

## Self-Service OSS/BSS for CSPs

By Becky Bracken

Every interaction in our daily lives happens in real-time. So why wouldn't customers expect the same experience with their CSP? Today's consumers have smart, touch-screen devices, unlimited apps and a million different ways to spend their mobile broadband data bundle. They want instant interaction, download and listen to music, and watch a video or update their status on Twitter and Facebook. The opportunities to empower customers to handle and manage their own experience are exploding, and providers on the bleeding edge of the trend are going to see dividends in customer retention, satisfaction and service consumption.

"The rating and charging systems which were originally designed for voice services can't keep up and this results in bill shock and a poor all-around consumer experience," Jennifer Kyriakakis, founder and VP marketing, MATRIX Software says. "It makes perfect sense to expose consumers to the next generation of real-time systems which are designed specifically for data services. Mobile apps which allow them to see their balance, control their spending, and make informed purchasing decisions are the future."



### What Services Are Prime for Self-Service?

There are some CSP systems that make sense to push out to customers for a self-service experience. An Amdocs survey released in March 2012 takes a close look at customer satisfaction and the types of interactions CSPs are most often handling from their customers. By providing visibility into OSS/BSS systems, SPs can expect to see increased call deflection with self service, and call elimination--or call shed--with proactive care. "The results for customer satisfaction are revolutionary," Kyriakakis says. "For example, instead of beginning to watch a Netflix video and then getting throttled midway through as a data allowance runs out, the consumer can be proactively notified before the video starts that they need to top up their balance. In a similar way, if a consumer needs a heightened level of

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The advertisement features the CHR Solutions logo, which consists of the letters "CHR" in a bold, sans-serif font next to a stylized blue circular graphic. Below the logo, the text "click to make cloud a REALITY" is displayed, with "REALITY" in a larger, bold, blue font. In the bottom right corner, there is a blue rectangular button with the text "CHRSolutions.com" in white.

QoS – to make an important business Facetime call, for example – then they should be able to buy a bandwidth boost. The number of new services, applications and experiences CSPs can provide is literally limitless and they are all based on allowing the consumer to make their own choices in real-time.”

Answers to the survey question “For which of the following reasons would you say you have called a service providers contact centre for help?” are particularly revealing:

1. Network problem or coverage – 37 percent
2. How to use service features – 35 percent
3. How to understand various rate/ cost plans – 33 percent
4. Add / change/ delete existing plans and features – 29 percent
5. How to use equipment – 28 percent
6. How to understand a bill – 28 percent
7. Dispute a charge or billing issue – 27 percent
8. Make changes to account settings and preferences – 21 percent
9. Make a payment or set up an auto payment – 21 percent
10. Buy or upgrade to a new phone – 20 percent
11. Help with top up phone credit – 15 percent
12. Cancel contract (obviously, this is not a good candidate for self service) – 14 percent

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13. Escalate a case – 12 percent

Many of these interactions can, and by all means should be automated today. By leveraging OSS and BSS systems and self-service applications, CSPs stand to streamline customer service, create a better customer experience, drive down support and call center costs.

“In order to increase customer satisfaction, service providers need to go beyond just providing total visibility to OSS/ BSS systems,” Nibha Aggarwal, Director, Customer Management Product Marketing for Amdocs says. “Customers today ‘expect’ proactive notifications from service providers, so SPs need to put some intelligence in their systems, in addition to visibility, to identify emerging issues and problems, and take proactive action before the customer has to make a phone call.”

#### Automating the ‘How do I?’ Calls

Aggarwal uses the example of the issues owners of the Samsung Galaxy are having with email

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configurations. “The SP should proactively notify all customers using Samsung Galaxy to inform them of the impending issue that may affect them,” Aggarwal says. “In fact, SPs should even go a step further and fix this problem proactively before the customers are even aware of this issue. In terms of ‘how’ the customers want to be notified, email is at the top of the list, followed by SMS.”

The Amdocs survey indicates about 56 percent of customers have a problem with either the device or SP during the first year of purchase. Of these, around 82 percent of the calls are “How do I” type of calls that have the potential to be deflected. About 46 percent of the support calls during first year of purchase of smartphone consumers are, “How do I..” type of calls.

Deflecting these types of customer service calls can mean a big savings in OPEX for CSPs in reduced call center staff and happier, better-served customers. And OSS/BSS players like Amdocs claim they can cut the cost of serving these customers in half.

“From our past experience, Amdocs can deflect up to 50 percent of these ‘How do I...’ type of calls,” Aggarwal says. “Hence, up to a quarter, 23 percent, of the support calls during first year of purchase have the potential to be deflected to a smartphone self-service channel. As the cost of servicing a call via self service is about a tenth--in developed countries--of a live call, so SPs can see up to a 15 percent reduction in support costs to reduce OPEX; 80 percent reduction in support costs to be conservative, for 23 percent of the calls.”

Of course, there are limitations on the amount of control CSPs should offer their customers. These limitations can easily be placed into three primary categories: technological, customer-centric and CSP-centric.

### **1. System/ technology limitations to self service**

“Ironically, sometimes the biggest problems cannot be self-served,” Aggarwal says. “For example, if the customer is having a network problem, they cannot connect to the network to self serve or get a proactive notification, and yet we know the survey shows that network/ coverage issue gets the most calls.”

### **2. Customer rejects self service**

For instance, billing disputes where the customer wants to talk to an agent to resolve an issue can’t be made self serve. Buying or upgrading a plan or device is potentially another area where customers want to compare options and may want to speak with an agent or a retail store representative before making a final decision.

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### **3. SPs do not want to make a function self serve**

Providers might not want to allow subscribers to cancel a contract without speaking to a representative.

Customer self service for CSPs can help create a more personalized service that will make them feel more valued and engaged as a customer and decrease churn. Everything from throttling to billing will work together in real time to give consumers ultimate control of their experience and how they spend their broadband bundle.

“In time, CSPs will be offering hybrid services that include a streaming video subscription of 30 hours of video per month across YouTube, Netflix and Hulu,” Kyriakakis says. “The customer will be able to choose to turbo boost for up to five hours during off-peak times, and also accumulate bonus points for certain sponsored or subsidized content. They can then cash in those bonus points in real-time for additional video time, upgrades, merchandise or other services. They’ll also have the option to gift a certain amount of their data allowance to other family members who need it more.”

As the systems that power this type of functionality get smarter, there will be better personalization of services for subscribers based on their behavior, and location or context so customers will feel they’re having a more personalized experience. The result: happier customers who spend more and cost less to support; a win-win by any measure.