The 2023 Pipeline Innovation Awards
Showcasing Industry Innovation
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The culmination of the 12th annual *Pipeline* Innovation Awards program was another incredible showcase of technical innovation occurring across the industry. This year's awards program featured hundreds of nominations across [30 categories of technical innovation](#) in which contestants have an opportunity to compete by nominating themselves, their partners, suppliers, and customers. A select group is also nominated by *Pipeline*, based on its unique perspective and familiarity with the technology, industry, and innovators. As nominations are received and reviewed, *Pipeline* adds, consolidates, and augments categories to ensure ample and adequate competition across the awards program.

Once nominations close and categories have been finalized, Semi-finalists are sent their submission packages. The completed submission packages received by *Pipeline* from contestants are distilled down to a group of select Finalists through a rigid and objective mathematical scoring process. This proprietary formula is unique to *Pipeline*'s annual Innovation Awards program and is specifically designed to magnify dozens of various aspects of contestants' submissions to amplify particular factors related to the company, category, technology, and innovation itself. It also dampens other factors to ensure fair competition regardless of the size of company or market share of the contestant. This process elevates the Semi-finalists' submissions which truly embody innovation, technical relevance related to each category, and the spirit of the *Pipeline* Innovation Awards program. The highest-scoring Semi-finalists in each category are then promoted to the Finalist stage of the competition. It's worth mentioning that the cream always rises to the top, with the top innovators and their innovations often appearing as ts in multiple categories.

The Finalists' submissions from within each category are then sent to an exclusive, external judging panel comprised of decision makers that use, buy, recommend, or invest in innovative technology that advances the way we work, live, and play as a globally connected society. The [Esteemed Judging Panel](#) this year was comprised of 30 technology experts and executives who were hand-selected from *Pipeline*'s Industry Advisory Board from companies such as AT&T, Bell Canada, BT Group, Colt, Comcast, Lumen, Orange, Rogers, Telefonica, Telenor, Telstra, Telus, T-Mobile, and Windstream. This year's judging panel also featured prominent industry analysts from ACG Research, Analysys Mason, Appledore Research, Dell'Oro Group, IDC, Omdia, The Technology Innovation Council, and others. All of whom have an opportunity to review the

contestants' extensive submissions, questionnaires, and supporting materials – including conducting their own independent research, interviews, and demonstrations. The judges then vote on which of the finalists in each category they find most innovative. The contestant with the most votes becomes the winner, and the contestant with the second most votes becomes the runner-up within each category.

Pipeline's unique process of mathematical scoring and third-party voting by our Esteemed Judging Panel ensures the annual *Pipeline* Innovation Awards are the most objective and credible validation of technical innovation in the world. In fact, the Innovation Awards contestants routinely win deals as a result of including their placement in sales proposals, due to the peer-to-peer validation it provides, and the judges occasionally buy the products of the awards contestants – regardless of whether or not they win or place.

It's also important to underscore that the difference between Semi-finalist and Finalist can come down to less than a single point through the mathematical scoring process. And the difference between Winner and Runner-up can sometimes be the difference of a single vote. Finalists, Runner-ups, and Winners all demonstrate tremendous technical innovation and are on near equal footing from a *Pipeline* perspective.

This year's contestants were no exception, demonstrating innovation in advanced technology areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), customer and digital experiences (CX/DX), cybersecurity, digital transformation, ecosystem management, network technologies, operational agility and automation, support systems, and more. The 2023 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards were once again fiercely contested with notable upsets of incumbent technology providers by emerging technology innovators, hair-splitting votes, and forfeits by companies that couldn't take the heat. Some of the highlights of the 2023 Innovation Awards follow below.

The Most Innovative Technology Provider

One of the most hotly contested categories each year in the annual innovation awards is The Most Innovative Technology Provider. There is always ample participation in this category as contestants are competing for more than the coveted *Pipeline* Innovation Awards (PIA) Trophy. The Winner of The Most Innovative Technology Provider category also receives a prize valued at nearly 50 thousand dollars. This category evaluates technical innovation like the other awards categories, but it specifically assesses how innovation is embraced, shared, and promoted across an entire organization – internally and externally with its suppliers, partners, and customers.

