

OSS: NEXT-GEN OSS

SUPPORT SERVICE

IN AN NGN WORLD TELECOMS IS MORE ABOUT DELIVERING SERVICES AND LESS ABOUT RUNNING NETWORKS. OSS IS CATCHING UP, SAYS PRISCILLA AWDE

Operational Support Systems have been something of a poor relation when it comes to investment, but operators are now spending on next generation OSS (NGOSS) as they realise that legacy systems prevent them exploiting the full revenue saving and performance potential of next-generation networks.

In the next-generation world, networks are more intelligent, self-repairing, faster, efficient, more flexible and incorporate more functionality. Designed as service delivery platforms, NGNs are creating something of a seismic shock affecting internal working cultures and all legacy technology and platforms. This is especially true for OSS, which traditionally runs, manages and controls network functions.

Indeed, the whole orientation of telcos has shifted from a network to a service focus. Telecoms is now less about running networks and more about delivering multimedia services to any device anywhere, fast and reliably and there are few second chances for those getting it wrong.

“Operators have done a good job of getting core OSS to support networks but if they know what is happening in networks, it doesn’t mean they know what’s happening to services,” explains Larry Goldman, partner, Analysys Mason. “Now there is very strong emphasis in measuring the quality of services rather than the performance and reliability of networks.”

According to Analysys Mason, telecoms software will see a CAGR of 7.9% between 2009 and 2014. Service delivery platforms are growing at 15% CAGR per annum and service management at 17% CAGR, reflecting the growth of OSS spend to support NGNs.

As operators shift more towards application performance and the impact on customers, they must correlate service data held in fulfilment systems with network operations data. Change is now happening: silos are being rationalised,

data cleaned and made more readily available to all processes. Any uncertainties about what network equipment will be available when are being resolved.

Sanjay Mewada, VP strategy, Netcracker Technology, knows greater efficiencies can be achieved by associating services with networks and advises against porting legacy OSS to the NGN environment. “Operators haven’t captured how services are created so don’t have repeatable processes. Although eight out of ten steps are the same to deploy each new iteration of DSL for instance, most operators must recreate all steps. There are systems which understand the relationship between services and networks so service bundles can be created faster by re-using elements.”

According to Mewada, the future is NGN and operators should now be buying NGOSS.

“NGOSS is proprietary but, based on common programming languages, is open and configurable so anyone can work on it. NGOSS handles layers 1-7 thereby overcoming the traditional divide between the network and IT application layers,” he adds.

NGOSS automatically manages and understands network constraints and prioritises services according to pre-defined business parameters. Mark Nicholson, CTO of Subex, believes NGOSS must map intent, fair use and understand, quantify and model goals accurately and according to operators’ aims. “Taking a service-oriented approach means understanding and modelling services and customers’ priorities. Networks are now running not just as bit carriers but as service carriers.”

Nicholson believes that legacy OSS sits in the middle, meaning “it has the worst of both worlds with a changing network below and changing business environment above. It has been keeping up but not fast or efficiently enough. While OSS used to tell networks how to send bits from A-Z,

NGOSS tells networks what it wants to do and lets them decide how and the best route.”

Nicholson estimates the level of network intelligence has increased tenfold.

In the old world, OSS was not real time and there was a one-to-one correlation between services and network - very different from the dynamic, one-to-many IP environment. “In IP, the line between OSS and network control blurs and overlaps with policy type platforms; more configuration is done on-line requiring more active feedback and proactive capacity management. A bridge is needed between the separate IT and network worlds,” says Peter Briscoe, executive director, innovation, Telcordia. A trend he suggests is evidenced by procurement moving from CTOs to CIOs.

The ultimate goal is to exploit the NGN promise which requires investment and change especially to OSS systems. “New services flowing in networks are application aware and able to move traffic presenting huge potential,” says Filippo Galimberti, business development manager, Europe, at Cisco. “Operators need to transform those architectures into business and therefore need new OSS to exploit the advantages of technology changes. Taking a business approach is a paradigm change which must be reflected in OSS.”

Convergence and cloud applications are also changing the OSS landscape.

Johanne Mayer, director, communications services at Alcatel-Lucent believes in harmonisation, standardisation, aligning fixed and wireless sides and opening systems up to developers. “Operators must consolidate. They now have three fault management systems – backbone, wireless and fixed and three teams to fix faults which must be harmonised to get one fault reporting system. The question is what to migrate to new system and what information to make available to other parts of the system and to developers.” ■