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White Paper

Maximizing Return on Employee:

A Strategic Framework for Utility Leaders

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Executive Summary

As the utility industry navigates workforce transitions, aging infrastructure, and rising customer expectations, leaders must rethink how to maximize value from their most strategic asset: their workforce. As traditional productivity metrics fall short, leading utilities are adopting Return on Employee (ROE) - a comprehensive framework that captures the full spectrum of value delivered by well-equipped and supported workers, from cost savings and safety to customer satisfaction and long-term asset performance. Unlike conventional metrics like “revenue per employee,” ROE accounts for multidimensional contributions such as preventive maintenance, customer interactions, safety protocols, and operational insights, which are often overlooked. With most utilities only capturing 70–78% of potential workforce value due to fragmented systems and inefficiencies, there is a significant opportunity to elevate performance through targeted technology investments and operational improvements.

This article explores how unified, cloud-native, mobile-first platforms like KloudGin eliminate system fragmentation to enable faster response times, better communication, and more proactive service delivery, while AI-powered field assistants like KloudGin AssetIQ Atlas augment, rather than replace, worker capabilities. This advanced technology foundation supports utilities implementing ROE-driven strategies, driving measurable improvements in financial performance, operational excellence, and regulatory readiness. The most successful utilities are pursuing ROE through integrated efforts across technology, processes, and workforce development - creating more satisfying work environments, stronger customer experiences, and a foundation for resilient, high-performing utilities.



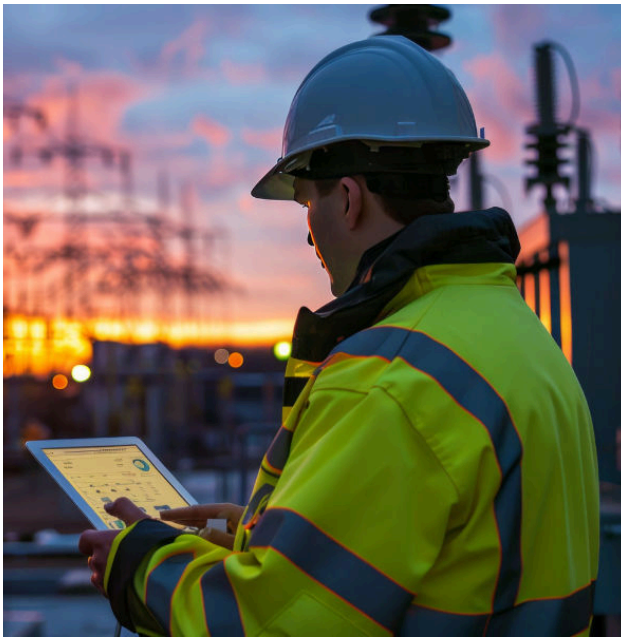
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For utility executives, the fundamental challenge of the next decade centers on maximizing value from their most strategic asset - their workforce. Success lies in creating an environment where employees are safe, empowered, and equipped to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Forward-thinking utility leaders are adopting Return on Employee (ROE) as a comprehensive framework that goes beyond traditional productivity metrics. ROE captures the full spectrum of value delivered by skilled, well-equipped, and supported workers: cost savings, enhanced service quality, improved safety, higher customer satisfaction, and optimized long-term asset performance. By investing in tools and processes that make employees' jobs easier and safer, utilities can unlock their workforce's full potential and drive meaningful customer impact.

As utilities navigate workforce transitions, infrastructure challenges, and rising customer expectations, optimizing ROE provides a clear path to sustainable competitive advantage while building more resilient, agile operations that put both employee well-being and customer satisfaction at the center of strategic planning.

Understanding ROE: Beyond Traditional Productivity Metrics



ROE differs fundamentally from basic productivity measurements by capturing the full spectrum of value each worker generates. Unlike “revenue per employee,” which only measures top-line financial output, ROE considers broader contributions: preventive maintenance insights that prevent costly failures, customer interactions that build community trust, safety protocols that prevent incidents, and operational intelligence that extends infrastructure longevity.

For utilities, this distinction is critical. A field technician's value extends beyond completed work orders to include the institutional knowledge they apply, the proactive insights they provide, the customer relationships they build, and the safety and customer standards they maintain. Traditional metrics often overlook these multidimensional contributions, which ultimately determine an organization's long-term success.

Research indicates that utilities typically capture only 70-78% of potential workforce value due to system fragmentation and operational inefficiencies. This gap represents a massive opportunity to increase ROE through strategic technology investments and operational improvements.

