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Telecom operators worldwide are under constant pressure to manage the capital expenditure associated with network deployment and reduce network operating costs while maintaining the quality of experience (QoE) for customers. There is pressure to make continued technology investments and work out a monetisation strategy for 5G and IoT.

To this end, operators are required to rethink and reinvent their network deployment and managed services, and realign them to support a new array of services – all this while not losing focus on the processes that manage the anticipated growth in workload.

The key characteristics that will define how telecommunication networks are built and managed are:

- Cost reduction while building the capability to provide network on demand
- Evolution from a monolithic to a software-defined modular architecture
- Integration with cloud computing infrastructure
- Digitalised and automated end-to-end processes to enhance efficiency
- Use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies such as machine learning, which will enable automation as well as predictive and near-real-time actions

• The growing gig economy, and changing workforce engagement and management models.

The current market scenario and economic conditions are compelling telecom network operators to reinvent their business models. This is akin to an almost complete overhaul of the business, with operators moving away from network-centric services to value-added, customer-centric content, solutions and services.

The availability of affordable broadband and the increased demand for high quality converged multimedia services (enabled by ubiquitous connectivity) are driving business transformations and making the deployment of next-generation services a necessity.

Services can no longer be limited to operationally focused and network-centric approaches. Next-generation services will help achieve business transformation via a services-centric approach, which aims to provide customers with the services they want, where they want them and when they want them. Further, it offers the operator flexibility of delivery and cost structure.

Telecom operators are moving from a network-centric to a service-centric environment to meet consumer and enterprise demand for innovative multimedia applications and services. The increasing focus on end users and meeting their demand calls for advanced network deployment. Creative partnerships and innovative risk sharing, new deployment services, managed services and outsourcing business models provide a framework for creating a next-generation-enabled portfolio of services for consumers and enterprises without compromising network performance, service quality and security.

Moving forward

The adoption and successful implementation of next-generation network deployment and management services can be complex and daunting as a radical shift in the services ecosystem may raise several challenges for telecom operators. The transition from deploying physical network elements to implementing virtual network functions will require service providers to carefully evaluate the existing services ecosystem and create a new ecosystem of partners for its journey towards virtual radio access network.

Addressing those challenges effectively requires a service partner with proven experience and expertise in ensuring solution excellence. This will enable telecom operators to generate new revenues and deliver enhanced QoE. Therefore, it is important for network operators to engage with a trusted partner in realising their objectives. A trusted partner should be able to manage the most important components of the services model. These include:

- Build, operate, manage (BOM) services
- Shared and managed infrastructure to realise the basic BOM approach and other growth avenues
- Managed end-to-end service operations by enabling the shift from a network-centric to a subscriber-centric approach
- Capacity to handle end-to-end network operations and related functions in a flexible and cost-effective manner
- Flexible, fast on-site customer support

Telecommunications network deployment and management services offer the best and more personalised path to profitability and customer satisfaction for telecom service providers today. The telecom industry is at an unprecedented crossroads. To thrive in this challenging market landscape, telecom players need to ensure high network reliability, optimise service operations, meet customer expectations and work with partners that deliver end-to-end field service management to address all aspects of field service operations.

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