Optimizing Networks to Enhance Sales

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In the evolving landscape of Communication Service Providers (CSPs), the pressure to deliver exceptional services alongside ever increasing sales targets has never been greater. The competitive advantage of merely offering the latest technology has diminished. Enterprise customers are far less concerned about whether their service is underpinned by a legacy MPLS network or the latest SD-WAN, so long as it delivers on its promises. Today's differentiators now lie in delivering compelling commercials and the best service wrap.

At the same time, SD-WAN platforms such as Cisco Meraki continue to be popular with enterprise IT departments looking to gain greater control of their own networks. Having invested in SD-WAN technology, enterprises now have the cloud controllers for remote configuration and management; however, they also lack any real-time visibility, monitoring, alerting, and historical trend reporting. This presents a significant pain point.

For CSP sales teams, understanding and addressing these gaps is the key to delivering a differentiated pitch to prospects that keeps their attention and turns them into customers. CSPs are therefore having to support the SD-WAN technology as well as deliver a higher level of understanding into how all vital services are performing across often complex and multilayered networks.

The Role of Observability

Leading CSPs are now adopting service observability platforms internally to enhance their support and account management capabilities, but it also presents an opportunity for sales teams to achieve new wins by offering observability as an add-on, giving them an opportunity to get efficiency wins and make them more involved in their customers' overall service.

Service observability is also becoming a major differentiator and, depending on the CSP's approach, can be a value booster, bringing in MRR and increasing the profit margin of the service.

The latest cloud-based service observability platforms give CSPs the ability to add a powerful layer of monitoring and alerting capabilities across a network. In addition, they are quick to implement, scalable, easy to deploy, and since there is no on-premises equipment, are low maintenance for CSPs.

With greater observability, sales and customer support teams can shift their focus from merely ensuring service uptime to enhancing strategic customer accounts with improved information delivery and comprehensive service wraps. Customers value having robust real-time insights and historical reporting to ensure their networks are performing optimally and to provide evidence of service value to key stakeholders.

Deploying Observability Solutions Helps Smaller Customers to Help Themselves

A pertinent example is Countrywide Healthcare, a 27-year-old supplier of medical equipment to the care sector. The company faced critical network performance challenges in a new warehouse equipped with a Cisco Meraki SD-WAN network. The IT team struggled with the simplistic monitoring and alerting delivered by their SD-WAN, leading to unresolved downtime incidents like the inability to download web orders and slow ERP system performance.

By adding a service observability platform to their network, Countrywide was able to resolve these issues through real-time insights and comprehensive historical reporting. This enabled the provider and inhouse IT team to troubleshoot effectively and optimise network performance, reducing the time to identify network issues by 80 percent. Another benefit of a cloud-based observability platform is that it can empower sales leaders who often feel constrained by a limited set of products and tools they can offer their clients. By leveraging these advanced observability tools, sales leaders can differentiate their offerings without needing extensive product team involvement. If presenting a business case for enhanced visibility and reporting capabilities, sales professionals can unlock new opportunities and retain key customers.

Shared Observability is the Key Differentiator

Sales teams are always looking for something new to sell because most CSPs are offering the same thing. Service observability is something new, whether aimed at existing or new customers.

By layering a service observability platform on top of an SD-WAN solution like Meraki, CSPs can provide a simple managed service or deliver a more complex multi-tenant capability. The enhanced visibility enables CSPs to ensure service quality and provide full transparency, sharing critical information with their customers. Real-time insights and historical data enable providers and their customers to be faster and more effective at troubleshooting. And with accurate and comprehensive reporting tools, CSPs can demonstrate greater value and prove performance to stakeholders. Overall, it leads to significant reductions in time and cost associated with issue identification and resolution.It is particularly useful at identifying visibility gaps and seeing where existing tools are falling short. A sales professional can run the service observability's API over a customer's network estate to gain visibility on everything, including systems delivered by other providers. The API can be pushed out across large LAN estates, such as a university campus, to reveal old switches and access points that have been long forgotten, offering an easy opportunity for a refresh and to add value with new equipment.

The front-line service desk can also be equipped with an integrated cloud-based observability platform to deliver an immediate response to customer queries. The platform equips service teams with a high level of understanding and knowledge about a customer's infrastructure without them having to gain a granular level of knowledge. This means less expensive resources can deliver front-line support.

Delivering Quantifiable Results through Observability at Scale

In another example, Visionist, experts in digital transformation and IT service management, demonstrated the potential of leveraging observability tools. By increasing their observability across the network of central UK government departments, Visionist enhanced its management of the cloud-based network and end-user support across nearly 8000 workers in 24 sites. The result was a doubling of infrastructure visibility, a 25 percent improvement in service delivery, and a 60 percent increase in proactive issue detection. This led to faster resolution times and improved performance from other third-party providers, streamlining SLA reporting and boosting stakeholder confidence.

With observability, CSPs can troubleshoot quicker, deliver a more stable network, and that means the applications at a customer's site are going to be more available more often. It also means CSPs can sell more products or give customers a better experience. Ultimately, they can address any issue before it becomes a problem.

For CSPs, optimising communications networks hinges on delivering greater visibility. Sales teams must recognise the limitations of current SD-WAN solutions and embrace advanced observability platforms to meet and exceed customer expectations. By focusing on comprehensive service wraps and enhanced reporting capabilities, CSPs can differentiate themselves in a competitive market, retain key customers, and drive new business opportunities. Embracing these strategies will not only improve network performance but also elevate the overall customer experience, ensuring long-term success in the rapidly evolving communications landscape.

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