

Achieving the intelligent, personal touch

As customers communicate with your network through multiple channels they expect a seamless, highly personalised cross-media experience. Mark Dye reports on the quest to achieve efficiencies and cost savings throughout the customer lifecycle, while ensuring enterprise-level brand control and regulatory compliance.



Hugh Roberts: Methodologies, processes and systems architectures aren't being developed

The idea that operators need to have a unified view of their customers as product ranges expand is nothing new. Nor is the idea that customer experience should be everything. Of course, getting there is the issue for most. So, too, is the idea of deriving cost savings and efficiencies from multiple customer communications channels.

As Hugh Roberts, an independent communications & media strategist, puts it, "Achieving cost savings across the OSS, BSS and CRM domain is easy, but to do so whilst remaining competitive in an evolving content-driven landscape is much harder."

He believes that operators are failing to maximise the revenue impact of their customer and usage data by turning it into business knowledge available to the communications value chain.

"Nor are they developing methodologies, processes and systems architectures that are capable of delivering near real-time customer experience management (CEM) responsiveness to personalise the service interaction environment as is increasingly being required," he says.

Indeed, a recent report from **Oracle**, entitled 'State of Readiness' suggests as few as 12% are able to run detailed analyses of customer

behaviour to spot trends and identify customer segments. Yet over time customer relationship management (CRM) and, to a certain degree, converged billing have been deployed in an attempt to address such issues.

However, as Judi Gill, director of Market Analysis and Strategy, **Clarity**, notes, rather than being an umbrella that unified underlying systems, CRM can be more of a façade, merely shielding an external user from the complexities below.

"What this meant was that all the individual provisioning, assurance and many other process areas remained as silos for each product and service," she says. "Adding to the complexity is the arbitrary delineation between OSS and BSS, both from a systems perspective and also organisationally, that meant the implementation of end-to-end automation was very difficult and costly to maintain."

Yossi Zohar, marketing director, **Amdocs** also identified the silo problem. "What's continually undermining attempts to improve the multi-channel experience is the persistence of the siloed IT systems that sit behind the different service provider channels," he says.

Zohar believes these prevent service providers from delivering a simple and consistent shopping experience to customers – something which is getting worse with the increasing ►



Araceli del Rio: a virtuous circle of insight and capabilities is required



adoption of smartphones, mobile broadband and new connected devices such as tablets and Netbooks.

Araceli del Rio, marketing manager for customer experience management, **Nokia Siemens Networks** is focused on automation and personalisation. "To provide a customer experience that wins new subscribers and keeps them happy, it takes a virtuous circle of insight and capabilities to drive personalised, automated and proactive business processes, all in real time," she says.

While Colin Rickard, EMEA managing director, **DataFlux**, adds: "If you don't know which services a customer currently uses it's impossible to understand their needs and to market new services efficiently."

Bell has been using DataFlux to help it cross-sell and up-sell services to existing customers in Canada after realising that its ability to do so was being hampered by a lack of accurate customer information within its database of over 24 million records.

Having been in a position where it was unable to confidently identify which services were already being used at a customer address and whether that address was even accurate, Bell was able to eliminate over 5m duplicate records from its database and set in place a system that constantly checks and corrects customer addresses as they are entered.

Zohar points out: "Operators must look at all their sales channels and devise a holistic strategy to improve the current shopping experience."

This means not only streamlining and simplifying the shopping experience in each channel, but also to ensuring all channels consistently use the same underlying product data and business rules.

Igor Sarenac, vice president of communication worldwide at **Convergys** rues the lack of consistent policies and messages to customers. "With no consistent application of business policies and no consistent message to the customer, it's really this slow time to convey messages that impacts the customer experience and their decisions which immediately impact in terms of loyalty and revenue."

So in order to build an appropriate customer experience, operators must know about their customers' needs and commercial value in near real time.

This, says Paul Skillen, president EMEA, **Subex**, means that employees in customer service need to know how quickly to respond to a call, how much time they have to deal with issues and how much resource they can use to resolve problems.

"Spending €50 to satisfy a customer who generates €10 in profit per annum is not a good commercial strategy," he adds. "Annoying a customer spending €100 per month for the sake of a €10 problem is equally foolish. So the key to success is access to real time or near real time customer information."

Other examples of achieving efficiencies come from deflecting calls to low cost self-service channels and ensuring a 'one and done' service to limit repeat calls.


According to Anandan Jayaraman, chief product and strategy officer, **Connectiva Systems**, both strategies have been widely adopted with best-in-class CRM even though there is much work to be done as customers increasingly look for self-service from 'edge' devices such iPads and set top boxes.

"Enterprise brand control is a challenge particularly with indirect channel heavy operations where it requires more rigour and discipline to ensure consistency of message across all franchisees, dealers and partners," he says. "It is critical that the brand promise and the value proposition be centrally managed and over-communicated to the ecosystem."

Stephan Gatien, global solution manager, **SAP Industry Solutions**, believes that this multi-channel effect will see an increasing need for transparency, seamless experience and personalisation for customers with the percentage of self-service activities growing steadily.

"Maximising any opportunity at the 'point of contact' whether this point of contact is a self-service transaction, a device-based activity or a call to a call centre will become even more essential," he says.

Of course, this will only be possible by clearly understanding the profile and consumption pattern of each customer.

On the other hand, Gatien believes the growth in self-service should create more opportunities to transfer some of the analytical capabilities back to customers themselves to review their activities and mine their own data. And that is good news for carriers all round. 



Paul Skillen: Spending €50 to satisfy a customer who generates €10 in profit per annum is not good strategy



Yossi Zohar: Siloes undermine attempts to improve the multichannel experience