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The Hidden Costs of Fragmented Operations

Many utilities still operate with disconnected systems that systematically reduce workforce effectiveness and limit ROE potential. Field crews lose valuable time each day navigating between different systems, reconciling conflicting information, and duplicating data entry across platforms - time that could instead be spent on higher-value work such as customer service, technical problem-solving, and proactive maintenance.

Consider the economic impact: when a single neighborhood requires four separate truck rolls in a week for related issues - for a new service connection, transformer replacement, routine maintenance, and follow-up repair - each visit represents not just increased costs, but substantial workforce investment that could have been optimized with better coordination and information sharing.

The City of Waco addressed this challenge by implementing unified operations across all of its municipal departments. "We want to be able to see any work order on a map at one time," explained Managing Director Lisa Tyers. "When somebody calls about an address or area, you can see any work occurring there that may be impacting the customer." This comprehensive visibility enables immediate, accurate responses while optimizing resource allocation across all of their municipal services.



A recent McKinsey study found that field technicians typically spend 25-35% of their time on administrative tasks. Eliminating this burden means organizations can redirect substantial workforce capacity toward activities that directly improve customer service, enhance safety, and extend asset life - the core elements that drive superior ROE.

Accelerating ROE with AI: Amplifying Human Capability

Artificial intelligence provides one of the most significant opportunities to optimize ROE, not by replacing workers but by amplifying their expertise, efficiency, and decision-making. KloudGin's AIQ Atlas exemplifies this by providing an intelligent copilot that enhances, rather than substitutes, human judgment and skill.

Smarter, Faster Decision-Making: Atlas delivers voice-activated, hands-free access to comprehensive asset information, work histories, technical documentation, and troubleshooting guides. When technicians encounter complex issues, they can instantly access institutional knowledge in the field that

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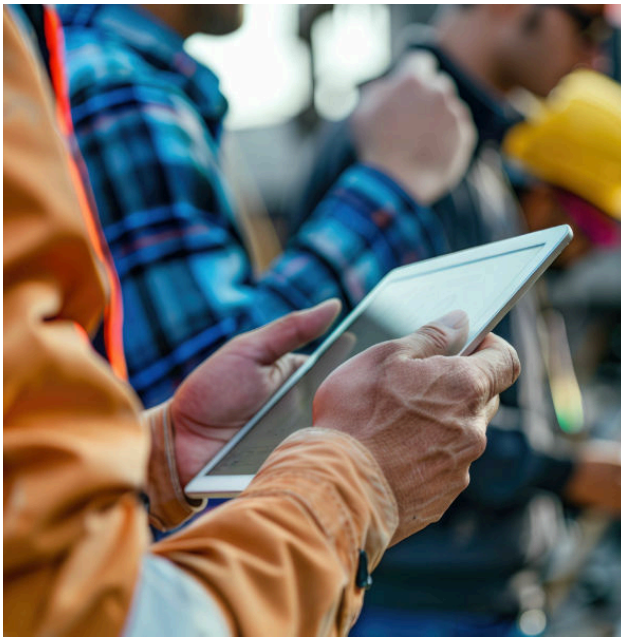
would traditionally require specialist consultation or extensive research. As experienced workers retire, this ensures their expertise remains accessible to the next generation.

Streamlined Documentation Processes: Atlas' Record-Review-Report (R3) mode transforms documentation from a time-consuming administrative task into an automated process that easily captures field observations, enabling workers to stay focused on technical tasks. Voice recordings automatically populate forms, surveys, and work order transactions, eliminating the need for manual data entry while ensuring comprehensive documentation.

Proactive Quality Assurance: Real-time anomaly detection flags inconsistencies and potential issues before they escalate, providing an intelligent safety net that helps workers avoid errors and recognize opportunities for optimization. This capability enhances rather than replaces human judgment by providing analytical perspectives that consider historical patterns and potential risks.

The net result is workforce augmentation that enables every technician to operate at a higher level while staying focused on tasks that only humans can do - complex problem-solving, customer interaction, and technical innovation.

