

## Removing BSS Complexity while Enhancing the Business Customer Experience

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The level of data, products and services that Communications Service Providers (CSPs) offer has increased greatly in the last 10 years, to the point where complexity is placing unnecessary burdens on customer operations, increasing costs and negatively impacting customer experience. Coupled with new business models and increased focus on communications propositions for particular market segments such as enterprise, the complexity of managing those highest revenue customer relationships has risen significantly, and in turn is negatively impacting the ability to differentiate in

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business customer markets.

In the last few years, growth has predominantly come from emerging markets and mobile broadband; high volume but low margin markets. As the market turns to new segments and new models to drive growth, CSPs are increasingly looking to their business customers in the enterprise market, where there remains a compelling opportunity for investment, in order to achieve profitable, long-term growth.

Focus has always been given to high ARPU business customers and this will continue, but how can CSPs differentiate their services and drive growth from this complex, business customer base while

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predominantly leaving the existing O/BSS asset base in place without further complex and costly transformation? These are customers that are looking for greater value from their communications services and, in many cases, fewer suppliers. Being able to present a consolidated 'single view' of products and services, along with the necessary online care and billing analytic capabilities to help customers manage their businesses, has never been more important.

As business customers have more choice and alternatives are easily available, adding value at the experience layer to communications solutions will become an increasingly important selling point. Moving forward, requirements and expectations from business customers will be higher, expecting more analysis on usage, profitability, SLAs, pricing and more online management of their communications services. The burden of proof will be on the CSP, which means looking creatively at greater levels of enablement across the customer experience layer. Offering these capabilities today is becoming key to meeting customer expectation and tomorrow it will be a necessity.

#### **The Role of BSS in Customer Experience Management**

Most, if not all CSPs are driven by a mantra to be customer-centric. While this makes sense to most,

**“A new online, unified layer can marry multiple data sources and leave the existing O/BSS asset base in place.”**

it has proven easier said than done for many. On an operational level, the supporting functions that provision the necessary services for customers are forced to operate across a number of vertical systems for billing and CRM. This often results in a focus on improving the individual systems supporting a particular product, or the highest revenue generator, rather than enhancing the overall customer experience offering utilising all vertical systems. The challenge for CSPs is to find a horizontal approach that is scalable, enabling 'single view' capability, converged reporting and an enhanced online experience for customers.

In many respects customer management is in its third generation from a solution support point of view, and BSS transformation has been predominantly driven by the need to rationalise complex back-end systems to save cost. However, a new online layer driven by unified e-billing and analytics can unify multiple data sources and leave the existing O/BSS asset base



**“The integration layer approach consolidates data, process and product for a seamless and adaptive customer experience.”**

in place. E-enablement is seen by many as a way to provide a single view of customer and services, and so a greater focus on e-billing analytics provides a way to offer an enhanced customer experience. Customer experience in the area of e-billing is dependent on information from the existing BSS environment, an approach that utilises the value from existing assets with minimal impact on investment level and resources.

Enhancing customer experience through e-billing and analytics adds value to existing customer care, CRM and billing solutions – as well as being agile to new and future customer requirements. It can also ensure that business customers have a consolidated and consistent experience across a complete portfolio of products, regardless of the underlying BSS or differing parameters, with ‘easy to use’ performance governance to provide complete

control and transparency of their communications services throughout any organisation. Far from having a lack of data, CSPs are typically overwhelmed with data but struggle to extract meaningful and useful information in a timely fashion. CSPs know they have the most current view of customers, their portfolios and usage, but often this data exists in different systems, which causes complexity. Removing this complexity is the key. In short, CSPs can get closer to their business customers by letting those customers get closer to themselves through the provision of online service management and unification of their BSS environment.

### **Changing Landscape**

With a changing landscape comes new opportunities. CSPs are fully aware of the need to embrace the new business models, which, though mostly an organic consequence of the development of the internet, have been driven with speed and agility by the Webcos. As a result, the traditional ‘Network Operators’ are keen to reinvent themselves as ‘Smart Pipe Operators’ and avoid being consigned to the role of a utility.

For any organisation in any industry, achieving significant business growth in times of austerity requires new ideas and offerings, an increase in

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operational efficiency and absolute focus on the customer experience. This is especially true of CSPs, who carry with them a legacy of products, systems and manual processes that were engineered for a different business model, and are looking for ways to transform the effectiveness of technology and processes across group and operating company business units. While much of this transformation has focused on key O/BSS platforms including Network, Inventory and Billing from a system rationalisation perspective, transformation is now turning towards market and customer segments from the perspective of unifying and enhancing the customer experience.

To rationalize the instances of vertical legacy billing systems and thereby simplify the operation to service and charge customers, many CSPs have introduced a billing transformation programme, several of which have not been successful. History tells us that such programmes are costly, complex and have a high propensity to fail. For CSPs, billing transformation must therefore remain a long-term strategic initiative, perhaps five years away, as opposed to a short to medium term solution.

Likewise, to support the introduction and maintenance of convergent services such as Unified Communications for business customers, CSPs will

**“For CSPs, billing transformation must remain a long-term strategic initiative”**

need to automate processes and integrate disparate product catalogues to provide a seamless and rich experience.

For the business customer that currently subscribes to multiple services from the same provider, the experience is typically fractured, or at least, not seamless. There is a lack of convergence of billing system data, of customer products, of front-office support and of payments. This can be time-consuming and confusing for the customer and costly to operate for the service provider. And with a fractured view of the customer base, the CSP has a similarly limited view of true customer value and how to build future growth.

