

# The promise of eCRM

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# The Promise of eCRM

For years Communications Service Providers (CSP) have employed Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions to automate their customer service, marketing and sales activities in order to attain and protect their most valuable resource, the subscriber. CSPs have adopted a portion of CRM functionality with varying degrees of success and are now looking to extend this functionality to provide new, more effective ways to deliver superior services. The result is a dramatic change in the way companies interact with their customers.

If traditional CRM was about consolidating subscriber information and automating internal processes to enable a consistent experience, eCRM is about reaching out to the subscriber through multiple touch points and providing a su-

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PETER HURST

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perior and differentiated experience. For the CSP, this can yield immediate cost savings, increased employee productivity and greater subscriber satisfaction. World-class eCRM allows CSPs to adapt to customers' rapidly growing expectations and requirements, which include demands for more information, easier and expanded access and support through new communication channels.

## Enter eCRM

This article will underscore the advantages of eCRM to both the CSP and their subscribers. We will highlight the cost efficiencies and improvements in customer satisfaction that service providers can enjoy when deploying a full scale eCRM solution as well as compare and contrast the benefits of working with a communications-specific CRM vendor. First, let us define eCRM. In essence, eCRM is about empowering subscribers with information, choices and flexibility. Instead of tying interactions to phone calls or personal contact, eCRM lets subscribers – both corporate and consumer – interact through a variety of communications channels such as e-mail or web selfservice. eCRM takes the traditional call center – with only one channel of communication – and turns it into a

modern multi-channel contact center. eCRM also gives customers the ability to solve complex problems on their own online or through assisted services such as chat or co-browsing.

Increasingly, customers want to access their usage history and billing data online. To do this, eCRM must tightly integrate with a service provider's billing systems for seamless Electronic Bill Presentation (EBP). The best eCRM systems will allow customers to perform a wide range of functions in either self or assisted service mode.

The eCRM needs of corporate subscribers differ from those of most consumer subscribers. Ideally, eCRM should empower these valuable corporate customers to manage their own telecommunication operations, allowing them to

This article was written as part of a series of articles for Billing Systems 2002. Billing Systems – now in its 9th year, the event is firmly established as the largest and most important event in the European Billing calendar. It was held from 22nd–25th April 2002, at Earls Court Conference & Exhibition Centre, London. For further details contact [billing@telecoms.iir.co.uk](mailto:billing@telecoms.iir.co.uk) or visit [www.iir.co.uk/billing](http://www.iir.co.uk/billing). Amdocs was a Gold sponsor and exhibitor at Billing Systems 2002.

control many of the features of their telecommunications service. With a full-featured eCRM suite, corporate customers can manage all billing related activities in one centralised location including complex corporate hierarchies.

## Why eCRM?

As mentioned before, eCRM allows greater convenience and a superior customer service experience. Subscribers can perform self-service anytime and anywhere with the confidence that they will receive consistent, high quality ser-



*eCRM is about empowering subscribers with information, choices and flexibility.*

vice no matter the channel. For the CSP, eCRM can yield cost savings in two significant ways.

- First, providing non-assisted channels like the Internet and asynchronous channels like eMail means that the CSP can significantly decrease the call volume to the call center and therefore staff workload. Furthermore, the Customer Service Representative (CSR) can make better use of time by dealing with trouble tickets and orders over the Web or via eMail during non-peak hours.
- Secondly, subscribers using self-service applications commit far fewer errors than a typical CSR. The likelihood of miscommunication or errors by the CSR when changing a subscriber profile or inputting subscriber data is significantly reduced, saving time, money and avoiding subscriber frustration.

Market data from industry analysts and other sources all demonstrate that eCRM is a growing trend. Analyst firm Frost & Sullivan found that the Web self-service segment of the eCRM industry alone generated revenues of \$123 million in 2000 and is projected to increase to \$1.6 billion by 2007. And the need for it certainly exists. A recent Gartner Group study shows that 70% of enterprises believe they have a well-run call center that provides their customers with a good service. However, only 46% of their customers reported satisfaction with that service.

There are numerous options for carriers looking to employ and roll out a comprehensive eCRM solution. There is an even

greater number of CRM vendors who are vying for their business. For the CSP, the daunting challenge of maneuvering through the tangled web of vendors to determine which one is best is of the highest priority.

