

## Evolving into a Digital Service Provider (DSP)

By Jesse Cryderman

Ten years ago, AT&T offered voice, Internet, and networking services. There was no mobile offering, U-verse or Digital Life, and the company has just merged with SBC communications. AT&T's tagline by 2005 was "The World's Networking Company" and it was an exemplary communications service provider (CSP) of the time.

Compare that to the [AT&T website](http://AT&T website) today: the company now sells cell phones, many flavors of U-verse, Digital Life, DirecTV, wearable devices, cloud services, cybersecurity, M2M offerings, and more bundling and incentive options than you can imagine. The website automatically queues up a location-specific marketing incentive (in my case, a \$100 bill credit for switching a line of service to AT&T).

Today, many CSPs are evolving into Digital Service Providers — or DSPs — a classification that includes communication functions and a whole lot more. In the near future, communications will no longer be the end service, but the enabling component of digital lifestyles and experiences.

Service providers must adapt or they drown in the riptide of alternative service providers and new marketing entrants. To successfully evolve into DSPs, CSPs must evaluate every touch point of the customer lifecycle and compare their capabilities and tools against the dynamic demands of the cloud-era customer.

### Pre-sales

Digital experiences have become the cornerstone of just about every customer experience, driven in part by the rapid spread of customer activity among web, mobile, and social channels. For example, according to IDC, 70 percent of the buying cycle takes place before customers ever engage with a live sales person. That means that the first connection a prospective customer has with your company, and possibly the last, is the result of the quality of the digital experience you have created.



The majority of consumers prefer automated self-service and many of them now use their mobile devices to connect with their chosen brands. Today's digital ecosystem doesn't just represent a shift in shopping habits, but also a shift in power. Customers are in control. They decide how, when, and where they want to engage with your brand—whether it is in the store, over the phone, on the web, or via the recommendation of a trusted friend. When they do interact

with your brand, they expect you to quickly know who they are and what they need, and to seamlessly recognize and engage them at every touchpoint—consistently.

Products like Apptium's Eportal solution are doing just that by creating a unified experience within

multi-channel sales environments. These solutions will be increasingly more important as CSPs evolve into DSPs, and expand their sales and partner-sales channels. Primarily to create a consistent experience and maintain quality control through order fulfillment, but also to gauge partner-sales channel performance and analyze key metrics related to customer trends such as service and device adoption.

### Digital catalog and personalization

In order to compete in the digital economy, CSPs must essentially become digital-services retailers of hundreds, if not thousands, of product and product variations. They must be able to rapidly design, sell, launch, and scale solutions, integrate their offerings seamlessly with third-party solutions and numerous partners, and constantly manage dynamic promotions and incentive bundling to



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stay ahead of competitors and meet the needs of an increasingly demanding user base. To top it all off, there are more sales channels than ever before and many operators offer varying products under different brands in different regions.

If catalog innovation simply required the ability to add ever-more SKUs to the product inventory, operators wouldn't be facing these problems. However, the challenge is much more complex. Service providers aren't selling potatoes, but a vast number of digital products, services, and experiences that are both dynamic and interdependent; and might originate from other vendors. What is required is a solution that can configure and manage all available items, including telecoms-network services, content services, billing services, physical devices, accessories and third-party products or services.

The next-gen catalog system must exhibit real-time contextual awareness of what services are available, per inventory, per region, and per customer. It must understand the inter-dependencies of the product or bundle, and be cognizant of marketing incentives and interface with loyalty programs. Finally, it must incorporate real-time recommendations based on big data analytics and interface with all organizational units.

Companies like Ericsson and Sigma Systems offer next-generation catalog products that manage products from conception to end of life, and directly impact the order-to-cash process. Asialnfo helps operators leverage [omin-channel CRM](#) to ensure a consistent customer experience. Other companies like Global Capacity and Megaport are providing dynamic interfaces to thousands of network operators in regions around the world, enabling CSPs and enterprises to compare and select regional operators based on their specific needs and budget. Big Data products from companies such as IBM, Onotology, and SAS are providing real-time insights into customer behavior, service uptake, performance, and data usage. And, companies like CSG International are enabling rich multi-screen content delivery. These combined technologies can provide CSPs with a digital agility to virtually create thousands of service permutations — tailoring new, competitive offerings to meet the demands of their customers, wherever they may be.

