



EVOLVING TELCO ROLE PLAY FOR ENTERPRISE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

By Aditya Dhruva, VP and CTO at Mahindra Comviva

Mahindra Comviva is a subsidiary of Tech Mahindra and a part of the USD 19 billion Mahindra Group. Its extensive portfolio of solutions spans mobile finance, content, infotainment, customer value management, messaging, mobile data and managed VAS services.

The advent of the digital era has brought about a sea change in customer behavior. Consumer today is becoming more demanding and less loyal with each passing day. They require brands to be 'always-on', while offering contextual and real-time interactions. Enterprises are thus opting for 'mobile-first' marketing strategies to ensure timely, rich and compelling experiences.

On the other hand, Telecom Operators worldwide are facing increasing heat due to rapid erosion in their core infrastructure revenues. Voice minutes have dropped significantly, P2P Messaging is taken over by chat applications and digital services have taken over traditional VAS services. Telcos have to move beyond being an infrastructure player and require

to reposition themselves as digital service providers. Asset Monetization through value-based use-cases is necessary for Telcos to turn the current tide in their favor.

Deploying Application-to-Person (A2P) Messaging to Enhance Customer Engagement

While P2P messaging has shifted to over-the-top applications like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger etc., application to person (A2P) messaging traffic has increased significantly. To illustrate, Mobile squared's report on the enterprise messaging market indicates that the A2P messaging market is expected to grow to USD58.75 billion by 2020. With a 90 per cent open-rate, A2P SMS is one of the most reliable channels to achieve consumer engagement. Messaging is thus being preferred by enterpris-

es to communicate with customers, without unduly interrupting them. In fact, A2P messaging is already being widely deployed across multiple industries:

- Retail (order confirmation, delivery dispatches, delivery updates)
- Finance (alerts, transaction verifications)
- - Transport (freight/asset monitoring, delivery tracking, connected car, navigation, ticketing)
- Healthcare (clinic search, test results, information dissemination)
- Logistics (tracking shipments, delivery times, pick-ups and delays)

The Transformation of Enterprise Engagement

As the A2P market gains traction, new use cases have come to the fore. Prior to this, while enterprises

largely deployed SMS or email to ensure customer engagement, the scope has widened significantly. Now, multiple options are attaining centre stage, such as push messaging, social media, chatbots and even telco's own RCS for rich contextual reach. A2P Messaging is not just SMS anymore. Mobile engagement via digital channels will, needless to say, be a key focus for enterprises.

Before this can be leveraged to its full potential, however, a few challenges remain. For example, enterprises that are dependent on standalone platforms for SMS, USSD, or over-the-top services find it difficult to move from one channel to another. In fact, a Gartner study indicates that on average, companies deploy around 22 different tools for marketing. Telcos can monetize on this business need by providing a convergent solution that will enable enterprises to connect and engage with their customers and partners through various channels – all through a single platform in order to deliver higher value to enterprises and omni-channel experience to their consumers.

ASSET MONETIZATION THROUGH VALUE-BASED USE-CASES IS NECESSARY FOR TELCOS TO TURN THE CURRENT TIDE IN THEIR FAVOR

More importantly, enterprises can benefit from the vast repository of customer data and business intelligence available with the operator. This largely includes a customer's usage patterns, location-based information, demographics, etc. are key data that enterprises out there need, for driving custom intelligence and targeted sales. In fact, stringent regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), too, add to an operator's arsenal. These players are best positioned to monetize inherent attributes like the security and privacy of customer data, to provide GDPR compliant solutions to enterprises.

Mobile Data as a Channel for Enterprise Engagement

As per GSMA Intelligence, 80 per cent of customers without access to the internet live within range of a 3G



or 4G signal. A strong reason to support this fact is that in low-income countries, 500 MB of data is priced at almost 10 per cent of monthly GDP per capita. It has also been observed that internet access is not only a challenge for the developing world, but also seen in developed countries. In fact, in the US and Europe, 300 million customers do not use the internet, even though they live within range of a 3G or 4G mobile network. A significant number of these customers belong to a low income background.

The big opportunity that is untapped to a fairly large extent is Mobile Data Sponsorship, where customers can browse, stream and enjoy content from data sponsors without impacting their monthly data plan allowance. Enterprises, on the other hand, are always exploring new engagement channels to ensure customer retention, improved service quality and service promotion. Operators ought to leverage this opportunity, by making it convenient for enterprises to connect with customers via data as an engagement channel. Enterprises should be enabled to leverage data to incentivize, reward and promote services. Monetizing mobile data channel is critical for an operator's long-term success.

Conclusion

With the emergence of multi-channel communications, enterprises must ensure that every channel and every customer interaction is synchronized for achieving omni-channel engagement. However, in order to make this happen, Telcos have a key role to play. Telcos have to manage all the integrations and provide a platform for Customer Engagement. This will help Telcos rise up in the value chain and monetize the enterprise digital engagement market. 