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Service Management Modernization – Benefits & Challenges



HEAVY LIFTING ANALYST NOTES
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As one of the world's largest wholesale voice carrier with a global Internet backbone that carries over 25% of the global Internet traffic, Tata Communications plays a key role in providing connectivity to its 5,000 enterprise customers (including two thirds of the Fortune 500) and 2,000 service provider partners. Supporting these customers, Tata Communications has over 8,500 employees of which around 2,400 are field reps, working to fix any issues that arise with the network.

Having grown through acquisition Tata Communications had amassed a number of service management systems and, as a result, suffered from low visibility into its overall operations and poor operational efficiency. Low visibility had a negative impact on customer satisfaction while the lack of operational efficiency was a drag on profitability. To resolve this, the operator began a project, around three years ago, to deploy a new customer service management platform across its entire business. The solution included field service management and IT service management.

Phase 1: Customer contact center

The project was delivered over three phases (customer contact center, field service and the Network Operations Center) over the course of a year. The first phase, which took around six months to implement, was deployment in the contact center for enterprise customers. This involved case, incident, problem, change and configuration management, as well as service request and order management all presented in a single unified customer facing enterprise portal. The prior service management tool had simply logged tickets in response to customer calls. It did not proactively enable effective ticket resolution. The system had also been heavily customized and had not been upgraded for some time as there were concerns that an upgrade might have an unforeseen impact on other IT systems.

With the new system, information from monitoring tools is fed directly into the service management platform. There is no longer a need for customer service reps to switch between multiple platforms in order to track and resolve issues. If there is a network or service anomaly, this automatically generates an event that is logged against the appropriate configuration items. The event management platform can identify that a customer is having issues (e.g., degradation of service due to packet loss) and the system proactively creates an incident or a query and notifies the customer, through the enterprise portal, that they are aware of an issue and that it is being investigated. This has greatly increased the customers' visibility into incident remediation and led to a significant improvement in customer experience. Log files associated with an incident ticket are made available to the customer through the portal, along with regular performance reports.

Phase 2: Field service

The second phase, which took around four months to implement, involved deploying a field service management system for technicians who work on planned maintenance as well as network fault resolution. Previously these activities were managed using spreadsheets. Now the system is fully integrated into the work order management system. Jobs are assigned based on the known skills and location of workers, as well as parts availability, which has led

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to a big increase in the number of first-time completions. Through a video chat capability in the field technician's mobile device they are able to liaise with more experienced personnel to resolve issues they had not previously tackled. That has driven an increase in productivity and boosted customer satisfaction as issues are dealt with faster. Work orders related to network and service incidents can be prioritized over regular maintenance and the work schedules updated on the fly.

Phase 3: Network operations center

The third phase, which took around three months to implement, was to replace the core service management platform in the NOC. The system covers incident, problem, change and configuration management for the network. The new platform was integrated with an existing inventory management system in order to correlate between physical assets and customer facing services. For example if a fiber is cut Tata Communications now has real-time awareness about which services and customers might be impacted. As such they can proactively manage the communication of network issues with the customer. Moreover, they can see what the potential SLA penalties might be in order to prioritize remediation work and create the necessary work orders.

The biggest benefit for the NOC has been increased visibility of customer service and better understanding of the business impact of incidents. They have seen a big productivity uplift. When there was an incident in the past the NOC would be inundated with calls from customer facing staff looking for status update. Now customer service reps have real time visibility into network issues (and the steps being taken to resolve them) directly from the service management platform; there is no need to call the NOC. Customer support can push updates to the portal so that the customer is kept abreast, resulting in a marked uplift in customer satisfaction. This increased transparency of information results in fewer calls from customers to the call center and fewer calls from the call center to the NOC.

Challenges and benefits

As with any large IT project the greatest challenge in implementing the new service management platform at Tata Communications was adapting to change. Staff were used to working in certain ways with specific tools. As the benefits of the new system, for customers and staff themselves, became apparent this internal resistance melted away. Another challenge worth flagging was the need to build some new APIs to integrate with network monitoring tools that weren't already part of the API catalog.

These challenges were far outweighed by the benefits of the new service management system. Through process simplification, faster approvals and tight integration between customer service and field management, the operator was able to reduce fulfillment times by 35% on average. There was an increase in productivity with the number of tickets resolved per representative each day rising 26% thanks to improved ticket routing and tracking. The move from spreadsheets to a comprehensive field management platform allowed real-time dashboards to be created for management and other stakeholders. Overall, the modernization of service management across the call center, field operations and the NOC led to an improvement in customer satisfaction as reflected in an uplift in Tata Communications' Net Promoter Score in the months following the project's successful implementation. You can find out more about the Tata Communications service management solution in this case study [here](#).

This article is sponsored by ServiceNow.

— James Crawshaw, Senior Analyst, Intelligent Networks and Automation, Heavy Reading

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Big 5G Event Fireside Chat: Starry COO Alex Moulle-Berteaux

16:42

Light Reading's Mike Dano discussed how to build an affordable fixed 5G Internet service with Alex Moulle-Berteaux, chief operating officer for Starry, at the Big 5G Event in Denver on May 8.



f5: Three Essential Components for 5G Security

6:49

Jim Hodges of Heavy Reading interviews Geoff Petersen from F5 Networks at Light Reading's Big 5G Event.

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- Carriers
- Consumers
- Components vendors
- Huawei
- China
- Trump
- No one

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