#### **Unified Data Integration: A New Approach**

If the overall objective is strong and sustainable business growth, and the strategic solution is transformation, then a new approach is required that can deliver immediate gains in efficiency and growth



and has a clear line of sight to long-term business objectives.

As a new approach to Business Support Systems (BSS), the introduction of a unified data integration layer, enabled by process analytics, can provide horizontal business-enablement that enables CSPs to leverage their existing asset base and reduce congestion on middleware. The integration layer approach offers consolidation of data, process and product for a seamless and adaptive customer experience.

Through the integration layer, data can be extracted from any number of vertical billing systems, potentially each with their own unique format, and can be transformed from a disparate data set into a common data set according to dynamic business rules. This can also be applied to unbilled records, whereby the requirement becomes real-time.

With data integration, customer records historically spread across multiple billing systems are unified to present a single view of the customer that, for the CSP, provides meaningful insight and an increased awareness of true customer value. This can significantly improve customer experience and help to support retention activities.

With a common data set, the CSP can offer one invoice or e-bill for all services, provide an adaptive online experience, and support a single point of contact for all inbound enquiries, all of which help to reduce the cost to serve and promote customer loyalty.

The integration layer also delivers a single point of reporting that presents the CSP with timely and relevant information across its business – ‘pools of knowledge’ rather than ‘oceans of data’. This is an essential enabler of meaningful and consistent customer interactions.

### **Convergent Offerings through Product Integration**

Established service providers will typically have more than two thousand tariffs across multiple vertical catalogues, and launching new products and services can take anywhere between 6-12 months. The complexity of new product introduction means that most CSPs are restricted to very few launches each

year. The dilemma exists that products and services in a convergent offering are -in addition to billable traffic - priced items, software licenses and content based. Implementing these products and service types does not require the product and tariff code based pricing mechanisms calculated in complex rating that is core to enterprise billing systems, which is a major delay factor in time to market.

Therefore, an independent catalogue of products and services must sit above the legacy catalogues that exist for metered traffic pricing, providing a unified repository for all offerings, including metered traffic, priced item, software license, and content. The repository must allow the same core product or service to be presented according to the channel that is selling it or the customer that is consuming it, in multiple currencies and languages, and with variable discounting to protect margin.

With a single view of product, orders and upgrades for all channels, including new customers, existing customer, dealers, and resellers, can be managed through a single, customisable portal. This presents a seamless customer experience for convergent offerings and can reduce the costs associated with maintaining multiple catalogues.

### **Order Management and Service Delivery through Process Integration**

The business processes associated with order management and service delivery have touch-points that spread across the customer lifecycle, including acquisition and in-life moves and changes. This is especially relevant in the delivery of convergent services, which introduce new challenges in all areas.

For customer acquisition, there are concurrent processes for service and hardware provision that have unequal delivery cycles within the same customer order. An example of a short-running cycle could be the delivery and activation of a SIM card. A long running cycle might be the deployment and configuration of an IP PBX. Process integration enables the CSP to balance these unequal delivery cycles and provide a seamless on-boarding experience.

For in-life support, there is a need to dynamically



synchronise and manage customer moves and changes, including changes to their fixed and mobile dial plan. Additionally, Unified Communications and advanced Fixed-Mobile Convergence services can introduce IP, SIP and Low Power GSM elements as part of a solution, which can involve additional systems from third-party service providers. Process integration enables the CSP to dynamically synchronise moves and changes across all service elements in real-time, removing the cost and complexity of manual support and delivering the capabilities to support volume sales.

### **Delivering Growth and Cost Efficiencies**

The unified integration layer is a non-intrusive solution that consolidates and enriches data from multiple sources, enabling the CSP to re-use existing assets and reduce congestion on middleware. The integration layer approach can deliver immediate growth and cost-efficiencies, and alignment with the overall business objectives ensures that the integration layer offers long-term benefits.

Process integration also delivers effective order automation and process orchestration across a distributed infrastructure, which can accelerate 'new offer' introduction and simplify complex multi-service propositions.

With single view capabilities it is possible to present consistent and meaningful information across

internally and externally facing applications that deliver customer stickiness through adaptive and enhanced customer experience, reduced cost to serve and improved time to market:

- CRM applications that provide the Customer Service Advisor with a single view of customer and product and, therefore, support single point of contact for the customer
- On-line e-care, e-billing and analytics applications that provide the customer with a single view of their products and services that are reflected in a single bill
- Business reporting applications that present the CSP with a single view of their business

Businesses of all sizes, from global enterprises to SMEs and sole traders, are looking for ways to efficiently manage the growing complexity of their communications services. They want to have timely access to a unified view of spend across their organisation, presented in a convenient and easy to understand manner that eliminates the need for paper bills. By allowing them to take control of their communications services, CSPs have an opportunity to enhance the loyalty of these valued customers, quickly roll-out rich new services, and reduce overall operational and support costs.

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### **About MDS**

MDS is a global provider of award-winning enterprise customer experience management solutions for service providers. MDS enables customer-centric organizations to differentiate and grow by delivering process innovation, service efficiency and optimal business performance across the areas of customer experience and customer revenue management.

MDS specialise in providing software solutions for service providers to effectively serve their business customers, enabling the agility to get closer to the most complex customers in the management of customer care and billing. MDS enable this through a solutions portfolio that contains e-billing, e-care and customer management solutions that manage the complete customer experience from initial order, through account management and billing, without disrupting existing system assets.

Headquartered in the UK, MDS has offices in North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific from which we support service provider customers internationally, including Vodafone, BT, Telefónica O2, and The Carphone Warehouse.

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