The Finalists of the Most Innovative Technology Provider category this year included CloudSmartz, Netcracker, and Promptlink Communications. At first glance, one might think that Netcracker being an awards veteran, past winner of this category, and market-share leader had this one all buttoned up, but they would be mistaken. Promptlink Communications bagged the prize by a single vote in a near tie with Netcracker. The final results are Promptlink Communications as the Winner, Netcracker as the Runner-up, and CloudSmartz as the Finalist. CloudSmartz only fell two votes behind Netcracker and resonated particularly well with the analyst judges getting as many analyst votes as Promptlink Communications and Netcracker combined.

Editor's Choice

Another unique category to the *Pipeline* Innovation Awards is the Editor's Choice category. The Editor's Choice Winner and Runner-up are selected from a multitude of factors across all categories and contestant submissions. It also incorporates input from the category chairs, the judging panel, and *Pipeline*'s editorial team. But at the end of the day, it's Editor's Choice and this singular category provides *Pipeline* the exclusive opportunity to select the most innovative contestants it feels set themselves apart from the rest of the competition. This year, particular submissions from Comarch, Etiya, Promptlink Communications, MYCOM OSI, and Netcracker stood out.

Comarch submitted its mobile app featuring integrated Augmented Reality (AR) for field technicians in the Innovations in OSS category. Etiya submitted its digital twin innovation for personalized and emerging use cases in the Innovations in AI & Analytics category, and flowE for low-code, drag-and-drop digital process automation in the Innovations in Agility & Automation category. MYCOM OSI submitted its AI Ops for autonomous networks innovation in the Innovation in OSS category. Netcracker submitted notable innovations in several categories that stood out. These included a Digital BSS for digital experiences such as metaverse, generative AI, cloud gaming, and connected healthcare in the Innovations in BSS category; a multi-system data aggregation and pattern analysis for core and non-core use cases in the Innovation in AI & Data Analytics category; an Edge and SDN network management system solution in the Innovations in Network Technology category; and a no-code partner ecosystem management innovation in the Innovations in Partner Ecosystem Management category. Promptlink Communications submitted its AI solution for identifying, targeting, and eliminating network noise in hybrid, HFC networks in several categories including Most Innovative Technology Provider and Innovations in Network Technology, AI & Data Analytics, and Digital Transformation.

While the judges are not required to vote on this category, as it's the only category exclusively voted on by *Pipeline,* that didn't stop them from providing their input. The judges found that "Etiya's customer service solution was impressive… with many innovative features and functions, but not overbuilt." The Esteemed Judges Panel also found that Netcracker submissions demonstrated compelling "innovation across a number of areas with components fitting into a broader portfolio." We agreed, and had our work cut out for us. While all of Netcracker's submissions were truly innovative in their own right – as were all the Finalists in each category – we felt they were properly recognized in those respective categories. Further, we felt strongly that MYCOM's use of AI for autonomous networks, and Etiya's application for digital twins for emerging use cases set them apart. Going a little against the grain, *Pipeline* selected MYCOM OSI as the Winner, Etiya as the Runner-up, and Netcracker, Promptlink Communications, and Comarch as Finalists – which is notable in its own right.

Innovations in Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Data Analytics

The Innovation in AI & Data Analytics category showed the most significant leap forward this year with many companies embracing real-world use cases for Artificial Intelligence (AI). In fact, it was one of the most hotly contested categories with nearly 10 Semi-finalists, and from which the Finalists included CloudSmartz, Etiya, Netcracker, and Subex. Subex submitted its AI-first fraud management system for SIM box fraud detection and prevention, a powerful tool that uses an advanced AI engine to enable companies to combat fraud and security risks. CloudSmartz's submitted its Acumen360™, a digital marketplace and customer experience platform that enables enterprise self-service and automates many OSS functions, Etiya submitted its Digital Twin Engine. Netcracker showcased its Data Analytics Platform. In the end, Subex edged out the win by a couple of analyst votes, making Etiya the runner-up. Notably, both had an equal number of service provider votes, underscoring the difficult decisions our judges must make each year and the minute difference between final placements in the awards program.

