



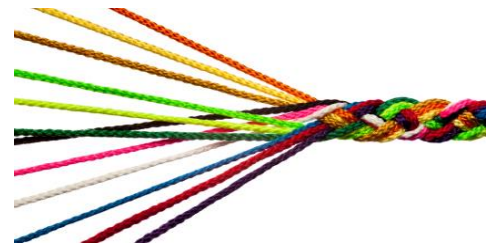
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## Minimizing Digital Disruption

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Telecom service providers supply the foundation for the world's most transformative technologies. Without them, we wouldn't have the ability to work from home on Zoom, message our friends across the globe using WhatsApp, or order a birthday gift from Amazon that will be delivered the very same evening. Yet, when it comes to transformation, many lag behind.



Transformation was a business imperative even prior to the pandemic. For decades, telecom service providers have been burdened with dozens—if not hundreds—of siloed systems, each serving their own vital purpose. Inherited systems from mergers and acquisitions only added fuel to the fire. On the other hand, smaller telecom service providers had very few systems, and daunting costs kept them from adopting larger holistic solutions. Instead, they have relied upon a resource-intensive combination of Microsoft Excel, Notepad, and a sturdy swivel chair. The pandemic pushed many transformation initiatives forward but yet, years after the start of the pandemic, telecom providers are still struggling to transform.

[Boston Consulting Group reports](#) that only 22 percent of telecom providers have successfully launched a digital transformation initiative as of 2022, compared to 35 percent in other industries. And it really comes as no surprise. Ask anyone who has ever overseen a digital transformation project, and they'll tell you that it's incredibly complicated. It's difficult from both a technology perspective and a people perspective. Teams across the organization can feel negative consequences during a transformation process, where they have been promised positive results but instead experience disruption. This simple fact is, the numerous existing systems that are in place are there for good reasons, and employees rely on them for key operational processes. A "rip and replace" approach is costly, disruptive, and can impact employee productivity and morale—stifling both innovation and transformation.

But digital transformation doesn't need to be disruptive. Telecom service providers can innovate and transform with much less pain. And they can do so while preserving and improving employee and customer experience (EX and CX, respectively). By combining the right strategy and a unified service

experience platform, they'll be able to minimize disruption, unlock efficiencies, and accelerate revenues. Consider these recommendations focused on bringing a centralized approach to the process. They can help minimize disruption and discontent during digital transformation, while accelerating business outcomes.

# Leveraging a Unified Service Experience Platform

In today's economic environment, telecom providers face added financial pressures due to large capital expenditures, rising interest rates, and inflation. With new cost constraints, it's more important than ever to avoid unnecessary expenses and make the most efficient use of existing resources. It's also paramount to review and understand how existing systems are being used by various internal stakeholders so as not to disrupt existing productive processes. It's like the old adage goes: if it's not broken, don't fix it. The ability to leave existing systems in place also enables telecom providers to augment or decommission systems over time, providing additional savings.

That's why I recommend a "review and reserve" approach over a rip and replace approach. When telecom providers choose to review and replace, they should start by understanding their current infrastructure and software while identifying areas that can be leveraged and optimized. They don't need to move everything to the cloud. They don't need to have everything on-premises. Not everything has to be within or done in a single system. Providers should have a firm grasp of their own technology landscape and develop a plan to harness value, unlock siloed data, and increase efficiency across their organization. This is where leveraging a unified service experience platform comes in. By avoiding rip and replace, and adding next-generation technology as an overlay, telecom providers can save significant costs and reduce the time and learning curve required by a fresh implementation from scratch.

But cost isn't the only factor. Just as important, they'll be preserving the systems employees know, are comfortable with, and rely upon. This allows them to gently transition to newer, better views and cross-domain information, thereby enhancing the end-user experience. I advise our customers to take what they have and make it work better to make the most of past investments and avoid detrimental disruption issues. Focus on creating a better, more useful interface that provides more visual, consolidated, and relevant information based upon their internal and external stakeholder's specific roles and needs. Provide better insights and access to outputs, while offering more automated and intuitive features along with cross domain automation and functionality.

With an end goal of increasing efficiency and productivity, telecom service providers can also begin laying the foundation for automation with artificial intelligence (AI)—a point I'll touch on in more detail below. But, when you focus on making incremental improvements and enhancements to existing systems with a unified service experience platform, you're always able to scale. Not only does this approach minimize digital transformation disruption, but it ensures a faster and more cost-effective digital transformation process.

## Empowering Employees and Enhancing Productivity

Change management is often the most challenging aspect of digital transformation. A poorly executed transformation initiative can result in lower morale, disengaged employees, and higher resignation rates. During a digital transformation initiative, employees often don't want to let go of systems they've used for years and learn a new system from scratch. Yet, they're the ones who must invest the significant effort toward bringing new systems online. This creates a negative employee experience and reduces productivity, which is the exact opposite of what transformation projects should achieve. Instead, the goal should be to provide employees with better tools that make their jobs more efficient and enjoyable.

