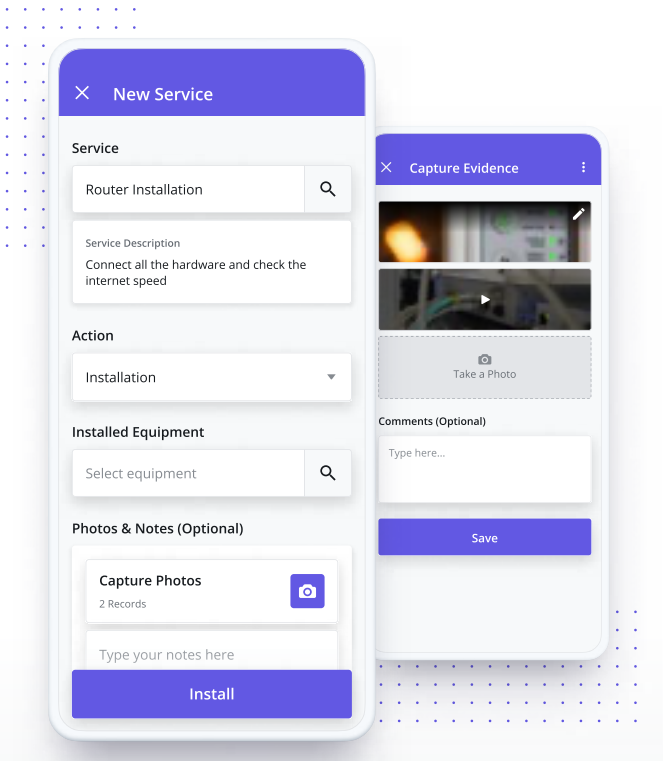
Excellence in the installation process starts long before the actual installation. As the old adage warns, “fail to plan, plan to fail.” Your preliminary planning before your first installation or construction in a new area or neighborhood should include:

- [ ] Mapping out existing infrastructure.
- [ ] Understanding vegetation challenges.
- [ ] Identifying locations where equipment can be parked and left overnight.
- [ ] Ensuring that preliminary data gathered by one person, team, or third-party contractor is readily available to all other people, teams, and contractors who will need it.
- [ ] Gathering and capturing key data about locations, pictures of the neighborhood, and any relevant infrastructure details.
- [ ] Collecting pertinent information from site surveys.

Field Operations System

Just as you need to take stock of the physical layout and parameters you'll be dealing with, you will also need to make sure that you have access to all the digital assets you may need for an efficient and successful installation. You'll also want to ensure that each data source can be integrated with other data, as well as with your field operations management solution. A few ways to plan for success:

- [ ] Ensure that you can integrate mobile forms with inputs captured from other sources.
- [ ] Data should be viewable by both internal and external teams and resources.
- [ ] Data should be consistent in its format and delivery so that teams become familiar with the information and how it is presented to them.
- [ ] Geolocation of existing assets should be accessible on mobile devices and field teams should be able to make any necessary adjustments (via their mobile devices) to that data if they discover inaccuracies in the field.



Effective Coordination of Contractors and Full-time Employees

In today's economy, many FTTH teams include a mix of full-time employees and contractors, and this is likely to remain a fact of life for the foreseeable future. And while different types of employees may sometimes need to be treated differently, your goal should be to ensure that all technicians and backoffice personnel can work together effectively and efficiently.

- [ ] Information about contractors and full-time employees should, wherever possible, be captured and seamlessly coordinated, regardless of a worker's employment status. The default should be to treat them the same unless there is a compelling reason to treat them differently, rather than defaulting to treating them separately. You may need to handle their financial details differently, for example, but that doesn't mean you can't provide all workers with the same types of support, status updates, and other details related to getting their tasks accomplished quickly and effectively.

- [ ] Increased visibility for everyone involved in any project should always be a priority. The default should be to share as much information as possible to as many people as possible, rather than defaulting to the opposite practice of keeping information siloed unless sharing it is specifically required.

- [ ] Scheduling mechanisms should be clear and readily available.

- [ ] Design your systems so that you'll never lose sight of key objectives, such as tightening the elapsed time between cable drop, dig, and install phases, regardless of which phases are performed by different categories of workers.

