Orchestrating the Omnichannel Customer Experience

What telcos must do to get it right and why

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Summary

Catalyst

Consumer behaviors continue to evolve as new mechanisms for communicating and sharing emerge. Their expectations are also being shaped by the technologies and positive experiences enabled by internet ecosystem drivers such as Amazon, Alibaba, Facebook, and Uber. Simultaneously, OTTs, content providers, and aggregators are vying for market position and customer attention. Against this backdrop, rampant commoditization continues to erode profit margins, leading some to believe that the only source of differentiation now is the quality of the customer experience.

Ovum view

Telcos must take a two-pronged approach to profitable growth in order to survive and thrive in such a volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous environment. The first prong is to focus on delivering an orchestrated omnichannel customer experience that supports all customers through every interaction moment across their various journeys and helps them achieve their desired outcomes. The second is to ramp up their ability to innovate continuously to create or co-create new digital services designed to attract and retain customers. An effective omnichannel capability also provides the path to the customers, enabling them to find, configure, and subscribe to relevant services that meet their specific needs. This means that omnichannel provides an essential foundation for creation and delivery of new digital services and growth.

In this paper, we explore how consumer behaviors are evolving and what telcos must do to develop the ability to orchestrate the customer experience. This is essential to ensure that customers will want to stay long enough to enjoy the new digital services developed as telcos morph into digital services providers.

Key messages

- Consumers’ communications behavior has changed; traditional network-based services such as SMS and voice are still important, but advances in IP-based technologies have raised consumers’ communications intelligence and expectations in recent years.
- Telcos are also undergoing digital transformation in order to respond to rapidly changing market dynamics, including the move to multiplay, the imminent rollout of 5G networks, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence.
- However, telcos need to identify and address capability gaps in their organizational competence and technology platforms, if they are to maintain optimal relationships with their customers into the future.
- In order to successfully deploy an omnichannel customer experience platform, telcos must commit to providing a unified view of the customer that extends across all of their departments and data systems.
- Telcos must also focus on achieving four key objectives as they build out their omnichannel platform: customer or persona recognition, orchestration, continuous adaptation, and protection of the customer.
Orchestration is particularly important if telcos are to avoid customer journey fragmentation. Telcos must avoid creating or using silos, and they must also find some way to overcome their existing silos. In addition, telcos must have commitment from the CxO level down to placing the customer at the center of the enterprise – which includes making sure they have a good understanding of how their customers wish to interact with them – and they must prioritize those journeys that will be of most benefit to their customers.

Customers have changed the way they communicate

From network-based services to messaging channels and apps

The way in which consumers and enterprise users use communications services has undergone a significant shift since the turn of the century. Indeed, each half-decade since 2000 has seen its own step change, which has set the foundations for communication service development over each successive five years (see Figure 1). Between 2000 and 2005, there was mainstream adoption of (mostly fixed) IP-based communications in developed markets, providing an alternative to traditional circuit-switched services such as voice and, on mobile, SMS. Between 2005 and 2010, IP-based communications spread to mobile, smartphones proliferated, and the mobile app market took off; with the launch of Facebook and Twitter, the social media market was born. The succeeding five years saw the introduction and rapid adoption of chat apps, which have themselves become multidevice platforms for VoIP and video calling – in addition to messaging – as well as for content distribution, services, and payments. We are now in a fourth five-year cycle, in which we have seen the rise of automated communications via chatbots, and the introduction and increasing use of communications capabilities enabled by artificial intelligence, including digital assistants such as Amazon Alexa and Apple Siri.
Telcos have been the instrument by which communications evolution has occurred; the cyclical reinvention of what it means to communicate would not have been possible otherwise. Telcos’ investments in network infrastructure, including high-speed data networks, are a key enabler for the newer social and digital platforms, and also for the content and services that these platforms offer in order to attract users and stimulate engagement. This means that network-centric services such as traditional voice and SMS are no longer the main communications events on the mobile device, for example; consumers still use these services, to a lesser degree, but they also access voice, messaging, and social networking via their mobile apps.

In general, consumers now expect to be able to access multiple communications channels across multiple devices. Consumers also expect their interactions with their telcos (and other service providers) to switch seamlessly between different communications channels, depending on the objective of each stage of the interaction – that is, they expect their telco to enable omnichannel communications.

Digital natives in particular have a different set of expectations again with regards to the way in which they use communications services – for example, they are primarily mobile and always online. The mobilization of digital natives (millennials and Generation Z) – and, to be fair, of consumers in general – is a consequence of the commoditization of communications services, such as voice, SMS, and mobile data; the lower cost of increasingly sophisticated smartphones; and the widespread availability of free public Wi-Fi.