Innovations in Agility & Automation

The Agility & Automation category featured many innovations and, like the Innovation in AI category, included a robust group of highly competitive Semi-finalists. The selection included CloudSmartz, Etiya, and Netcracker. CloudSmartz submitted its aforementioned comprehensive Acumen360™ platform, Etiya entered the previously mentioned flowE digital process automation innovation, and Netcracker submitted its Intelligent Automation solution, mentioned above in Editor's Choice, that enables advanced OSS automation to enable autonomous networks.

The judges found Netracker's technology the most innovative, securing the Winner placement with the most CSP votes with several analysts jumping on board as well. Etiya resonated evenly among the CSP and analyst judges but fell just a couple of votes short of the top spot, making it the Runner-up, and CloudSmartz also garnered notable votes from the Esteemed Judging Panel securing the Finalist position in this category.

Innovations in IoT & Connected Devices

In the Innovations in IoT & Connected Device category, Comarch, Incognito, and Intraway submitted compelling solutions and placed as finalists. Comarch submitted its IoT Connect innovation and Industry 4.0 and Healthcare add-ons. Incognito submitted its DX (digital experience) solution for smart home service delivery and standards-based automation for in-home device management. Intraway submitted Symphonica, its flexible orchestration engine that manages complex orchestration processes, supporting high-volume transactions efficiently with zero-touch service order management and open APIs.

In the end, Comarch was victorious, in a near tie with Incognito. Both resonated well with CSP and analyst judges. However, notably more CSPs favored our Runner-up, Incognito, whereas Analysts leaned more heavily toward Comarch's broader solution. Intraway also gained several notable CSP votes again underscoring the fierceness of the competition at this level. The results are Comarch as the Winner, Incognito as the Runner-up, and Intraway as the Finalist.

Innovations in Assurance

The Innovations in Assurance category looks for innovative technologies that help protect operations. This year, Comarch and Subex elevated through the ranks to the Finalist level and

were presented to the 2023 Innovation Awards judges for voting. Comarch submitted its cloud-based, IT service monitoring, and enterprise service management solution, MTR (Meet the Request) for automation across service activation, monitoring, and repair. Subex submitted its Business Assurance solution in conjunction with British Telecom (BT) for the integration of data analytics and visualization, identification of revenue leakages, and automation of resolutions.

In the end, Subex took the Winner position with overwhelming support from the analyst judges. Comarch received incredible endorsement and validation of its innovation, gathering nearly all the votes from the CSP judges. But the analysts tipped the scales in Subex's favor resulting in Subex as the Winner and Comarch as the Runner-up.

Innovations in Digital Transformation (DT)

Innovation in Digital Transformation was another 2023 Pipeline Innovation Awards category chocked full of innovative submissions from many Semi-finalists. Through the objective, mathematical scoring process, the robust group of Semi-finalists was whittled down to just three Finalists which included CloudSmartz, Intraway, and Netcracker. This time, however, Netcracker put up its Netcracker Digital Platform (NDP) for the acceleration of 5G, cloud, and B2B applications. And, once again, it appeared that Netcracker would dominate this category based on shear size, resources, and market share – and notable past award wins – but once again we were surprised by the results.

Intraway received many endorsements of Symphonica, receiving the majority of votes from CSPs and notable analysts. CloudSmartz did well too, receiving validation from Tier 1 CSPs such as AT&T, and resonated even better among analysts receiving more votes from Intraway. Surprisingly, Netcracker resonated better with the Tier 2 operators on the 2023 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards judging panel and notable analysts but fell short of Intraway and CloudSmartz when the votes were tallied. In the end, Intraway was the Winner, CloudSmartz the Runner-up, and Netcracker placed as Finalist.

