

## Managing the Complete Customer Lifecycle

By Sanjay Kumar

For CSPs, customer interactions fall into three basic categories: “the good, the bad and the ugly.” Each of these interactions has a different impact on a CSP with respect to corporate objectives, finance, customer goodwill, and brand reputation.

Obviously, the ultimate goal is to have only the “good” interactions, which yield a stronger, long-term relationship with customers, increasing positive sentiment and ultimately generate more revenue and customers. These touch points are typically more proactive in nature. The CSP takes the lead to reach out to customers and present them with offers or information that enhances their overall experience.

On the other side of the spectrum, “the bad” occurs when the customers are the key drivers in contacting the CSP because they are unhappy with their experience and their expectations have not been met. Whether the catalyst for contact is an unfilled service promise, recurring service issues, or billing discrepancies, the customer viewpoint is that the provider should be meeting their needs at all times, especially in today’s landscape, which has no shortage of provider alternatives.

### From “Bad” to Worse

“The bad” can quickly turn into “the ugly” if the CSP



is not able to rapidly identify the issue and resolve it to the customer’s satisfaction. This mishandling can have some serious and painful consequences for the CSP. For example, the resources needed to address the issue can have significant costs, especially considering those resources are often pulled from other critical activities in an attempt to fix the issue as efficiently as possible. In addition, think of the other customers waiting for service as the existing CSP resources are redirected. Time equals money, and it adds up quickly.

This can have further implications for the waiting customers, who become more frustrated at the situation as their time is consumed addressing a service they expect to work flawlessly. Enter social media, and this frustration can easily turn into negative comments on Facebook, Twitter, and other social communities reaching thousands of customers and prospects and inflicting serious damage on the CSP’s reputation. Worse yet, the customer could

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become so fed up that he or she decides to leave for good. The price of “winning back” customers is extremely high – significantly more than acquiring them in the first place.

These are all revenue impacting consequences that a CSP will contend with unless it can focus on providing the best possible experience to all customers – not just from a service assurance perspective, but from every aspect of the customer lifecycle, which includes service fulfillment, service assurance, marketing, billing and everything in between. A successful customer experience management (CEM) approach will allow a CSP to proactively manage all interactions throughout this cycle, providing only the “good” interactions, where the CSP is in the driver’s seat making the proactive contact to enhance the customer relationship, and avoiding the “bad” and “ugly” that can result in high costs and customer churn.

#### **Making It “Good”**

So how does a CSP ensure that all customer interactions remain positive throughout the entire lifecycle? Ultimately it comes down to this:

- Making every point in the customer lifecycle as issue-free as possible
- Identifying and resolving issues quickly and minimizing disruptions
- Initiating proactive, positive interactions
- Leveraging tools that provide an end-to-end view of the customer’s experience and enabling immediate action to ensure positive interactions and satisfied customers

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The perfect relationship is one in which the customer never has contact with the service provider, except to upgrade or add on--a positive interaction because it equates to more revenue from a service provider perspective. For a CSP, the key to perfecting its customer interactions is to have an end-to-end view of the customer’s experience throughout the entire lifecycle, across the silos, organizations, and processes that currently exist behind the scenes, away from the customer’s view. They must have real-time visibility into all the customer’s interactions and potential impacts/roadblocks or opportunities that may impact their experience, either positively or negatively.

#### **Beyond Issue Identification**

However, visibility alone is not enough; simply seeing the problem is useless if action cannot be taken immediately to right the issue. CSPs must have the ability to address the problem, whatever it may be. Whether this allows them to preemptively resolve the issue before it negatively impacts the customer or to resolve the issues raised by the customer quickly so that expectations are met, actionable visibility is the key to a CSP’s success in maintaining a positive customer experience. The challenge in achieving this lies in the fact that behind the “magic curtain” of that united front, there is a complex web



of siloed B/OSS environments, organizations, and processes that make it difficult for a CSP to gain that 360-degree actionable end-to-end view of the customer.

Fortunately, today's CSPs are aided by the availability of technology that gives them direct insight into the network and helps them proactively manage and monitor their business processes, allowing them to ensure that every customer interaction is the best it can be. Ripping and replacing existing systems is not a viable option for the majority of providers, but by utilizing business process management (BPM) platforms with existing software systems, managers can easily equip themselves with the real-time visibility they need to monitor, analyze, control and improve the execution of business processes in real-time to enhance their customers' experiences.

Better yet, CSPs can use BPM as a tool to engage in continuous business process improvement driven by an easily adaptable business process view that is decoupled from the underlying systems, allowing for easy changes to meet new customer and business requirements without requiring IT to consume a lot of time and effort. This, combined with a real-time holistic view across all operational areas, allows CSPs to increase operational responsiveness when it comes to network or operational issue resolutions or acting upon a positive opportunity at any touch point throughout the customer's life cycle. This provides the ultimate key to customer experience management and overall customer satisfaction. As the telecom landscape continues to evolve and more and more service options become available, this technology becomes increasingly important for any CSP hoping to stay competitive in today's rapidly changing and increasingly competitive environment.

### Creating the Positive Interaction

Beyond minimizing the potential negative interactions that can arise, building that nirvana with the customer requires positive proactive communication on the part of the service provider. CSPs have access to a wealth of customer data--usage patterns, profiles, preferences, location, etc.--that they can use to enhance and build positive interactions with their customers that will benefit both parties. BPM, combined with CEP, can build a compelling CEM platform that allows CSPs to build the capability to immediately analyze and correlate multiple variables, enabling them to reach out to customers with the right message or offer at the exact right time. This capability can be used, for example, to help customers avoid bill shock by providing real-time usage information so a CSP can proactively reach out to let the customer know when they are incurring

## BPM combined with CEP can build a compelling CEM platform.

exorbitant charges due to roaming, or even offer the customer a better pricing plan based on their usage pattern. This enables the CSP to course correct before the customer has a chance to complain.

A CEM tool powered by BPM and CEP enables CSPs to better develop and manage multiple marketing campaigns by providing them with the combination of three powerful capabilities that run continuously and in real-time: (a) in-depth visibility and analytics into customer call patterns and each promotion; (b) strong sense and responsive capabilities allowing users to detect usage patterns providing near predictive capability; and, (c) the agility to immediately adjust promotional programs and processes when needed to ensure that the offer is optimal to a customer's preference.

Combining CEM and BPM can empower CSPs to see, sense and respond to real time opportunities so they can proactively reach out to the customer, producing several positive effects. First, the customer is happy to receive customized service, and second, the CSP has avoided receiving an expensive bill dispute call. This same capability can be used to identify when a customer is unhappy and may churn based on his or her usage patterns, which allows the service provider to proactively reach out and "save" them before they leave. Or perhaps it's offering value-add services based on the customer's profile, social networking preferences, usage and other specific attributes associated with them, which will improve their overall experience beyond just the relationship they have with their service provider. The ability to sift through the mountains of rich data available for each customer and translate it in real-time into something actionable is a critical advantage that will help providers improve their customers' experience. If you cannot do this in real-time, the value and the opportunity you had with that customer at that specific point in time is quickly lost.

Any service provider with a pulse understands that today's competitive telecom landscape has become increasingly complicated and that competition continues to grow steadily. As in any industry, customers are vital to a company's success, and in order to remain a viable player in the space, CSPs must place their focus on proactive customer experience management.