Since communications services will continue to evolve, what it means to be a digital native will also remain fluid. From an organizational and technological perspective, telcos need to be flexible and agile enough to embrace this fluidity, in order to remain relevant to their customers both now and in the future.
Digital transformation brings opportunities for intelligent customer interaction

As telcos become triple- and quad-play service providers, the types of content and services that consumers can access from their telcos have increased. Multiplay telcos offer a mix of mobile and fixed-line communications services, broadband internet, and cable TV. Yet as telcos have extended their reach into additional service markets organically or via acquisition, they are faced with the challenge of ensuring that they can effectively and proactively up-sell or cross-sell all of their service offerings to their existing customers. This is not an easy task for telcos, which have traditionally operated services in silos. For multiplay telcos that have grown by acquisition rather than organically, the problem is exacerbated by the need to integrate different sets of customer data, potentially across different data (and customer experience) management platforms.

At the same time, a number of telcos are undergoing digital transformation, evolving their entire service delivery infrastructure to IP-based platforms, in order to become more agile service providers. This transformation will be a vital prerequisite for all telcos as they ramp up to the launch of 5G networks, which will be application-adaptive networks that will allow telcos to better tailor the performance of applications and services delivered over 5G to the needs of the individual end user (whether consumer or enterprise).

Consequently, from a customer service perspective, telcos will need to build organizational competency in developing a single coherent view of their customers as individuals, across all the products and services that the customer buys from the telco. Telcos will also need to know how best to engage with each individual customer. Achieving these competencies requires a fundamental change in thinking across the telco organization, driven by the CxOs, toward a mindset that embraces intelligent interaction with customers. This intelligent interaction should go beyond the ability for telcos to be proactive by, for example, noticing when a customer is using less voice and consuming more media services, and consequently suggesting a mobile price plan that includes a lower number of minutes and a higher data cap or unlimited data. Alternatively, if the telco is a multiplay operator, it could send the mobile customer a media-related promotion for services available on its fixed or broadband network. It will also require the identification of and investment in the relevant underlying technology platforms that can help telcos achieve this agile customer engagement model.

For example, telcos will need to consider how they might be able to provide better customer service by being able to automate tasks such as order processing, transaction fulfilment, or service provisioning by using artificial intelligence (such as natural language processing) or chatbots. By being able to automate simpler tasks and responses, telcos could devote extra resources in the contact center to one-to-one interactions that are crucial to the smooth running of the customer relationship or that would result in higher-value transactions.

While the marketing and/or customer service functions within telcos may regard omnichannel communications as a key priority, actually accomplishing it will require buy-in from telcos’ IT departments. Typically, telco IT departments are already straining under the load of maintaining daily operations – they do not necessarily have the resources to fund the development of the type of the digital customer service experience the sales and marketing teams are seeking.

Consequently, this leaves two options for IT departments: either make a business case to the relevant CxOs for increased investment or assess alternative options – such as a cloud-based platform – that
would enable such innovation within the restrictions of their existing budgets. Many companies are now turning toward using cloud communications as a way of eliminating capital expenditure and reducing operational expenditure.

The capability gap in telco omnichannel communications

Consumers have never had as much choice as they do now in terms of how to interact with their service providers and brands, including telcos. This is exemplified by the way in which consumers are able to access multiple communications capabilities from within an app, such as a chat app or a social networking app, including voice and video calling as well as messaging.

Extending this into the customer service domain, it is no longer necessary, or even ideal, for customer interactions to always follow a linear path – that is, beginning and ending in the same communications channel. That means it should be possible to move an interaction with a customer who provides negative customer feedback or asks a question on a telco's Facebook page to a one-to-one communications channel, such as Facebook Messenger. In summary, customer service is increasingly moving toward being channel-agnostic, which means that telcos (and other types of service providers) must be willing and able to provide customer service across the multiple communications channels that their customers use.

However, the way in which most telcos traditionally provide communications services – that is, as a series of silos – means that their underlying technology platforms are not equipped to provide their customers with as much choice as is available. For example, telcos typically are not yet able to provide the level of messaging-oriented interaction with their customers that is described above. The gap lies both in telcos engineering the necessary integrations with the relevant third-party services (such as Facebook) and in terms of telcos "conversation-enabling" their existing back-end systems, including customer relationship management, provisioning, and fulfilment, for example.

The ability to intelligently automate certain segments of the customer interaction is another area where telcos should assess the possibilities that are open to them. As mentioned previously, if telcos can automate tasks that generate high volumes of inbound traffic to a telco's call center, but that are relatively straightforward to deal with, it will be possible to free up resources that can be used to address more complex inquiries and potentially increase the value of their interactions with their customers. At the same time, automating straightforward service inquiries is also something that customers appreciate, since it becomes a far more efficient use of their time.

