



Highlights

- Communications service providers need to build personalization into their customer interactions, but siloed business environments make this difficult
 - IBM omni-channel engagement solutions help CSPs gain a complete understanding of who their customers are and what they want
 - These complete customer insights can be used to create a consistent, personalized experience that crosses all channels and makes the customer feel in control
 - IBM's cognitive commerce initiative makes it easier for CSPs to identify the market and customer insights they need
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IBM omni-channel engagement

Helping communications service providers offer the personalized, consistent experience today's customers expect

The world of telecom has changed. While communication service providers experienced tremendous growth over the past 10 to 15 years based solely on acquiring new customers and expanding their geographic reach, this trend seems unlikely to continue. The market for traditional voice and data services has reached a point of saturation, meaning that CSPs will have to take a different approach if they want to keep growing at the same rate. This problem is compounded by the rapid ascension of over-the-top (OTT) service providers like Skype and Google. These market players went from being customers of CSPs to being their direct competitors, highlighting the need for CSPs to transform their business models if they intend to stay relevant going into the future.

Another imperative CSPs must account for is the new customer-to-business (C2B) paradigm. Today's customers are more connected and empowered than ever before, meaning that CSPs must offer a consistent and contextual experience across all channels, based on a real understanding of customers and their preferences, in order to keep customers satisfied. Unfortunately, making this transformation may be easier said than done: according to survey data from the IBM Institute for Business Value, two-thirds of telecom C-suite executives said they expected it to be difficult to understand their customers as individuals, rather than parts of a category or market segment.

Today's CSPs interact with customers across more channels than ever before. However, the traditional siloed business models that many CSPs have relied on for decades is not built to handle this new reality. CSPs need to be able to provide their customers with an integrated, seamless experience across all channels—the same kind of experience those customers have come to expect from their interactions with other businesses. However, the silos that continue to separate web, point of sale, mobile and call center channels make this nearly impossible to do.



IBM offers the omni-channel customer engagement solutions that CSPs need to break through the silos, build a cross-channel customer intelligence platform that provides the level of individual customer understanding that today's C2B economy demands, and then use that 360-degree view of the customer to provide a seamless, personalized experience for customers, no matter which channel they choose to interact with the provider. As a result, CSPs will take a key step toward becoming digital service providers, overcome the hurdles standing in the way of their ongoing growth, and continue driving better business results.

Better customer understanding and insights

Too often, CSPs rely on simple ad hoc analytics operations; insights are gathered at random, with no continuity across channels. As a result, business users won't be able to use the insights gathered by these programs to support a better omni-channel customer engagement and real-time intelligent campaigns. They won't have a complete picture of individual customers across all channels, and the insights they do have will not be available on a real-time basis.

Analytics solutions from IBM can help CSPs expand beyond this out-of-date way of doing business. With IBM analytics solutions, CSPs can pull insights from customer interactions, no matter which internal or external channel the interaction took place upon. This means that CSPs will be able to build a complete picture of the customer, including their preferences, interests and dislikes. These insights can be compiled in real time, allowing CSPs to drive the kind of individualized customer interactions across all channels that today's C2B economy demands.

Real-time campaigns

With real-time intelligent campaigns supported by cross-channel customer insights, CSPs can ensure that the offers and messaging they are providing are meaningful, useful and relevant to the customers. These intelligent campaigns can be launched quickly and efficiently, making it easier for CSPs to capitalize on business opportunities as they arise. In addition, the customer insights offered by IBM analytics solutions provide added flexibility, allowing CSPs to adjust their campaigns as needed to address customer tastes and interests, or keep up with new circumstances in the business world as a whole.

Location analytics

While digital channels are clearly growing in importance to CSPs, customer insights can also be captured in the physical world with location analytics solutions.

Using beacons that interact with the mobile devices that customers carry with them everywhere, CSPs can find out more about how customers shop while in brick-and-mortar stores, including what products they look at, which areas of the store they linger in the longest, and how often they return to a store over time. This information can then be added to the larger customer profile, creating a view of the customer that merges the digital and physical worlds.

IBM Digital Data Exchange

IBM Digital Data Exchange, a solution integrated into the IBM Digital Analytics platform, can help digital marketers simplify the collection and distribution of real-time behavioral data. These insights can be placed at business users' fingertips, available whenever they need them to support their campaigns. These business users are also able to pull the customer insights they need to support their work without having to rely on support from the IT team. Taking a self-service approach to customer data helps business users work faster, while also keeping IT users free to focus on more important work they could be performing.

Improved customer experience

Today's customers expect to be able to shop whenever they want, wherever they want, while still having a consistent, high-quality experience that flows across all points of interaction. In addition, customers expect for their provider to listen to their input and involve them in a collaborative process to help create the best and most relevant experience possible. Unfortunately, CSPs have a long way to go to achieve this goal: according to a recent report from the IBM Institute for Business Value, only 38 percent of customers feel that their provider enables them to give feedback to help develop new communications products and services.¹

Omni-channel engagement solutions from IBM help remove the silos that have traditionally separated different channels of customer interaction. As a result, a customer can now browse products, compare different options, try out a product in store, place an order, and make returns, all while enjoying a single integrated user experience that is perfectly attuned to their own wants and needs.

