

Standards: The International Language of Commerce and Love

By Becky Bracken

Standards are the OSS/BSS international language of love. And the more the industry collectively loves standards, the more it's going to get back. Standards help communications service providers (CSPs) make better procurement decisions and actually encourage more spending. Standards alleviate the anxiety of interoperability even in the face of the old mousetrap, silos-but-converged-with-bailing-wire-and-duct-tape legacy networks. Standardized systems are like a big, warm hug and a cup of cocoa for IT managers across industries and continents because standards make their jobs easier, and more secure.

Standards	Shift
Business	Focus
Toward	New
Revenues	

As CSPs across the globe increasingly look toward OSS/BSS and other communications technology solutions to drive down costs and boost revenues, the demand for standardization is growing. Convergence and the commoditization of data are putting enormous pressure on service providers to develop new value-added services. CSPs need systems that offer the agility to roll out new services at lightning speed, and standardized systems can provide that. CSPs also need systems that are automated, scalable, reliable, and enable the business focus to shift from service delivery to innovation.

In fact Amdocs, which puts its significant weight behind the TM Forum, published a report titled "Leading With Standards and Best Practices" [LINKTO: <http://www.amdocs.com/Whitepapers/Standards-Best-Practices-WP.pdf>] that details, in their view, the benefits for both service providers and vendors of developing standardized OSS/BSS systems.

"Standards and best practices go beyond helping providers achieve reduced costs and increased agility



without undermining their ability to innovate," the report says. "In fact, standardization enables the focus to shift away from commodities to new service creation, revenue opportunities, effective business models and improved customer experiences."

Standards Reduce Risk

More than half of the 100 CSP IT managers across EMEA, the Americas and the Asia Pacific region who were surveyed by Oracle in 2011 estimated they

would free up more than 10 percent of their annual IT budgets if existing industry standards for OSS/BSS business processes were widely adopted. In fact the average percentage of IT respondents who said they would free up with more widespread standardization was almost 16 percent.

Why? Because standards reduce risk. IT managers no longer have the luxury of rolling the dice. They need to know that the solutions they purchase and deploy are going to work today and support the new value-added services of tomorrow and next year.

"It is clear from this research that industry standards have a very real role to play in making BSS/OSS work for the business," says Bhaskar Gorti, senior vice president and general manager of Oracle Communications. "Standards expedite procurement processes for our customers through their use of common terms to describe product and service capabilities, and the ability to identify inefficiencies

Multi-vendor Network Configuration Management

Configure Cisco, Juniper, Ericsson, Alcatel-Lucent, NSN, and many more.

Watch Our Demo >

tail-f

Not for distribution or reproduction.

via comparisons with industry best practices. As we can see from the results of this new research, standardization can also reduce integration and operational costs as well as risk.”

Inconsistent standards adoption for OSS/BSS business processes and IT infrastructure has led to these challenges for CSPs, the Oracle report concludes:

- Three quarters of respondents (75 percent) believe that systems integration costs are higher now than they would be with the widespread adoption of standards, and 65 percent feel the same way about management and maintenance costs;
- For 57 percent of respondents the lack of industry-wide standards adoption makes it more difficult for IT departments to respond as quickly as they would like to new demands from the business;
- When asked which outcomes for OSS/BSS would provide the biggest benefit to their businesses, 54 percent ranked increasing the agility of the IT architecture to become more responsive to business needs in their top three.

Vertical Expansion Through Standards

As service providers look to expand services into vertical markets with huge revenue potential, including healthcare banking even government support, [RC1] standardization of solutions becomes even more dire. IT departments of hospitals and banks will need to be able to clearly state their complex individual business challenges and requirements, and vendors will need to be able to communicate their value in real terms.

Standards bodies like the TM Forum provide templates and support to achieve that sort of highly technical agreement and take much of the guesswork out of expensive, business-critical, nail-biting purchases for IT managers. In fact this sample RFP template posted online by Cisco [LINKTO: http://www.cisco.com/en/US/docs/net_mgmt/prime/optical/9.3/miscellaneous/MNTM_TM_Forum_Document_9.3.pdf] shows the full 115-page behemoth. Taking this due-diligence burden off the shoulders of an IT manager must be worth the document’s weight in gold.

Standardization is like an antacid for IT-manager heartburn over procurement by guaranteeing interoperability with existing systems. Standardization gives that IT manager a level of comfort and transparency into the solutions that will promote a more widespread adoption. Once banks are comfortable deploying mobile payment solutions, rolling out a customer-care solution will be less

As communications service providers (CSPs) across the globe increasingly look toward OSS/BSS and other ComIT solutions to drive down costs and boost revenues, the demand for standardization is growing.

anxiety inducing. Healthcare IT managers basking in the benefit of mobile workforce solutions will be much more enthusiastic when it comes to talking about that billing-system upgrade they’ve been putting off. Standardization is the language that will allow everyone to communicate the benefits of OSS/BSS systems and solutions across vertical segments.

Standards Encourage a Global Economy

In 2007 Telekom Malaysia signed a “public-private partnership” with the Malaysian government to build a national broadband network-in 18 months, including the OSS/BSS infrastructure-offering high-speed access to more than two million homes. Telekom Malaysia selected and proceeded to work with the OSS/BSS vendors in April 2009; the CSP had a few months to prepare the operations and supporting systems.

An Analysys Mason case study noted that Telekom Malaysia originally approached the scheme as a greenfield project, but because of time and cost constraints the systems were built on existing technology. This meant that OSS and BSS components were selected on the basis of not only a reference customer for the product but also references for the system integrations that the architecture required, according to Nizam Arshad, Vice President of Group IT at Telekom Malaysia.

IT purchasers are wiser to the timelines of a project without interoperability expectations, and international operators faced with rolling out broadband and other services to millions of people at a time are going to require more assurance. Factor in the language barriers on top of potential technological ones and the importance of standards is increasingly compounded.

Standards enable these rapid turnaround projects with the use of convenient, road-tested, cost-effective COTS solutions. Operators like Telekom Malaysia must look for OSS/BSS systems that will integrate seamlessly with existing technology-and with no room in the timeline, or budget, for error.

Widely adopted sets of standards agreed upon by

an industry are nothing new. ComIT and the OSS/BSS segments have reached a level of maturity and widespread adoption that demands agreement on a set of technical standards that meet the evolving needs of not only CSPs but the larger international economy.

“The international language of commerce is standards,” former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans says. “Adherence to agreed-upon product or service specifications underpins international commerce, enabling trillions of dollars of goods to flow across borders regardless of the spoken language of any business parties. The common acceptance of standards is fundamental to the success of robust, fair and free trade. Without standards it would be difficult to imagine the tremendous volume and complexity of international trade.”

ComIT and the OSS/BSS segments have reached a level of maturity and widespread adoption that demands agreement on a set of technical standards that meet the evolving needs of not only CSPs, but the larger international economy.