Consumer communications and interactions are becoming more messaging-oriented, and consumers are typically willing to use voice-activated services that extend far beyond the capabilities of interactive voice response. Consequently, it will become increasingly important for telcos to tap into this change in customers' expectations, and one of the ways in which telcos can do this is by deploying artificial intelligence such as natural language processing in order to more intelligently answer customer inquiries.

Intelligent automation will, however, be key. Customers will not be satisfied with a response that merely provides them with acknowledgement of their request and a query number. For routine inquiries requiring no human agent intervention, customers will expect their telco to be able to process the request, activate or provision a service, and provide an order confirmation. What's more, in today’s fast-paced world, consumers typically expect a close-to-instant response to a request or query, or at least some guidance as to how long it will take to deal with an inquiry to be dealt with. Enabling this level of
intelligent interaction and responsiveness, which potentially spans multiple communications channels and back-end systems, is already a challenge for many telcos.

At the same time, it is vital for telcos to cultivate a more agile service development environment as an organizational competency in general, but also to ensure continuous regeneration of their customer engagement platforms in particular. The way in which consumers communicate has changed significantly just in the last 17 years, and it is entirely possible that this relatively fast rate of development in communications will continue in the years to come. Telcos need to ensure that their underlying technology platforms and organizational cultures are continuously adaptable to changes that are both expected and unforeseen, so that new capabilities can be easily added and features that are not delivering the desired results can be either dropped or tweaked in order to become more relevant.

In addition, telcos should examine to what extent they can maximize the use of their own network assets in order to further enhance the customer journey. For example, they are in a unique position to effectively use their customers' location and personal data to offer proximity-based marketing campaigns using geo-fences; if one of its own customers is near a telco shopfront, the telco could encourage footfall within that store with a personalized message or promotion.

To a large extent, telcos also need to underpin the adaptability of their technology platforms and organizational culture with a constant reassessment as to what it is that their customers actually need as they undertake their journeys with the telco. These insights will help them guide and refine the development of their strategies for customer engagement, engender interdepartmental collaboration between sales and marketing and the IT department, and, ultimately, influence the architecture of their back-end IT systems in order to more effectively support their customer-facing objectives.

Omnichannel orchestration: Common barriers to success

Figure 2 outlines the common barriers to success that a telco (or another type of service provider) will likely face as it builds out its omnichannel orchestration strategies.

**Figure 2: Hierarchy of common barriers to success**

Source: Ovum

**Lack of leadership vision and values to create a customer orientation**

Unless the leadership of the enterprise fosters a genuine customer culture and communicates and demonstrates a core set of values to foster a symbiotic relationship with customers, no amount of technology will lead to success.
A lack of understanding of what omnichannel implies

It is common to see telcos adding new channels but not enabling customers to cross channels during their journeys. This results in an inconsistent journey experience and leads to frustration. This is multichannel, not omnichannel. This lack of understanding often starts with little insight into how customers would like to interact as they embark on their many and various customer journeys. This also leads to tactical approaches to improve the customer experience.

Tactical approaches to omnichannel

Too many organizations adopt tactical approaches to omnichannel. There is a difference between progressively designing and implementing capabilities as firms complete major milestones plotted out on a well-thought-out roadmap versus bolting on capabilities without any clear view of what the eventual omnichannel capability will look like. Tactical approaches often need unpacking later, as unforeseen and negative customer experience consequences come to light.

Fragmented customer data

Customer data is fragmented across multiple systems and is often transactional in form. This impedes insight into customer context, which in turn leads to poor responsiveness and inappropriate offers or irritation as customers may be forced to repeat themselves or re-enter data.

Silos

Silos are one of the biggest barriers to a positive customer experience.

- **Organizational silos.** They prevent the necessary collaboration between marketing, sales, and service and operational employees. When following different departmental agendas, the quality of the service provided is often poor, and consequently the customer experience suffers.
  - **Legacy systems and system silos.** In addition to the problem of legacy systems being designed and heavily customized for a different era, the legacy systems landscape often mirrors the organizational silos.
  - **Product silos.** They are typical of product-centric organizations. All product leaders are responsible for their own go-to-market and channel strategies. This leads to channel silos.
  - **Channel silos.** This is where the experience is highly dependent on the product being purchased and is often inconsistent or denies customers the freedom to interact in the way that seems most natural to them.

No orchestration layer

It is hardly surprising in the chaotic environment described so far that the ability to orchestrate the customer experience will be lacking. This is why it is so important to get the organizational alignment right at the outset, so that everyone is pointing in the same direction. It is possible to synthesize data from multiple sources and even embed some real-time intelligence to mimic an orchestration capability; however, in these siloed environments, the strong likelihood is that content that might be relevant at a moment in a customer’s journey may either not exist or be hidden away in different systems.
• **Content fragmentation.** That is therefore another barrier to a positive customer experience.

