



EXPERT OPINION:

Removing BSS complexity while enhancing the business customer experience

The level of data, products and services offered by communications service providers (CSPs) has increased greatly in the last 10 years, to the point where complexity is placing unnecessary burdens on customer operations, increasing costs while 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 business customer markets.

In the last few years growth has predominantly come from emerging markets and mobile broadband; high volume, but low profit markets. As the market turns to new segments and new models to drive growth, CSPs are increasingly looking to 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, enterprise customer base while 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, it has proven easier said than done to many. On an operational level, the supporting functions that provision the necessary services for customers are forced to operate across a number of vertical or rather silo 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 a 'single view' capability, converged reporting and an enhanced on-line 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 in place.

E-enablement is seen by many as a way to provide a single view of customers 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 dependant 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.

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Drew Rockwell, CEO of MDS, an award-winning provider of business customer experience management solutions for CSPs, discusses the opportunities to differentiate services and remove back office OSS/BSS complexity with dedicated enterprise e-billing and analytics.

VanillaPlus Jargon Buster

O/BSS = Operations / Business Support Systems
SLA = Service Level Agreement