

Postcards From Barcelona



Mobile World Congress 2017

As communication service providers, vendors, analysts, and press returned to Barcelona, Spain for their annual review of all things mobile there was a sense of empowerment among the vendors and operators as they visited the booths and hiked the halls.

Our discussions reflected active and tangible efforts rather than the passive and conceptual discussions that have dominated years past. Rather than broad concepts like 5G or IoT or Customer Experience; we talked of outcomes and examples, successes rather than strategies. Not that those strategies aren't important, but at some point it's time to go to work. And that's what I saw and heard this year. Specifically we spoke of digitization, consolidation and monetization.

Definitely Not Digital - but we're trying

A digital network does not make you a digital service provider and piecemeal automation does not make you a digital enterprise. There remains a lot of arm waving about digital transformation, but precious little evidence.

Given that vast portions of the public network are still not IP, digital transformation may seem unwarranted or even undesirable. Yet, progress in converting the network should not deter business-wide transformation efforts to become a digital enterprise. Implementing processes and OSS/BSS solutions to support digital operations can only benefit the business, so there is no excuse to wait.

In a recent ICT Intuition survey, 67% of the more than 120 service providers questioned claim to be digital service providers (DSPs), yet most sold only network services, had no partner strategies and continue to rely on manual efforts. While some tasks have been automated, processes haven't changed. When calling in for support, a customer is still bounced from one area to another because relevant data is stored based on network or service rather than customer. There is no automation or intelligence that ties it to an individual customer.

Upcoming research from ICT Intuition will investigate operator efforts, progress and successes to find out if those 67% deserve the title of DSP.

Vendor Consolidation, too

While operators and supporting vendors continue to simplify and automate operations; at the corporate level it is much less streamlined.

Recently Broadcom acquired Brocade, Nokia acquired Comptel and EXFO announced at MWC that it will add Ontology to an already impressive lineup of acquisitions. And we're just getting started.

Integrating a whole company is more difficult than adding a new partner and a lot can go wrong, so we'll keep an eye on these and others to see what happens.



2017, ICT Intuition, LLC



Data.DATA.DATA

So many discussions about data. Capturing it, storing it, finding it, using it, monetizing it.

And all valid. As an industry we dove into big data and analytics and left ourselves wondering what to do with it all.

Now we're starting to reset and define use cases and models that apply all that great data and intelligence to solving real problems.

I heard about several good and practical options coming to market as add-ons to existing systems or, my favorite, as-a-service.

We know we have the data and we know we need to make better use of it – so let's get to it!



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Consolidate and Simplify

Transforming to a digital enterprise represents the perfect opportunity to clean house. Vast accumulations of processes, systems, interfaces and integrations need to be scrubbed, reduced and/or replaced.

I heard the term “retirement” often and it wasn’t just from us old timers. There is so much complexity on the horizon with the coming of virtualization, complex digital services, 5G and the rest that many operators are wanting to clear the decks before starting in on the new stuff. Although there are some large OSS/BSS implementations that are risky to replace, there are also quite a few innovations that wrap around those sacred systems and have the potential to add capability and simplify operations while limiting risk. Ultimately those behemoth installations shrink and will be safe to turn off.

Monetize is the Mission

Consolidation and automation efforts will all improve the bottom line, but so will improving the customer experience. No, really. Any effort to improve how we win, serve and retain customers is good for business and will help monetize the delivery of digital services. Becoming a digital enterprise benefits customers while reducing operational expense. Using data to better serve customers reduces rework and aligns investment with efforts that deliver the greatest return.

Serving the customer and furthering the business are not mutually exclusive. Every effort to improve the customer experience improves the business and we’re starting to see real evidence of the advantages associated with adopting a true customer focus. Automation doesn’t fix a bad process and in most cases can make it worse. Process changes are real changes and as much as we humans don’t like change, it is inevitable.

59% of service provider executives believe that Changing corporate culture and mindset Is a significant barrier to becoming a DSP

Source: ICT Intuition, LLC “So You Want to be a DSP?”