• **Lack of integration and architecture.** The customer experience may involve many interaction points spanning the entire enterprise value chain. All of this must be integrated or connected. While many enterprises may follow architectural standards, far fewer develop the architecture with the customer as its anchor point. Omnichannel demands an outside-in architectural approach.

These represent some of the most common barriers to omnichannel customer experience orchestration. In the next section of this white paper, we'll discuss what telcos need to do to overcome these barriers.

### Telcos must continuously adapt to meet customer experience needs and expectations

**Omnichannel can help telcos serve consumers better in a digital world if they adopt the right approach**

The changes in consumers’ behaviors and expectations as well as ready access to alternatives from traditional or emerging competitors and OTT players, allied to commoditization of services, mean that the pressure is on for telcos to differentiate on the quality and relevance of the customer experience they can deliver. Many telcos are following a twin-track approach in the pursuit of profitable growth:

• creating the omnichannel-delivered customer experience

• transforming their value propositions and evolving from communications services providers (CSPs) to digital service providers.

The smarter ones realize that the two engines of growth must be closely interwoven. Creating an effective omnichannel customer experience opens the channel arteries of the firm through which new services can be bought and consumed, reviewed, and recommended by customers, if the experience is positive and relevant. This is not about adding new channels used by consumers such as social or e-commerce. It is about facilitating customers’ journeys across channels they choose to use and that make sense to them based on the stage of their journeys and complexity of the transaction or query and whether or not the transaction lends itself to self-service, automated support, or advice from a knowledgeable employee.

### Four core capabilities must be supported by omnichannel

What telcos must deliver and at the core of omnichannel are four capabilities that must be supported:

• **Recognize the customer or persona.** Recognize the customer as a customer or, if a prospect, a persona, based on behavioral patterns.

• **Orchestrate the experience.** Intelligently orchestrate the customer experience throughout the customer’s journey in real time.

• **Adapt continuously.** Adapt at the right pace to ensure a persistently relevant customer experience across all interactions.
• **Protect the customer.** That refers to privacy and protection against the unauthorized or fraudulent use of customer data; it is essential in all transactions.

**A unified view of the customer supported by organizational coherence is essential**

Fundamental to omnichannel delivery is a unified view of each customer or prospect and the means and mechanisms to coordinate relevant support, be it content, advice, or a specific action. It also calls for a genuine commitment to make the customer the focal point for all enterprise activities, which demands a high degree of visionary leadership and organizational coherence.

A tactical approach to omnichannel customer experience will fail. From a consumer perspective, they expect their various interaction journeys to be a seamless and frictionless chain of events as they traverse channels to fulfill their objectives. Telcos stuck in organizational silos or with customer data fragmented across multiple systems will struggle to deliver the promise of omnichannel as they lack the essential unified view of the customer and organizational coherence required.

To deliver that seamless journey and offer relevance at each step is a major feat of intelligent orchestration that must be supported by some form of customer interaction hub to control the traffic and personalize the experience by synthesizing and acting on live customer data, historical data from CRM systems, and product content and operational data. Figure 3 below outlines a simple series of customer journeys from initial research through purchase, to use of the service, support when in difficulty or need for advice, recommendation (assuming the service was compelling), and hopefully repurchase or increased subscription. Customer lifecycles are also becoming more compressed as customers eschew 24-month contracts in favor of 12 months as they exercise their rights for more choice. This increases the pressure on telcos to differentiate by delivering a well-orchestrated omnichannel experience.
What makes an intelligent and effective omnichannel platform?

To support the four core capabilities of customer or persona recognition, orchestration, continuous adaptation, and protection of the customer, Ovum has identified 13 attributes that must form part of any omnichannel development. These are outlined in Figure 4 below.
Figure 4: The 13 attributes of omnichannel management

These 13 attributes shown in the 10 outer circles, plus privacy protection, compliance, and cybersecurity highlighted in the green circle, must be supported in every interaction and form the basis of an omnichannel customer experience strategy.

**Recognize customers and their personas**

Recognizing the customer as a customer is a prerequisite to delivering a personalized experience.

**Supporting attributes**

- **Identify the customer.** This can be achieved through authentication, using a unique identifier such as a mobile phone number, login details, token, or biometric means, depending on the nature of the business and level of security required. Personas are representative archetypes and are typically recognized by their patterns of behavior. Customer information must be unified from all sources to create a contextual 360-degree view.