This approach begins with consolidating multiple, disparate systems into a unified service experience platform, eliminating the need for employees to log into multiple systems to search for information or to complete routine and repeatable tasks. It eliminates the need to search, dig, and click through old, archaic systems. Instead, a unified service experience platform aggregates customer, product, network, service, and system information into a single source of truth. And it makes it personal for individual roles through the organization, and can be provided to end customers for self-service. It sets up rules that will give customer service, sales, and finance everything they need on a clean, state-of-the-art platform. It also provides them with a set of intelligent, next-generation tools that can recognize and suggest improvements to workflows, timing, processes, and tasks, while automating actions across silos.

The EX is also integral to enhancing the customer experience (CX) and optimizing operations. Happy employees make for happy customers. When employees see that the goal of digital transformation is to provide them with simplified, consolidated tools that will decrease their workload, simplify their daily tasks, and improve their job satisfaction, getting their buy-in is much easier. The organization benefits through boosted productivity and a variety of morale-related advantages when employees experience more direct benefits instead of disruption during digital transformation initiatives.

## Laying the Foundation for intelligent and AI Automation

Virtually every organization is experiencing exponential data growth, and managing it can be difficult. Simply having more data doesn't equate to better decision-making. In fact, if data is managed in disparate systems, different formats, and needs human intervention, it can create far more problems than it solves. Employees may not trust it or use it, or use erroneous data creating order fallout.

To get the most value out of data and create operational agility, telecom service providers should strive to implement intelligent, AI-based automation that integrates disparate data sources and automates repeatable tasks across the organization. Integrating functions like Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Catalogue-Price-Quote (CPQ), Operational Support Systems (OSS), and Business Support Systems (BSS) with AI accelerates revenues, decreases costs, and increases the overall quality of products and services.

AI can also analyze data, identify data inconsistencies, ensure data uniformity and reliability, and clean data contained within legacy systems. It can automate processes such as lead-to-quote management, order fulfillment, service delivery, and more. A unified service experience platform lays the foundation for intelligent automation, as both an integrated overlay to existing systems and the single source of truth. It's also the fastest path to transformation, as telecom service providers can keep their existing systems in place and minimize digital disruption at the same time. By embracing automation and intelligent systems, telecom service providers can optimize human capital and achieve significant cost savings with better resource allocation. They can offload lower-level tasks from employees, and give employees more engaging, higher value work.

The benefits of AI can extend well beyond data management as well. For example, AI can help accelerate revenues. It can enable telecom providers to provide personalized recommendations and notifications to customers based on their usage trends. It can suggest customers purchase more bandwidth if their usage patterns indicate a need. Or it can alert them concerning potential outages. Leveraging AI can be a powerful tool for both revenue generation and customer experience management, providing a keen competitive advantage while increasing the lifetime value of customers.

Embracing intelligent automation provides many other benefits that support the bottom line. By laying a foundation for AI as part of transformation initiatives, telecom service providers can expect better productivity, accuracy, and decision making, while providing a better experience for both employees and customers.

## **A Unified Service Experience Platform as a Single Source of Truth**

To ensure successful integration of existing systems, customization of technology, and utilization of powerful AI, having a single source of truth is imperative. The journey towards transformation should start with a unified service experience platform—as a central command center. It should also encompass core foundational modules that can be configured to meet the specific requirements of different roles and departments. Additionally, it should seamlessly integrate with existing environments, data sources, processes, and systems.

A unified service experience platform can serve as the link that connects customers and internal stakeholders with products, networks, services, and data. By offering a consolidated, personalized, and relevant view of information in a consolidated platform, it empowers users with customized insights and facilitates better, faster, and more informed decision-making. To achieve the greatest agility, I recommend telecom service providers consider a platform built upon a composable architecture that enables the creation of a "composable business"—one built upon interchangeable building blocks.

Composability lies at the heart of scalability and agility, liberating businesses from the constraints of vendor lock-in and the limitations of legacy platforms. The chosen platform should possess the flexibility to seamlessly integrate with existing software using northbound APIs within their unique environments. This interoperability ensures a smooth transition and maximizes the potential for increased efficiency, automation, and revenue acceleration—while providing the ability to add future functionality as it emerges.

By embracing the right platform, organizations can unlock endless possibilities. These possibilities extend far beyond the immediate benefits of streamlined processes, improved data management and the ability to scale while decelerating operational costs. A robust, unified service experience platform empowers businesses to embrace innovation, leverage cutting-edge AI technologies, and propel themselves ahead of the competition. With the right unified platform in place, organizations can confidently navigate the complexities of the digital landscape and usher in a new era of success.

## **Removing Disruption from the Digital Transformation Journey**

Digital transformation is an imperative for telecom providers looking to remain competitive, drive long-term growth, and increase profitability. It doesn't have to be a disruptive and painful process, however. By harnessing the right unified service experience platform and adopting a strategic approach that focuses on centralizing processes—reviewing and reserving existing systems, consolidating and customizing interfaces, and implementing intelligent, AI-driven automation—telecom providers can successfully navigate and accelerate their transformation journeys. They can also do so while minimizing disruption, reducing costs, and enhancing employee and customer experiences, while transforming their Operational and Business Support Systems into a revenue generation and acceleration engine.