Letter from the Editor - September 2014

By Tim Young

There’s a great old story about an exchange between humorist Will Rogers and a reporter during World War I. The reporter supposedly asked Rogers how he would deal with the scourge of German U-boats that were wreaking havoc in the North Atlantic. Rogers replied that he would boil the ocean. When the reporter asked how he might accomplish such a feat, Rogers quipped, “I’m just the idea man here.”

Like any good story, there is plenty of debate as to whether the above exchange actually happened, but who cares? It’s an exchange that has been happening in its own way in service provider conference rooms around the world for years. So much data flows through these networks. It’s RIGHT THERE. “Analyze and, if possible, monetize it,” the idea men (and women) say. “Let this glut of data help us optimize customer care and make heaps of money.” Increasingly, Big Data tools are rising to the challenge.

That’s a good thing, because the volume of data that needs to be managed is increasing rapidly. IBM, in its “4 V’s of Big Data” infographic, estimates that 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are created each day, and 40 zettabytes of data will be created by 2020. The applications for Big Data management tools are seemingly endless, stirring imaginations in fields ranging from public health to professional sports. It’s a major shift in the way we view data problems, and communications IT is on the forefront as this technology continues its awkward adolescence.

In this issue of Pipeline, we explore that quest to boil the ocean of Big Data from a variety of different angles. We look at analytical approaches, smarter infrastructure, machine learning and other tools that help service providers harness the data. We discuss the culture changes that might be required for a proper Big Data policy to effectively take root and examine how the information, once mastered, can be used to improve the customer experience. We also look at some of the times when attempts to master Big Data have ended in tears.

We bring you all that, plus the latest news and opinion in the world of communications and entertainment technology (COMET). I have a feeling you’ll enjoy this issue, but how do I know? I’m just the idea man here.

Sincerely,
Tim Young
Editor-in-Chief