- **Contextually relevant interactions.** Customer recognition must also include insight into customers’ implied intent, based on the nature of their interactions allied to their historical data.
- **Customer choice.** Finally, the third attribute, customer choice and preferences, must be supported, including how customers' information will be used or shared across each channel they choose to use, both digital and physical.

**Orchestrate the customer experience throughout the customer journey – based on real-time predictive intelligence**

This is at the heart of omnichannel customer experience: the ability to orchestrate content, knowledge, and appropriate responses to customer interactions throughout their journeys and deliver a consistently positive experience at scale. This requires an orchestration layer to provide intelligent automation based on predictive analytics. It also implies a high level of customer data integration of historic information from CRM and back-office systems and contextual data gleaned from customer interactions in real time. This provides real-time insights to trigger the right information and content allied to the next best action or offer. To trigger the right response and deliver continuity and consistency of experience, customers' interaction data must persist across all the channels they use in the course of their journeys.

The entire value chain, particularly fulfillment and logistics, must be integrated and connected to fulfill customers' orders and, if necessary, allow customers to reschedule delivery at a time and place that suits them, including availability of self-service channels. Underlying interaction processes must make life as easy as possible for the customer and be intuitive.

**Supporting attributes**

- **Customer choice.** The services provided must allow customers to interact how and when they like in the most convenient channel(s) that suit their preferences at a time of their choosing. This includes enabling customers to swap channels and pause and resume interactions at will in any mix of digital and physical channels, such as offline channels including retail stores, home visits, or, in B2B, the place of work.

- **Minimize customer effort.** The omnichannel experience must be easy and intuitive for customers to achieve their aims with minimal friction or effort.

- **Contextually relevant interactions.** This is based on inferring customers’ or prospects’ intent from their behaviors and history to trigger the most relevant action or content to enable them to fulfill their goals.

- **Two way and peer to peer.** This means customers can initiate the interaction, not just receive and respond to marketing communications. Customer communities or peer reviews should be included in the omnichannel ecosystem as customers often trust peers more than an organization's outbound communications or marketing.

- **Continuity of experience.** Journey data should persist across all channels so customers are not required to authenticate or repeat themselves on a different channel.

- **Integrated value chain.** If customers buy online, for example, delivery of their products must be predictable, reliable, and traceable. If they wish to change the delivery date, back-office and logistics systems must update in real time. Integration of the fulfillment and logistics functions must ensure that the product is in stock before offers are made to avoid disappointment due to failed or unfulfilled orders.

- **Adapt continuously to remain relevant.** To ensure adaptation is continuous and relevant, two types of closed loops are required: external and internal. External feedback
loops include dynamic real-time adaptation based on digital clues from the customer interaction, to trigger contextually relevant responses. As patterns of behavior are sensed through real-time predictive analytics, content or next best actions can be triggered to help customers fulfill their objectives or provide feedback. Machine learning augments analytics to provide continuous, closed-loop, automated learning and journey optimization linked to customer needs. Customer feedback and assessment of the customer's emotion during the interaction are needed, as is monitoring changes in behavioral patterns. This feedback is used to continuously recalibrate omnichannel experiences to ensure that they continue to meet customer expectations and provide a sustainable source of competitive differentiation. Performance must be monitored and a broad array of customer experience metrics and internal closed-loop mechanisms must be in place to drive continuous optimization.

**Protect the customer**

A core responsibility for every enterprise is to protect the customer's data from misuse. Cyber-attack is a growing threat, and as growth in online buying and other transactions continues to accelerate, the potential threat is magnified. Recent very public cases where large CSPs have had customer records stolen or hacked illustrate the damage that cybercrime has caused to their reputations and destruction of customer trust.

**Supporting attributes**

- **Privacy protection.** Ensure compliance with all legal requirements regarding customer information and respect for customers' wishes regarding privacy or sharing of their data.
- **Cybersecurity.** Throughout every interaction, manage authentication and data security to prevent malicious or fraudulent activities and ensure that customer details are protected from cyber-attack.
- **Compliance.** That could be specific regulatory compliance such as industry codes of practices, or more generally, such as ensuring that children do not have access to inappropriate content or protecting online gamers from spending more than a set amount and otherwise becoming impoverished.

**Avoid customer journey fragmentation**

Omnichannel customer experience orchestration is much more than a technology challenge. Many telcos have evolved and grown through acquisition, and over time that has led to a complex and highly fragmented tangle of departments, functions, and IT systems designed to support an acquisitive utility mindset, where products and services are pushed to customers with little insight into the context of the individuals and what drives their needs. This lack of insight and the ability to act on it in an orchestrated and timely manner leads to high churn rates.