Quantifying ROE Improvements: Time Recapture and Value Creation



ROE optimization through AI-driven workforce enhancement creates measurable economic gains across multiple dimensions. Organizations implementing intelligent workforce support systems consistently report significant improvements in key performance areas:

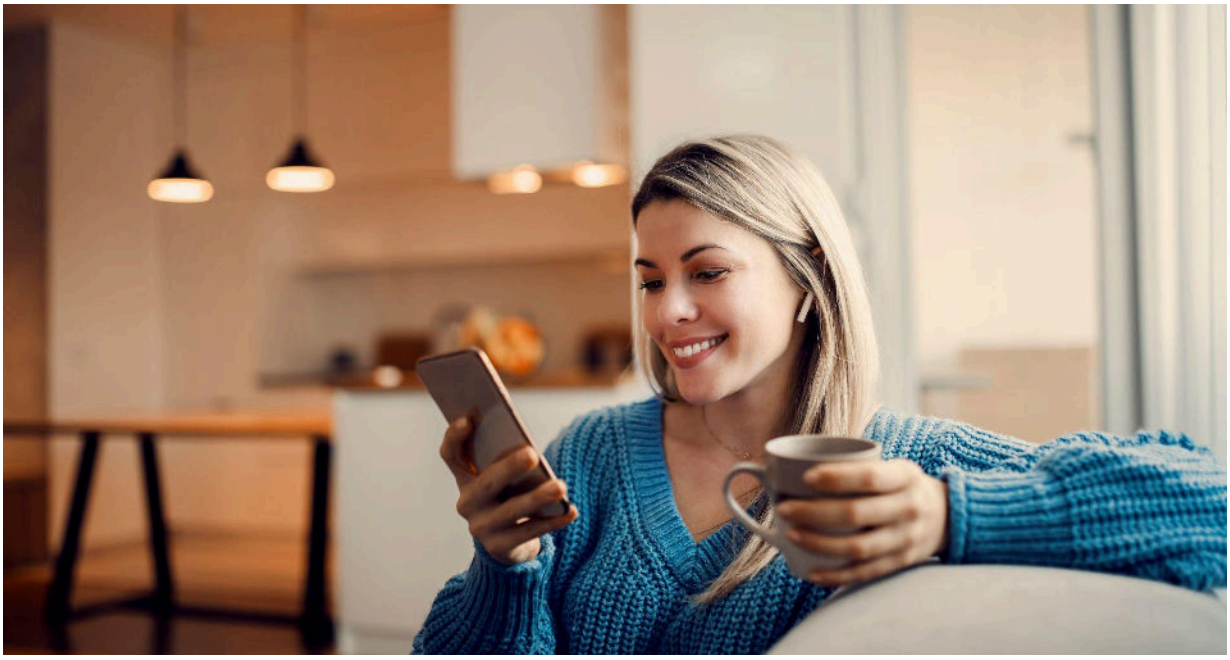
Productivity Enhancement: Utilities recapture an average of 15-30 minutes of productive time per technician per day by eliminating system switching, automating documentation, and providing instant access to information. Over a year, that's 80 hours of recovered time per worker - equivalent to two extra work weeks without any additional labor costs.

Quality Improvement: With instant access to technical information,historical context, and intelligent guidance, first-time fix rates improve by 20-25%. Workers make better decisions more quickly, reducing callbacks and customer disruptions while maximizing the value of every truck roll. One utility achieved a 25% improvement in first-time resolution within six months of implementing AI-powered field support.

Efficiency Gains: Intelligent work coordination reduces truck rolls by up to 30% by improving scheduling and comprehensive information sharing. This allows organizations to accomplish more work with existing resources while reducing operational costs and customer disruptions.

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Safety Performance: Comprehensive hazard awareness and real-time access to safety procedures significantly reduce incident rates, helping to protect workers. Improved safety performance directly impacts ROE through reduced incident costs, minimized downtime, and increased worker retention.



Customer Experience: A Key Driver for ROE

Customer experience directly impacts utility ROE - reducing complaint handling costs, improving satisfaction scores, and strengthening community relationships. AI-powered workforce support enables these improvements through:

Faster Response Times: Field crews equipped with real-time, access to comprehensive information about customer assets, service histories, and current work activities can respond more quickly and effectively. Customers receive faster, more effective service while organizations reduce the administrative overhead of information gathering and coordination.

Enhanced Communication Capabilities: AI-assisted field technicians can deliver more accurate and comprehensive updates to customers by providing real-time information about work progress, estimated completion times, and any related activities. This transparency and improved communication reduce customer complaints while building community trust.

Proactive Service Delivery: Access to comprehensive asset data and predictive insights enables technicians to identify and address potential issues before they impact customers. This proactive approach lowers emergency service call volumes while demonstrating the utility's commitment to reliable service delivery.

Utilities implementing connected customer solutions have reported a 14% reduction in service costs, a 20% increase in customer satisfaction, and a 25% increase in contract renewals - clear evidence of the direct connection between workforce effectiveness and improved customer experiences.

