Pipeline

Knowledge Is Power

Profitably Accelerate Customer-Focused Delivery and Management of Complex Enterprise Services
By Bill Otto

Are you challenged to satisfy the growing demands of your enterprise customers? Is lack of automation impacting your profitability? Are you struggling to deliver and manage complex and virtualized service offerings such as Virtual Ethernet LANs?
While true for all services, these challenges are especially significant for enterprise services. Let us explore each of these challenges.

Customer Demands

Large corporations have gained increasing power. Competition has provided them with multiple choices in Service Providers, so their procurement organizations can demand reduced pricing and increased features.

They are demanding flexibility, control, and improved experience. Despite Service Level Agreements, Service Providers have limited insight and many customers have no insight into service problems.

Attracting and retaining enterprise customers is hindered by lack of a real-time, customer-centric understanding of enterprise business services or physical network assets. Service Providers don't know in real-time what services or customers are impacted by a network change or fault or what level of service they are actually providing. So Service Providers are unable to provide proactive

support to their most important customers, such as fixing network faults that impact high priority customers before performing routine or low-profile troubleshooting.

Yet, increasing customer retention reduces churn and has substantial impact on the bottom-line.

Profitability Pressures

Manually intensive operational processes are eating into Service Provider revenue growth and minimizing profit. Every step in the service delivery lifecycle takes too long and is too complicated, resulting in delayed service revenues, high initial and ongoing costs, and customers lost to more customer-focused, leaner competitors.

Service Providers do not have real-time insight into utilization by location or by product, which makes forecasting or targeting specific growth a challenge. They also lack a dynamic registry of services or a real-time service catalog of network capabilities.

Service design and deployment are not only slow, but also subject to error and rework because they rely on historical network inventory records. Service designers do not trust the inventory systems because the systems do not model network inventory accurately, so double-check their designs manually. Such rework and labor-intensive efforts are costly and ultimately result in delayed service introduction and poor customer service.

Managing Complexity

Today's enterprise services are becoming more and more complex to use and for Service Providers to support. Service Providers do not have cost effective delivery solutions for complex data services such as Carrier Ethernet, Gigabit Ethernet, IP RAN, VPLS over MPLS, video, remote storage, and cloud computing. Mapping virtualized services such as VPNs to the Service Provider's infrastructure is pushing management systems to their limits.

At the same time, Network Operations and Provisioning teams are faced with managing tens to hundreds of disparate operations systems, all with different processes and none working very well.

Especially for enterprise services, the processes and tasks are complex and require extensive training. Processes are typically focused more on the network than on the customer.

Clearly, manual processes are expensive and error-prone and, combined with inaccurate network data, cause rework and increase the Service Provider's cost.

Inflexible legacy operations systems and network devices cause significant inefficiencies that lead to poor customer service and lost market share to competitors. They also make it difficult for Service Providers to meet revenue, cost, and profitability targets.

Two fundamental capabilities can make significant inroads to overcoming all of these challenges: using accurate network data in service design and provisioning, and mapping customers to their services and network devices.

Using Accurate Network Data in Service Design and Provisioning

Traditional network inventory systems based on manual processes are typically only 40-70% accurate. Even when inventory systems are made accurate, they are out of date the next day as new services are added and changes are made to circuit designs. A better approach is to use a provisioning system that is based on discovered data and that feeds inventory systems.

Using actual network configurations, instead of legacy data sources, as the basis of all functions results in accurate service design, provisioning, and assurance and reduces errors and costly rework. Service designs are made based on actual rather than historical network information, drastically reducing error fallout.

With this approach, service design, assign, provisioning, and activation take minutes instead of days, greatly increasing productivity and reducing the time from order to revenue. So Service Providers can increase their service revenues by bringing services to market rapidly and by configuring, activating, and managing services faster and with fewer errors.

Design costs are reduced by 70% with consolidated, current, accurate views of network inventory data, according to Stratecast. Furthermore, automated design optimization improved deployed capacity usage and, as a result, increased revenue by 8%.

The availability of a single source of accurate service and network data also allows diverse departments, from Marketing to Network Operations, to provide consistent, accurate information to customers. For example, Sales can see whether a customer service can be deployed and by when. This results in improved customer service.

Reconciliation across the service and network layers allows Service Providers to see how services have been implemented, manage the services, and resolve any problems expeditiously, thus increasing customer satisfaction.

Accurate, real-time network information combined with task automation provide major cost savings to Service Providers.

Mapping Customers to Their Services and Network Devices

Separating network- and service-facing resources provides the flexibility required to embrace new services, network devices, and technologies.

Mapping customers to their services and to the network devices being used by the service enables proactive customer engagement and improved customer service. Stratecast has found that without such mapping 40% of customers and circuits were misaligned.

When a network fault occurs, the faulty device is related to the services using it and which customers are affected. Customer Care representatives can then proactively notify the customer of the outage and communicate the action plan. In addition, operations can then prioritize network problem resolution based on number or category of customers impacted.

Profitably Accelerate Customer-Focused Service Delivery and Management

Using a current and accurate view of the network results in a highly automated environment that speeds accurate service design, provisioning, and delivery of complex enterprise data services. The end result: revenues are increased from faster time to market; costs are reduced by removing complexity and increasing accuracy; and, combined with mapping customers to their services and network devices, customer satisfaction is improved.