**Silos lead to customer journey fragmentation, disappointment, and churn**

Departmental, product, channel, and information silos all have a negative impact on the quality of the customer experience. Where different product teams or departments take responsibility for their own channel strategies, customers are often given little choice about how to interact with the company. If marketing, sales, and support are not aligned, the customer can be irritated or left confused by the lack of a coherent experience. Customer data that is fragmented across multiple systems makes it...
hard to gain any real actionable customer insight. Offers pushed out to customers and possibly through the wrong channels create considerable waste. Marketing automation systems allied to a lack of insight simply accelerate customer annoyance, leading to increased churn.

What is required is a coherent approach to customers, and that starts with a genuine customer orientation.

**The transformation to a highly adaptive digital services provider starts with a customer orientation**

The term "customer-centricity" is as elastic and nebulous as the term "digital transformation." Neither carries much meaning without clarity of purpose, and that demands real leadership from the CEO and throughout the leadership team of the enterprise.

A customer orientation starts with a vision to center the enterprise on the customer, organize around customers, and support customers throughout their lifecycles and across all their journeys. Values are critical too. Future revenues and profits will depend on developing a symbiotic relationship with customers, which means delivering customer outcomes and generating revenue and profits as a result. Far too many telcos lack the values required to create this symbiotic relationship, as they put their own narrow interests ahead of the customers'. Cultural transformation must complement organizational and omnichannel transformation.

Figure 5 provides a high-level view of how the telco must match customer expectations by aligning its departments, teams, processes, and systems to support each customer throughout the lifecycle. The inner circle represents a typical customer lifecycle and the outer circle how the enterprise supports each stage of the customer lifecycle, with bulleted illustrations around the perimeter.

This also requires cross-organizational collaboration underpinned by processes and activities to help customers achieve their desired outcomes. It is this interdepartmental orientation around the customer that will be one of the key challenges telcos face.
Figure 5: Organizational coherence mapped to the customer lifecycle

- Timely tips and offer upgrades based on usage patterns
- Easy onboarding and provisioning
- Simple buying experience
- Build own plan supported by intelligent virtual assistants
- Delivery options
- Consistent, easy-to-understand offers
- Customer reviews
- Simple comparison
- Chatbot support
- Contextually relevant offers across all touchpoints and channels
- Lead nurturing
- Timely personalized renewal offers based on usage patterns & other insights to drive retention
- Loyalty recognition & rewards
- Transparent billing and early warnings if in danger of exceeding entitlement
- Proactive support triggered by behaviors, network issues, or IoT
- Self-service
- First-time resolution

Customer journey mapping helps organizational alignment

Customer journey mapping is a visual means of developing organizational alignment at a more granular level. By understanding what customers are trying to achieve and how they wish to interact across each journey, telcos can gain a deeper understanding of any obstacles or barriers that impact those journeys as well as what content or action is required to facilitate them and help deliver customers’ desired outcomes.

Focusing on the most important customer journeys: Two present-day scenarios

Given the variety of customers and journeys that they may wish to travel, to get started telcos should focus on those that, if not supported in line with customer expectations, may create barriers to customer acquisition or lead to customer churn. Here are two scenarios: frictionless acquisition and onboarding, and proactive churn reduction and cross-selling. Each telco must select its own priorities based on those customer journeys that deliver the biggest mutual impact on customers and on enterprise growth and retention goals.

Source: Ovum
Two scenarios are illustrated in the next two diagrams:

**Figure 6: Frictionless acquisition and onboarding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquisition</th>
<th>Purchase</th>
<th>Onboarding</th>
<th>Post-purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offline</strong></td>
<td>1. Customer comes across a recent bundle offer and decides to visit store to explore it</td>
<td>3. Workflows capture contact details, and &quot;build your plan&quot; option enables the customer to select the right plan</td>
<td>4. Online package activation or SIM/product home delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual assistant</strong></td>
<td>2. While shop assistants are busy serving others, the customer decides to explore new &quot;scan to chat&quot; option</td>
<td>4. Instant SIM/product fulfillment at store</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Chatbot shares the set-up video on Facebook Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Live agent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Contextual transfer to live agent for further help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ovum, adapted from IMImobile

**Scenario 1: Frictionless acquisition and onboarding**

The above scenario illustrates a common customer journey that involves both digital and physical channels. The journey is seamless and with minimum friction, as behind the scenes every interaction is captured, and supporting workflows ensure that the customer achieves the desired outcome. At every stage, relevant information is provided without the customer having to repeat information.