## Provisioning

New connected devices are all the rage and customer adoption is quickly accelerating. That's the good news. The bad news is meeting customer demand for seamless activation and integration into the digital lifestyle. There are several approaches that can help here.

Amdocs has two offerings that fit the bill with its M2M

*Customers today buy new connected devices like hot cakes; the challenge is meeting customer demand for seamless activation and integration into the digital lifestyle.*

Connected Device Platform and cloud-based Connected Home Solution. Amdocs customers can add value by bundling communications and IoT services together. The result: consumers enjoy a better, more holistic experience, increased value for their money, and a one-stop shop for service and support; the IoT application providers enjoy better market exposure without the need for significant upfront investment; while the CSPs can expand their customer base, increase ARPU and loyalty, while driving new revenues beyond just connectivity. OnStar and AT&T is one, great example where Amdocs has added value to joint customers.

On a more device-based level, Gemalto offers the LinqUS On-Demand Connectivity (ODC) subscription management system. With this solution, a consumer device with an embedded SIM can securely connect to a mobile network, anytime and anywhere, using Over-The-Air remote provisioning. In this manner, users can now seamlessly activate connectivity on their devices by choosing any operator and adapted tariff plan based on their preferences and location. They can have the flexibility to dynamically add a wide variety of connected devices on-the-go, or switch to local operators for lower rates when traveling. The company recently showcased a demo at Mobile World Congress Shanghai with technology partner ZTE.

"The number of connected devices in China is expected to surpass the country's population very soon," said Suzanne Tong-Li, President for Greater China and Korea at Gemalto, at the event. "This demonstration with ZTE allows us to not only display the capabilities of ODC, but also gather vital information about different use cases their customers want, to drive the development of IoT ecosystem."

## Three keys to supporting digital services

What do exceptional digital experiences look like? In order to deliver experiences that differentiate your brand, grow loyalty, and increase revenue, CSPs who seek to evolve must possess the three keys to digital success:

#### *Make it seamless*

Delivering a customer experience that engages and enhances your brand requires consistency across channels and devices. 83 percent of customers say they receive an inconsistent response across channels from their service providers. Market leaders create frictionless, omni-channel experiences that not only delight customers, but also maximize cross-sell and up-sell opportunities. For example, a shopper may begin her

search for a particular handbag on her laptop computer at home, continue that session on her mobile phone or tablet while riding the train, and then visit a retail store to narrow down her selection by seeing the bags firsthand. This entire cycle should entail seamless hand-offs from one experience to the next. If that customer has opted to share her location and receive contextual data related to her whereabouts, she may even receive additional offers as she moves through the store.

#### *Make it personal*

A customized experience delivers the right information and context to the right audience at the right time—throughout the engagement cycle. For example, marketers can integrate website and e-mail campaign content as they target customers across channels and segment them according to their stated or implied preferences. Promotional messages will always be relevant and consistent, whether they are delivered through an e-mail message, on a web page, or via an in-store display.

#### *Make it innovative*

There is a tremendous amount of noise in this digital arena, so you must engage customers in ways that differentiate your brand, grow loyalty, and increase revenue. Leveraging social marketing, video experiences, rich mobile applications, and other interactive tools are all good ways to set your brand apart. For example, you can deliver multichannel experiences that integrate websites with social networks so customers can easily log in with their trusted credentials. This type of federated login simplifies the experience for people who do not wish to create and maintain distinct accounts. More importantly, it lets them make recommendations and report on their experiences using their social network identities. And don't forget—today's customers want portals and websites that are optimized for mobile access. Those sites should seamlessly integrate content from back-end applications and data stores to create impactful, relevant, and contextualized experiences.

*Amdocs cloud-based connected home solution and M2M connected device platform can accelerate the transition from CSP to DSP.*

### **Be a DSP**

CSPs are evolving into DSPs, and that requires a new way of thinking and a new set of tools. Integrating these tools into a single digital platform enables CSPs to acquire new customers, reduce costs, and optimize performance, even as complexity increases. Much like natural selection, it's not an option. The drive for customers has never been more fierce and service complexity has never been more complicated. Only those that adapt will thrive.