Customer empowerment

Providing an omni-channel engagement also gives customers a greater sense of control, because they know they're empowered to use whichever channel they prefer to interact with their provider.

If a customer prefers to access their account on their mobile device instead of waiting until they can be in front of a desktop, they can do so without having to worry that their experience might suffer due to the limitations of the mobile channel.

This is one way to provide the control that so many customers feel is missing from their current provider relationship, as it enables customers to request new services, increase thresholds, change policies, review account information, and lodge queries or complaints at any time, from any place. Customers also get control of their own personal data, including full transparency into permissions, policies and privacy protections that the service provider has in place.

IBM solutions also play an important role in delivering a shopping experience that is personalized and customized for individual customers. The data collected from customer analytics solutions is compiled into a single, 360-degree view of the customer. This means that no matter where a customer's next interaction with their CSP takes place, the provider will be able to approach them with full knowledge of their likes and dislikes. This capability allows a brand to increase average order value, and take advantage of new cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

Front office transformation

One example of how IBM makes omni-channel engagement possible is the front office transformation initiative. Front office transformation is a way of reimagining customer engagement for a new age that's defined by digital forces such as social, mobile, big data and analytics, and cloud. The transformation requires CSPs to implement a digital front office that makes it easier to connect and share value with customers, as well as a globally integrated enterprise that is built for efficiency and able to grow quickly. Taken together, these two elements can give CSPs everything they need to understand heightened customer expectations and respond to those expectations in a timely manner.

Order management to bring together diverse systems

There is an unprecedented amount of merger and acquisition activity going on in the communications sector today. An omni-channel engagement strategy provides an opportunity for CSPs to prepare for this, using an order management solution. Any time two CSPs come together to form a single organization, the result will be multiple and conflicting systems; even if one of the organizations previously adopted omni-channel engagement, their efforts could be derailed by merging with a partner who didn't.

Deploying an order management system as part of an omni-channel engagement strategy can help account for any other system that a CSP may find itself managing in the future. A single flexible OMS can serve as the connecting link between different systems, while ensuring that omni-channel engagement continues to extend across all of those systems. An OMS can also accelerate the process of integrating redundant systems.

Cognitive commerce

At IBM, we believe that a new age of business is upon us. It's an age defined by systems that can rapidly ingest unstructured data, reason about that data to generate educated hypotheses, and grow and learn from experience over time. We call it cognitive computing, and we think it's about to revolutionize the way CSPs operate. We're not alone in our opinion, either: according to one report, 89 percent of telecom professionals believe that the cognitive era will have an impact on the future of their business.²

While cognitive solutions such as IBM Watson™ have the potential to be transformative across industry settings, the opportunities in the commerce sector are particularly enticing. In this document, we've established that not having customer data can interfere with a CSP's efforts to build an omni-channel engagement strategy. Perhaps equally concerning is having too much data, to the point where commerce leaders can't identify what data is relevant to them. In many ways, the end result is the same: unable to support their decision making with relevant data, commerce professionals will find themselves making ad hoc decisions, based on intuition alone.

IBM's approach to cognitive commerce makes it easier for customer engagement professionals to find the data that matters most to their jobs. As a result, they'll be able to understand how their actions might impact customer engagement and sales, and make informed decisions accordingly.

In order to start taking advantage of the benefits cognitive computing can offer, you need the right infrastructure and talent in place, and an overarching cognitive strategy to support them. IBM has everything needed to help you implement these elements and get started with cognitive computing. Visit ibm.com/watson to learn more.

Why IBM?

IBM offers a comprehensive portfolio of commerce and customer analytics solutions, as well as a proven history of deploying them to support CSPs. These solutions are integrated into a single coherent environment that makes them easy to deploy and manage, and also helps CSPs go to market faster, interact with customers better, and achieve better business results overall.

IBM has a track record in the telecom industry that stretches back decades, and includes successful projects at some of the biggest names in the industry. However, we're also looking to the future: we understand the growing importance of digital technology in today's economy and the challenges this represents for CSPs. That's why we're helping CSPs drive the transformation from communications service provider to digital service provider.

In addition, CSPs that work with IBM to support their transformation initiatives can take advantage of IBM Research, the world's largest private research organization, which is always turning out new innovations that could help CSPs get better results. Our network of regional centers of excellence also supports CSPs with easy access to industry knowledge, resources and best practices. Finally, everything we do for our CSP customers is backed up by a global network of telecommunications delivery capabilities, allowing us to roll out transformations quickly.

For more information

To learn more about omni-channel engagement solutions from IBM, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner. You can also learn more about IBM solutions for the communications industry by visiting ibm.com/industries/communications.

Also, to learn more about IBM Commerce solutions for CSPs, visit ibm.com/commerce/us-en/industries/communications.

IBM Global Financing

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1 IBM Institute for Business Value, *Restoring connections: How telecommunications providers can reboot their customer experience*, January 2015 (ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?subtype=XB&infotype=PM&appname=GBSE_GB_TI_USEN&htmlfid=GBE03644USEN&attachment=GBE03644USEN.PDF)

2 *Welcome to the Cognitive Era: A new era in technology, a new era in business*, IBM, October 2015



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