Supporting this scenario is integrated offer management across all channels: CRM integration for in-store lead capture; integration with back-end IT systems for provisioning, including shipping and delivery; and integration with the contact center so that the live agent does not have to ask the customer for any further details and can concentrate on providing relevant support. All of that is managed by a customer engagement hub to provide the orchestration capability supported by real-time access to unified customer data.
**Scenario 2: Pre-emptive churn reduction and cross-selling in a quad-play environment**

Based on TV usage of fewer than two hours per month, a quad-play customer is identified as a likely candidate for churn. That triggers an alert and a further automated analysis of the customer's viewing habits and interests. The most relevant offer is then dynamically sent to the customer via the preferred communication channel, in this case Facebook Messenger, giving the customer an option to try free of charge for the first month a new HD sports channel and including free on-demand access to content on a smartphone. All the customer must do is key in "activate" and the subscription is confirmed and links to on-demand content are sent via the same channel. The offer and provisioning are completed in the same channel, making it very easy for the customer to accept and activate the offer. Upcoming sports that are of interest to the customer are also flagged to encourage continued use.

The entire experience throughout the customer journey is automated without the need for further human intervention and in a manner that augments the customer experience through increased relevance. Underlying that capability is unified customer data, predictive analytics, and a customer engagement hub to provide the omnichannel orchestration from offer to provisioning and post-purchase support.

**Telcos won't be able to capitalize on new digital services without closing the omnichannel gap**

Developing the omnichannel customer experience capability must be the top priority for digital transformation, or growth predicted from new digital services will be at risk, as will the reputation of the telco. If telcos can get to the base camp of omnichannel management described in the previous section, they will have a foundation on which to develop increased value to customers as well as reap...
the rewards of profitable growth in new digital services. Developing a full omnichannel capability takes time, yet speed to this capability is critical. To accelerate development, telcos should seek out cloud-based platforms that can be rapidly configured to fit. Those already making substantial progress will find a much faster uptake in the consumption of new digital services, as they come to be trusted by consumers and business customers alike.

**Most telcos are a long way from having an effective omnichannel capability**

Ovum research into omnichannel reveals that most telcos are still a long way from having the ability to orchestrate the customer experience in line with their customers’ many and various journeys. Figure 8 below outlines the progress telcos claim to have made.

**Figure 8: Omnichannel progress in telco companies**

Telcos in most countries are “in progress,” in “early stages,” or “not started.” In the UK, that accounts for around 60% of telcos. So why, given the obvious importance of delivering an experience in line with customer expectations, is progress so painfully slow?

**Telcos must take a strategic and holistic approach to omnichannel to overcome common barriers**

Just as we outlined a hierarchy of common barriers, enterprises that have progressed successfully with their omnichannel customer experience capabilities also exhibit a hierarchy of developments to ensure firm foundations. These are outlined in Figure 9 below:
Figure 9: A hierarchy for intelligent omnichannel orchestration

Source: Ovum

It starts with leadership commitment to the customer

Getting to an intelligent and orchestrated omnichannel capability represents a major business transformation, and firms that have succeeded in this endeavor are invariably led from the top. It is critical that the leadership of the telco recognizes that omnichannel offers a route for persistent customer relevance and growth. The success of future digital services and a successful transformation to become a competitive digital service provider rely on omnichannel as a platform for growth.

As an example, Verizon states very clearly its commitment to its customers: "The Verizon commitment is to put our customers first by providing excellent service and great communications experiences. This is what we do and this is why we exist. By focusing on our customers and being responsible members of our communities, we will produce a solid return for our shareowners, create meaningful work for ourselves and provide something of lasting value for society. As a result, Verizon will be recognized as a great company."

Values matter

This commitment to customers is underpinned by four core values: integrity, respect, performance excellence, and accountability.

Amazon is an oft-cited benchmark for the quality and consistency of the customer experience delivered. Amazon's founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos, established a clear vision from the outset: "Our vision is to be Earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online."

On one occasion, he said, "We've had three big ideas at Amazon that we've stuck with for 18 years, and they're the reason we're successful: Put the customer first. Invent. And be patient."

Without active leadership involvement, a mandate does not provide the momentum required to foster the desired culture and ensure that progress toward a consistently relevant and positive CX takes root.
Omnichannel requires cross-organizational collaboration and alignment

To get started or to progress with omnichannel, representation from each part of the firm's value chain should collaborate to design and develop the omnichannel platform. This should consist of business, domain, and IT and architectural experts. Firms may also embed external consultants or systems integrators into the team with the ability to help the organization develop its roadmap and harness existing legacy systems as well as integrate them with the new intelligent orchestration capabilities required.

Start by identifying the most critical customer segments and customer journeys to map

Customer journey mapping is a useful means of creating an outside-in view of how customers would like to interact with the firm. Most enterprises will have a wealth of customer feedback from satisfaction surveys, but this should be augmented through observation and testing. Given the variety and number of different customer journeys, rather than trying to map every possible permutation, the most critical customer segments and customer journeys should be mapped first. Speed matters, so iterative and agile approaches should be adopted.