Asset Views for Field Team

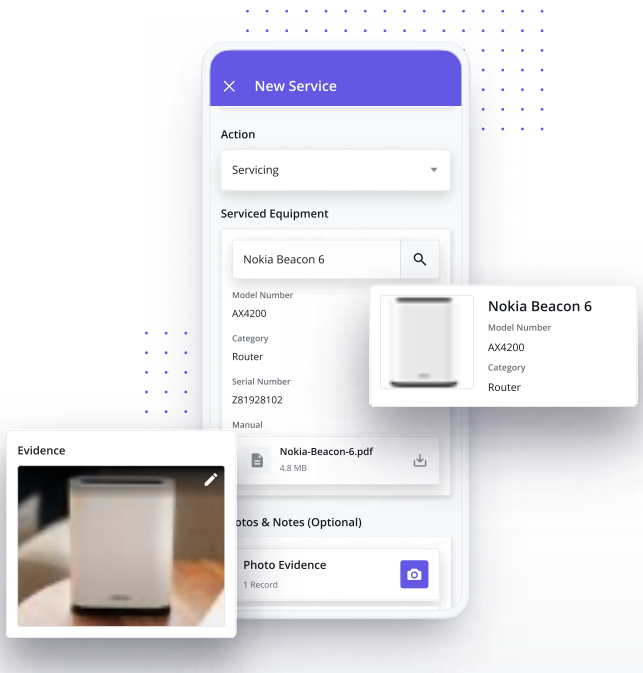
Visibility – of people and assets – is an essential aspect of a well-functioning field service operations system. Without it, far too much time and resources wind up being spent repeating and relaying the same information, or clarifying the basic details about a task or workflow.

- [ ] Visibility isn't just for backoffice personnel. Make sure that all stakeholders – the backoffice, field teams, contractors, customers – have access to all the information they should have. For example, field teams will perform more effectively when they're able to see the availability and locations of all existing infrastructure assets.

- [ ] Information needs to be updated as frequently as possible. Outdated information is often not merely unhelpful, but can actually be counterproductive by steering teams in the wrong direction.

- [ ] Since field teams are typically relying on a mobile device, be sure your systems are designed with a mobile-first mindset, rather than with mobile as an afterthought.

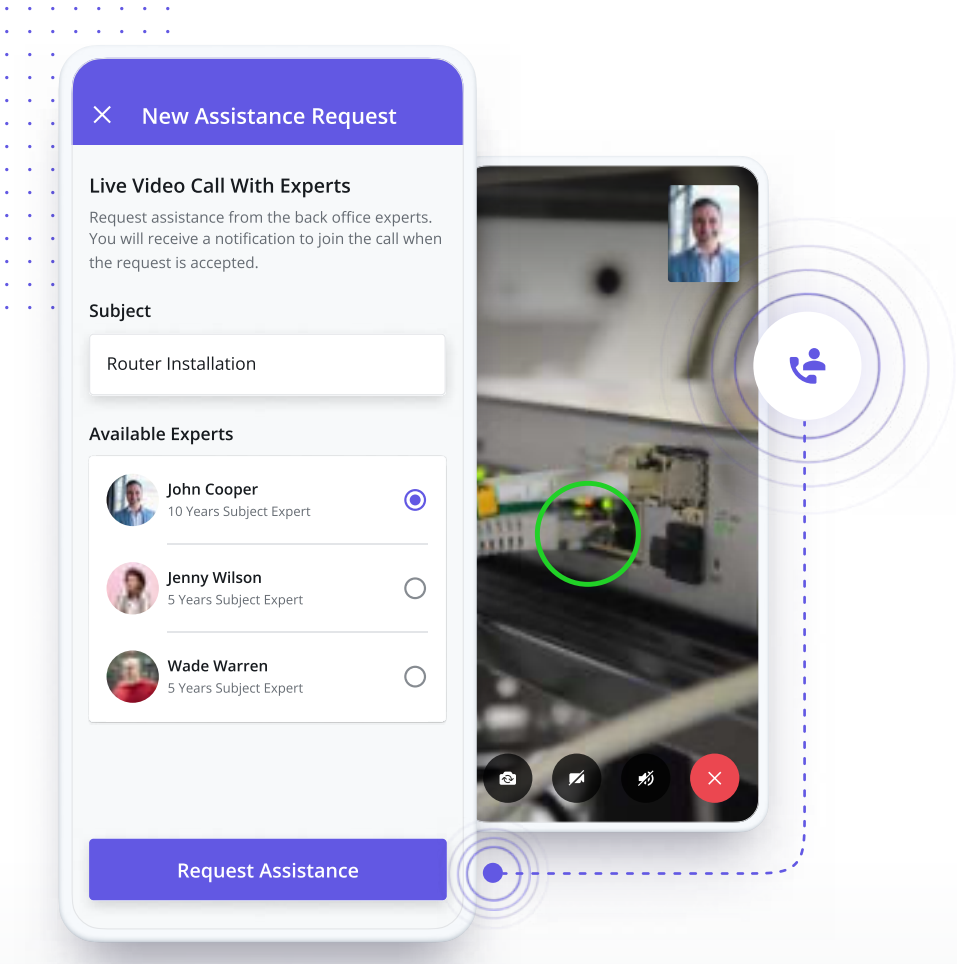
- [ ] Asset information shouldn't be limited to an inventory snapshot. A complete lifecycle picture should be available – not just the location of where equipment currently is, but also where equipment is expected to be placed in the future, the history of each piece of equipment, and documentation (including pictures) for each piece of equipment.



Constant Communication

No matter how good your operations seem on paper, they're only as good as the flow of communication that keeps them moving. Without effective communication, everything slows down, mistakes get made, morale slides, and all of your metrics suffer as a result.