Innovations in Operational Support Systems (OSS)

This category was also full of ample and highly competitive submissions from many global technical innovators and featured another surprising upset too. The Finalists included Netcracker, MYCOM OSI, and Comarch. Netcracker submitted its Netcracker Intelligent automation solution which incorporated AI and self-learning for self-service and zero-touch operations. MYCOM OSI showcased its Service Experience deployment that utilizes intelligent traffic profiling and predictive algorithms for mobile, broadband, and enterprise services to create a zero-touch NOC/SOC. And Comarch presented the fifth generation of its Mobile OSS application for iOS and Android, featuring many advanced OSS functions including augmented reality for field technicians.

In the end, MYCOM OSI took home the prize as the Winner, Netcracker came in as Runner-up, and Comarch remained the finalist. MYCOM OSI resonated the best with both CSPs across regions and tiers. Netcracker did well across both groups of judges too, but a couple CSPs voted MYCOM way securing their win. Comarch remained the Finalist, resonating with a major CSP in Latin America (LATAM) and gaining more analyst votes than Netcracker, and as many as MYCOM OSI.

Innovations in Business Support Systems (BSS)

Comarch, Etiya, and Netcracker all advanced to the Finalist stage in the Innovations in BSS category. This time Comarch flexed its BSS strength with its Comarch Product Catalog which

featured a new model for supporting satellite connectivity. Etiya submitted its BSS platform's multi-brand management feature particularly designed for MNOs and MVNOs to personalize offerings and streamline operations for diverse customer segments. Netcracker presented their Netcracker Digital BSS that enables CSPs to capitalize on investments in and use cases for 6G, cloud, the Metaverse, and Virtual Reality (VR). The judges certainly had their work cut out for them as all the Finalists demonstrated compelling advancements to modernize what may seem to some as a technical area ripe for and in dire need of innovation.

The judges were torn here as well, with Etiya taking the lead with CSPs and analysts. Netcracker and Comarch were in a dead heat, with Netcracker squeezing out just ahead of Comarch in the final stretch. The results were Etiya as the Winner, Netcracker as the Runner-up, and Comarch as the Finalist who garnered more attention and obtained more votes from the CSP judges in the US, Canada, and LATAM.

Innovations in Network Technology

In the Innovations in Network Technologies category, Promptlink and Netcracker emerged as the Finalists. Promptlink Communications submitted its NoiseHawkAI HFC solution that leverages AI for pinpointing and eliminating network noise in hybrid networks. Netcracker had two entries included in this category, including its Netcracker Edge Automation and Orchestration solution for ensuring stringent latency and performance in complete edge networks, and its Netcracker Network Domain Orchestration Solution for software-defined networks.

The judges of the 2023 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards program were clearly torn between Promptlink's AI innovation and Netcracker's Edge innovations, with a single vote tipping the scales in Promptlink Communications' favor. At the end of the day, Promptlink Communications was the Winner, and Netcracker the Runner-up.

Innovation in Cloud Technology

The Innovation in Cloud Technology category was a David and Goliath story this year. It pitted industry juggernaut Netcracker against the up-and-comer Intraway. Netcracker submitted its Ecosystem Approach to Cloud Transformation, and Intraway once again submitted Symphonica, its flexible orchestration engine for zero-touch service order management.

Netcracker's highly focused submission on cloud technologies and enabling cloud transformation gave them the win in a near landslide. David doesn't always win, but Intraway did pick up notable votes and recognition from Tier 2 operators in the US, a Tier 1 operator in LATAM, and a notable industry analyst. The results were Netcracker, Winner; Intraway Runner-up.