Adopt an architectural approach centered on the customer

Omnichannel will only achieve successful outcomes if it is designed from the customer back. Legacy systems as well as the new capabilities and supporting systems must work together harmoniously. External and internal feedback loops need to be in place to ensure that the experience delivered is optimized continuously. Redundant capabilities should be retired and replaced by more relevant capabilities.

Use the omnichannel design principles outlined in Figure 4

The four core capabilities outlined earlier must be addressed and supported by the 13 attributes. Use this as a design checklist.

Unify customer data

Fundamental to personalization is knowing the customer. One of the first jobs must be to unify customer data and where necessary augment it with real-time interaction data so that the customer's context can be determined and an appropriate response delivered at the right time.

Establish the orchestration layer – work with a specialist provider who can offer the platform as a service

A channel-agnostic and intelligent orchestration layer should be at the heart of the omnichannel design. This will ensure that the right response is delivered, triggered by customers' interactions across their journeys. Customer data must persist across channels, and if customers leave their journeys temporarily, they must be able to pick up later from where they left. For example, a customer may have initiated a webchat, seeking to add a new service such as quad play. The customer may have to leave halfway through to get to an appointment. On the way or while waiting in reception, the customer may pick up the conversation or use SMS to complete the inquiry. There must be a single view of each customer's interactions to support this capability.

Speed to capability is critical, so rather than develop an orchestration capability from the ground up, which can be expensive and take far too long, telcos should identify a specialist provider that can offer the platform as a service and be configured to fit.
Align the organization to remove silos

In tandem with the omnichannel design work, the leadership of the telco must take steps to align the organization around customers and to obliterate organizational, product, and channel silos. Organizational coherence is essential to successful omnichannel delivery.

Measure what matters – select KPIs to foster desired behaviors

The foundation of enduring relationships is trust. Telcos may need to review their current measurement criteria and KPIs and ensure that they foster the desired customer-centric behaviors.

Companies throughout industries commonly use customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Scores, but at a practical level, many agents in contact centers are still measured on call-handling times. The focus should shift to success in solving the customers’ issues or helping them achieve successful outcomes. Some telcos are also measuring the ease with which customers complete their journeys, the idea being to minimize customer effort and identify any systemic impediments that must be removed. A thorough review of existing KPIs must be undertaken to ensure that the right behaviors are being fostered and not the wrong ones.

Conclusion: Orchestrating omnichannel provides the foundation for a more rewarding customer experience – and thus future growth

The digital consumer is driving the need for telcos to massively improve their customer experience delivery capabilities. It requires a genuine commitment to the customer at the heart of everything the enterprise does. It is built on unified customer data and must be orchestrated at scale.

An intelligent orchestration layer, supported by real-time contextual data, predictive analytics, and automation, and integrated with back-end systems, provides the platform for omnichannel.

To succeed in enabling omnichannel orchestration, telcos must incorporate the four core capabilities and 13 attributes identified in this paper and consider what existing barriers must be removed to develop a firm foundation. To achieve this, telcos must take a systematic approach centered on the customer. Once this set of capabilities is in place, telcos will be able to enrich the customer experience further through innovative digital services, as well as identify new ways to monetize customer insights.

Omnichannel customer experience orchestration is a major milestone to profitable growth and continued customer relevance. Without it, telcos will lose customers at an increasing speed and miss out on the emerging opportunities that 5G, virtual reality, and other advancements would otherwise bring.
About IMImobile

IMImobile is a cloud communications software and solutions provider that enables companies to use mobile and digital technologies to better communicate with and engage their customers.

Our omnichannel platform enables enterprises to utilize the latest channels and technology to transform and automate the customer experience with minimal development time and lightweight integration.

Organizations that trust us to deliver smarter digital customer engagement solutions include Vodafone, Telefonica, Aircel, Airtel, EE, BSNL, AT&T, MTN, France Telecom, Centrica, Universal Music, Tata, the AA, the BBC and major financial institutions.

IMImobile is headquartered in London with offices in Hyderabad, Atlanta, Dubai and Johannesburg and has over 900 employees worldwide. IMImobile is quoted on the London Stock Exchange's AIM market with the TIDM code IMO.
Appendix

Definition of omnichannel: Ovum defines omnichannel as the means by which an enterprise enables interactive engagement with its customers across any channel or combination of channels customers choose to use, digital and physical, to achieve their desired outcomes; by delivering a contextually relevant and rewarding experience – consistently and securely.

Methodology

The conclusions in this report were based on both primary and secondary research data sources.

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