- [ ] Maintain an ongoing feedback loop that is consistent and available on demand.
- [ ] Streamline the process for field technicians seeking help from backoffice personnel or from more experienced technicians.
- [ ] Consider deploying video and VR capabilities to make it easier for junior techs to get help from senior techs, and to leverage the skills and experience of those more experienced field techs across a broader geography.



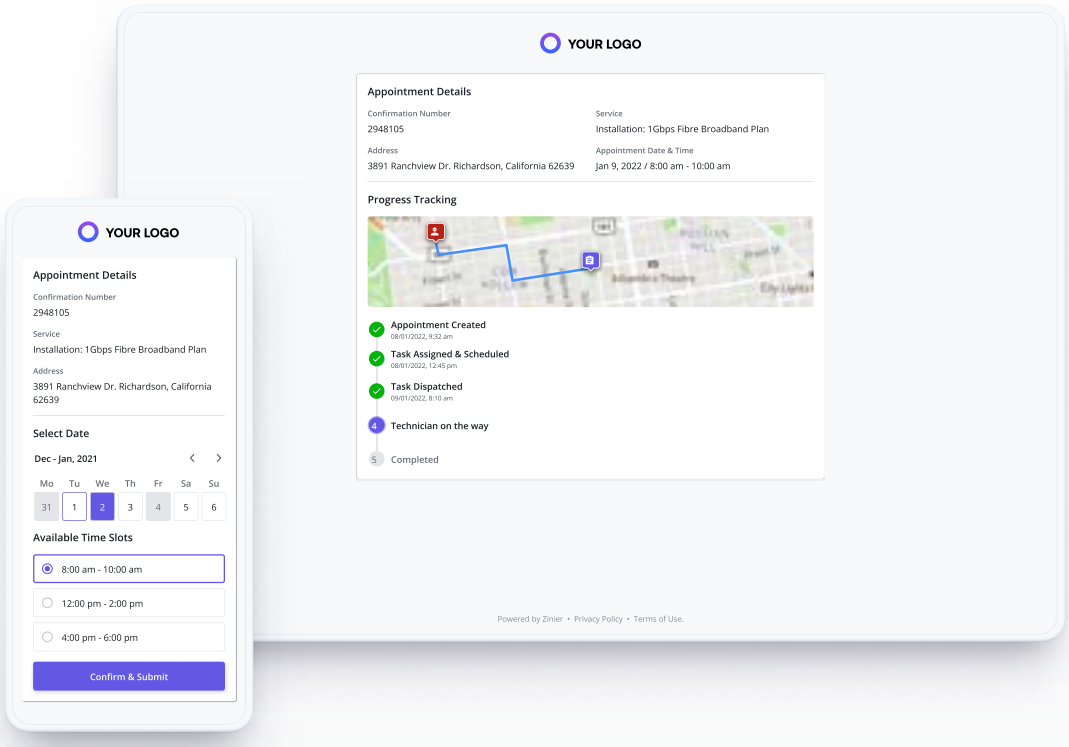
Customer Engagement

The customer is, ultimately, the driver of the FTTH gold rush. Your field operations aren't complete if you don't fully keep them in the loop – before, during, and after installation.

- Customers expect to know exactly what is going on with their service delivery – when will deployment start? How long will it take? When will I get service to my home? How will I know that installation is complete? When can I plan to shut off my current solution? Make sure your systems accommodate these expectations.

- Customers probably aren't familiar with field operations terminology, so make sure you're speaking their language rather than expecting them to translate your internal jargon.

- Today's customers expect their involvement in tasks such as scheduling home visits and initializations to be as easy as scheduling an Uber ride. Providing functionality that makes it easy to create appointment-booking windows, schedule updates, and access "track my technician" updates in real-time can be keys to keeping customers engaged and satisfied.



Optimized Execution

Unlike most of the other items in this list, the goal of optimizing execution across your field service operations doesn't have a simple binary solution. You can't simply toggle some switch that will change a setting for your operations from "unoptimized" to "optimized." Rather, it's an ongoing process that requires a shift in your mindset away from simply accepting the way things are to continuously looking for ways to improve.

- [ ] Optimizing the performance of your field operations translates directly into crucial metrics such as customer satisfaction. Make sure you're analyzing your performance metrics to follow the mantra "right resource, right time, right skills, right parts."
- [ ] Incorporate external data – such as real-time and forecasted weather and traffic information – into your workflow analysis to avoid wasted time and unproductive back-and-forth between field and back-office teams.
- [ ] Leverage AI to help you easily make rapid and informed game-time decisions with a high level of confidence.
- [ ] Eliminate paper from your process. (It's 2022....)

Deskless Productivity Starts with Zinier.

Zinier is commited to the success of the world's deskless workers. Our goal is to help you efficiently deploy the infrastructure that gives every home the necessary connectivity for work, school, and play.

We hope this checklist helps you improve the effectiveness of your fiber-to-the-home rollouts and would welcome the opportunity to show you how Zinier is empowering companies like yours.

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