Innovations in Customer Experiences (CX)

The Finalists in here had innovations featured across the 2023 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards program, but they really had an opportunity to shine in the Innovations in Customer Experience (CX) category. They included Etiya, CloudSmartz, and Netcracker. Etiya submitted its Etiya Campaign Management (ECM) innovation, which provides holistic campaign management across streamlined communications channels while providing near real-time performance insights and adaptability. CloudSmartz expanded its Acumen 360 submission to show how it provides a 360-degree view of the customer, seamlessly integrates with existing systems, and lays the foundation for AI use cases. Netcracker submitted its immersive Netcracker Intelligent Customer Experience Solution featuring an AI-first approach to the Total Experience (TX) supporting internal (e.g. employee) as well as external (e.g. customer) stakeholders.

Etiya ranked highly with both the CSP and analyst judges, whereas the rest of the votes were bifurcated between CloudSmartz and Netcracker. The CSPs seem to lean slightly more heavily toward Netcracker, while the majority of analysts felt CloudSmartz was the most innovative. In the end, Etiya emerged as the Winner, Netcracker was the Runner-up, and CloudSmartz was the Finalist by a single vote.

Innovations in Digital Experience (DX)

Netcracker and CloudSmartz squared off in a barn burner in the Innovations in Digital Experience category. Netcracker squared off its Intelligent Customer Experience solution against CloudSmartz's Acumen 360 digital marketplace and customer experience platform. Going head-to-head proved exciting with the Winner coming down again to a single vote. An equal number of analysts voted for each Finalist. It all came down to the CSP judges. CSPs from every tier and from the US, Canada, and Europe all voted for each of the Finalists. Then CloudSmartz picked up a vote from Telefonica creating a tie. It all came down to the final vote, and a split vote between two judges from AT&T sealed the Winner's fate. The results were Netcracker as the Winner and CloudSmartz as Runner-up.

Innovations in Partner Ecosystems

The Innovations in Partner Ecosystems category is designed to recognize innovations that expand global connectivity, commerce, and collaboration. The Finalists were ConnectBase, its submission featuring The Connected World platform; Netcracker with its Netcracker Partner Ecosystem Management solution; and Subex with its Partner Ecosystem Management Solution. All were innovative in their own right, but at the end of the day there can be only one Winner.

This category wasn't particularly close, but upon closer inspection there were some notable takeaways from the Judge's votes. In addition to CSP judges such as those from Lumen and Rogers, the analyst judges strongly favored the winner, ConnectBase. The majority of CSP judges, however, voted for the Runner-up, Netcracker. While the Finalist, Subex received notable votes from both CSPs and analysts alike but not quite enough to edge out Netcracker.

Innovations in Managed Services

Netcracker and Subex had the opportunity to square off again in Innovations in Managed Services. Subex submitted its Managed Services for Fraud Management to proactively address fraud risks and revenue leakage. Netcracker submitted its Customer-Centric Managed Services encompassing cloud management, application services, end-to-end network monitoring, operations optimization and governance, and security.

In another photo finish, Subex won by a single vote with a majority of CSPs voting their way along with a handful of analysts. However, Netcracker picked up the majority of analyst votes, along with a handful of CSPs in Canada and Europe as the Runner-up.

Showcasing Innovation

As you can see, the *Pipeline* Innovation Awards program is an extensive competition across many different technical areas of innovation. It also provides the most credible validation of innovation in the world through its objective scoring process and third-party Esteemed Judges

Panel comprised of decision markers that buy, use, and recommend these advanced technologies to advance the way we work, live, and play as a globally connected society.

We applaud the vigor and achievement of all our awards contestants, including the Nominees, Semi-finalists, Finalists, Runner-ups, and Winners. We invite them and all other technical innovators to submit their latest innovations in the 2024 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards Program. 2024 Nominations are now open, and – for a limited time – contestants can enter under the pay-as-you-progress pricing model, where contestants only pay for the level of advancement they achieve in the awards program. To view the 2024 *Pipeline* Innovation Awards categories and pricing, visit the Official Nomination Form and be sure to enter the **promo code PLPRG** to unlock progressive pricing.