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Workforce Transitions and Knowledge Retention

With 40% of the utility workforce set to retire over the next five years, ROE optimization is critical for accelerating new employee development and preserving institutional knowledge. AI-powered support systems address these challenges with several key capabilities:

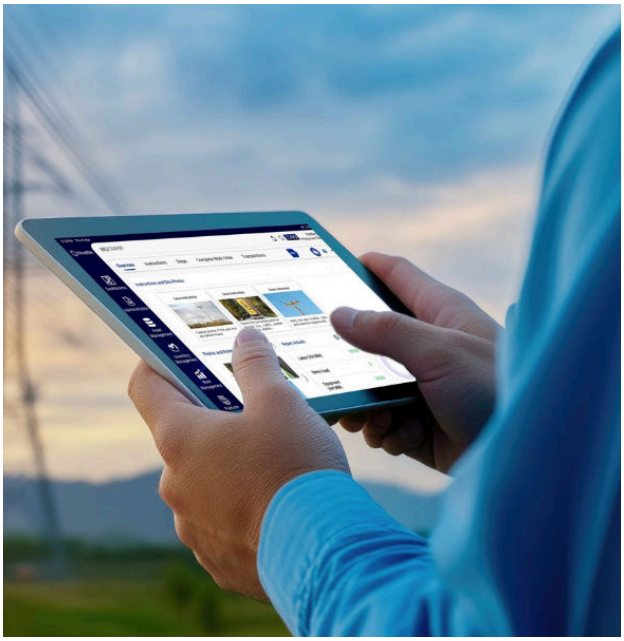
Accelerated Onboarding: New employees gain immediate access to organizational knowledge and expertise, reducing training time while ensuring continuity and quality across field operations. Rather than relying on experienced mentors, new workers benefit from AI-powered guidance that offers consistent and comprehensive support from day one.

Skill Enhancement: AI assistance equips all workers to perform at higher levels by providing instant access to technical expertise and troubleshooting guidance. This is particularly valuable for cross-training initiatives that aim to build more flexible and capable workforces.

Knowledge Preservation: Critical operational knowledge remains accessible even as experienced workers retire, as AI systems capture and preserve the insights, procedures, and problem-solving approaches that would otherwise be lost when veteran employees leave.

Continuous Improvement: AI and machine learning capabilities continuously refine guidance and recommendations based on organizational patterns and outcomes, creating systems that become increasingly valuable over time while preserving successful approaches that optimize performance organization-wide.

The Technology Foundation for Successful ROE Optimization



Modern cloud-native platforms provide the technical foundation for ROE optimization by delivering enterprise-grade capabilities across all operational domains. Mobile-first architecture ensures comprehensive functionality regardless of connectivity conditions, while advanced integrations with GIS systems and industry-specific tools create operational visibility that supports faster, more informed decision-making.

These platforms include a security framework that protects sensitive customer data while enabling AI insights to boost workforce performance. Their technical foundation allows utilities of all sizes to access sophisticated, enterprise-grade capabilities.

KloudGin's unified platform eliminates the system fragmentation that reduces workforce

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effectiveness, while providing AI assistance that amplifies human capabilities. With this foundation, organizations can implement comprehensive ROE optimization without the complexity and cost associated with multiple vendor solutions.

Building the Business Case: ROE's Strategic Advantage

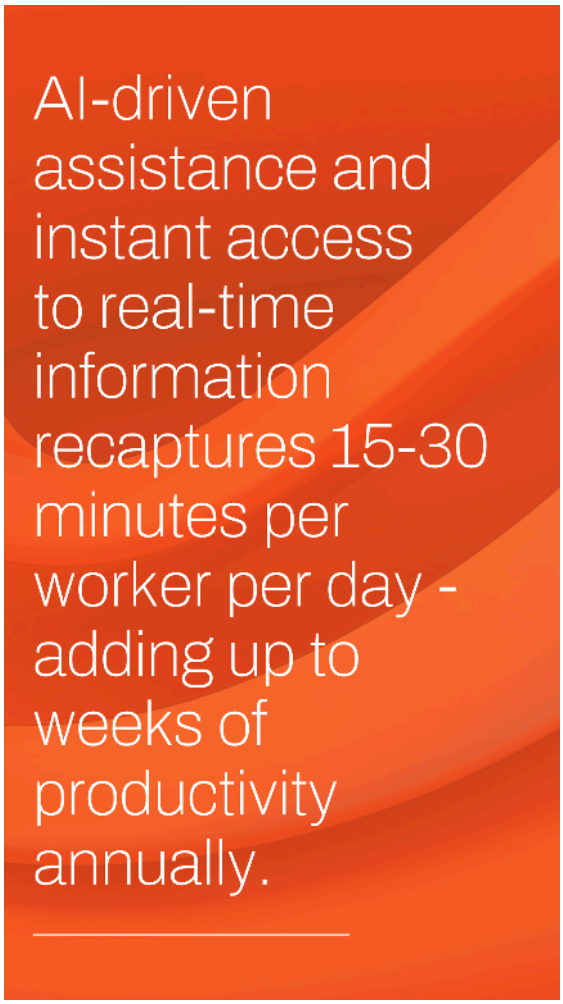
Utility executives advocating for ROE optimization can highlight measurable returns across several key dimensions:

Financial Performance: Organizations report 15-25% increases in workforce productivity while reducing operational costs through better resource allocation and reduced rework. This combination of higher output and lower costs creates substantial financial value.

Operational Excellence: Improved first-time fix rates, faster response times, and enhanced safety are operational improvements that directly benefit customers and communities, while also reducing long-term costs.

Workforce Retention: By eliminating administrative frustrations and enhancing capability development, organizations can increase job satisfaction, thereby retaining experienced workers while attracting new talent in a competitive labor market.

Competitive Positioning: Improved service delivery, enhanced safety performance, and increased customer satisfaction create competitive advantages that support rate case proceedings and regulatory compliance while strengthening community support.



Strategic Implementation: Maximizing ROE Potential

The most successful ROE strategies require comprehensive approaches that address technology, processes, and workforce development simultaneously. Leading utilities are achieving this by implementing unified platforms that eliminate system fragmentation while providing AI-powered support that amplifies human capabilities.

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This approach prioritizes real-world value, focusing on specific operational needs rather than deploying technology for its own sake. Organizations that achieve optimal ROE work to identify specific workforce challenges, implement targeted solutions, and measure results across productivity, quality, safety, and customer satisfaction.

Change management is crucial for successful ROE optimization. Workers must understand that AI tools enhance rather than threaten their roles, by providing tools that make their jobs more effective, satisfying, and valuable to the organization.

Looking Ahead: ROE as Competitive Advantage



The convergence of workforce transitions, infrastructure challenges, and growing customer expectations creates unique opportunities for the utilities that optimize ROE with strategic technology investments and operational improvements. Organizations that strengthen human capability with intelligent AI assistance will gain sustainable competitive advantages across productivity, safety, service delivery, and cost management.

These benefits extend beyond individual utility performance to entire communities. When utilities optimize their workforce to deliver faster response times, higher first-time fix rates, and enhanced safety performance, communities benefit from more reliable infrastructure, more rapid emergency response times, and stronger economic foundations.

Forward-thinking utility leaders recognize that the future belongs to organizations that maximize worker potential through strategic technology investments. The tools to achieve ROE optimization are already accessible, and the utilities that embrace them today will build the operational and workforce capabilities needed to thrive in an increasingly complex business environment.

ROE: The Foundation for Utility Success

Return on Employee provides utility executives a comprehensive, actionable framework for understanding and maximizing workforce value in an era of unprecedented operational challenges and opportunities. By focusing on optimizing ROE through AI-powered workforce augmentation, unified operational platforms, and strategic technology investments, utilities can achieve significant improvements across productivity, safety, service delivery, and financial performance.

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Research indicates that utilities implementing comprehensive ROE-driven strategies achieve superior results across all key performance dimensions while also creating more satisfying work environments and enhancing customer experiences. The technology and methodologies to support this transformation already exist, and organizations that take action will establish the workforce foundation necessary for long-term success.

For utility leaders, ROE optimization is more than operational improvement - it's a framework for developing organizations that maximize workforce potential while delivering essential services that communities depend on. The future belongs to utilities that recognize their greatest asset is their people, and invest accordingly in the technologies and approaches that amplify their capabilities.

About KloudGin

KloudGin is a cloud-native solution provider delivering the utility and public service's only true "Single Face of Work®" platform that unifies Construction Work Management, Enterprise Asset Management, and Field Service Management within one operational ecosystem. Purpose-built as the operational engine for utility and public sector workers, our AI-native platform eliminates silos between systems and processes, seamlessly connecting all work operations in real time to empower the workforce that keeps essential services running across communities worldwide. Learn more at www.kloudgin.com

About the Author



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Michael Levi currently serves as Vice President of Marketing at KloudGin, where he oversees product marketing strategy and execution. A transformative leader in energy systems and utility operations, he has pioneered innovative approaches across power generation, renewable energy, and enterprise technology for over 25 years.

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