#### Advantages of a communications-specific vendor

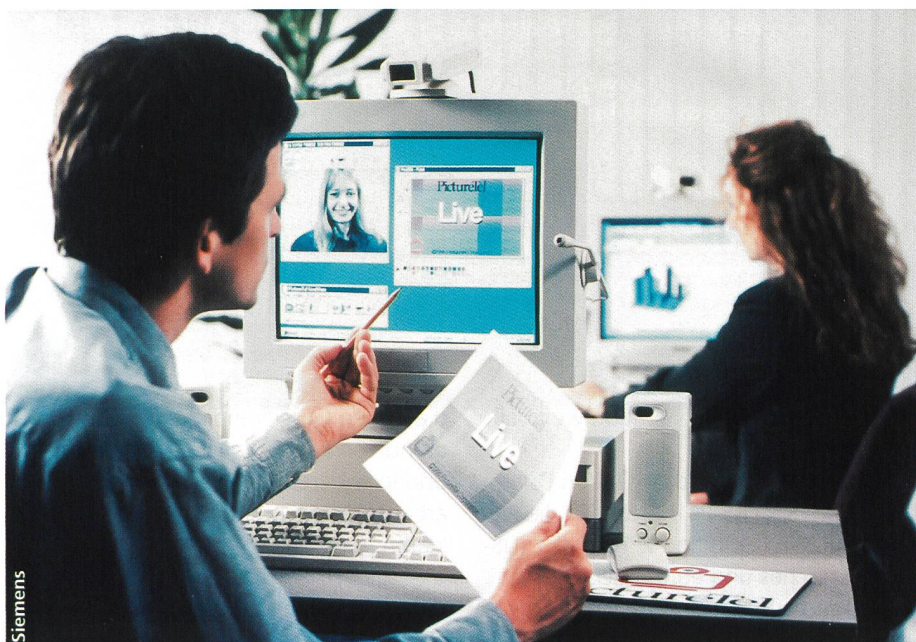
For CSPs today, the number one issue when considering a CRM upgrade is integration. Now more than ever, the ability for CRM functionality to tightly integrate with billing, order management and other aspects of customer care is crucial. Information needs to be shared between systems in real-time and needs to be accessible to subscribers and CSRs alike. It is especially important for the purposes of eCRM, characterised by multiple channel subscriber touch points. If all customer information is not accessible and up-to-date at each of these channels, the effort is at risk of failure. Undoubtedly, there are some CRM vendors who are simply better equipped than others to provide this integrated suite of functions to the community of CSPs. These companies specialise in developing solutions solely for the communications industry. Let us examine the advantages of choosing a communications-specific vendor, as opposed to a CRM "generalist".

A communications-specific vendor serves as a one-stop shop, providing a preintegrated solution that allows CSPs to differentiate themselves by superior cus-

tomers service – key in today's competitive market – while also containing integration and deployment costs. On the flipside, a CRM generalist with a distinct set of applications can create substantial integration problems resulting in higher operational costs.

Furthermore, the integrated solution allows the CSP to more effectively utilise information obtained through data mining and other analytical functions by putting analytical information into the operational CRM system for use by CSRs. Communications-specific CRM vendors already have advanced data analysis technologies in use in applications such as churn reduction and fraud prevention. The ability to understand, predict and anticipate customer behaviour by leveraging this type of data is just as crucial in the eCRM realm. CSPs armed with this data can make informed decisions about how to best interact with subscribers. The second advantage relates to the consistency of the experience for the subscriber. It is imperative for a CSP to provide a consistent experience for the subscriber across all CRM channels and all lines of business. All channels need to have an understanding of a subscriber's history, buying habits, recent interactions and general level of importance to the CSP. The subscriber, on the other hand, is looking for seamless, fluid customer service no matter the channel of choice. The final and perhaps the most critical advantage affects business processes. A vendor committed to the telecom industry allows the CSP to employ a solution that meets its business processes and meshes with its functionality. Simply stated, a CSP can avoid having to customise its business processes around the CRM suite by choosing a communications-specific vendor.

The advantages outlined can result in significant cost savings to the CSP both in the short and long term – costly upfront integrations and reconfiguring of service offerings to meet generic CRM applications are avoided while subscriber satisfaction increases, churn decreases and ultimately the bottom line grows. A unified eCRM system linked to the previously mentioned functions of customer care can create this unified experience by providing a 360° view of the subscriber. Only by providing this 360° view will eCRM and CRM as a whole meet its promise of providing a superior and differentiated customer experience. 5



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## Zusammenfassung

### Das Versprechen von E-CRM

Während Jahren haben Gesellschaften erfolgreich auf CRM-Lösungen gesetzt, um ihre Service-, Marketing- und Verkaufstätigkeit zu automatisieren. Ihr Ziel war es, ihr wertvollstes Gut, den Kunden, für sich einzunehmen und ihn zu halten. Heute gibt es einen einfacheren und billigeren Weg, den Kunden zu bedienen und zu betreuen: das Internet. Noch nie seit der Einführung von CRM war die Wertschöpfung hier so gross wie jetzt, wo es E-CRM gibt. Der Grund sind unmittelbare Kosteneinsparungen, höhere Personalproduktivität und grössere Kundenzufriedenheit. Der Artikel geht der Frage nach, wie es um den Wert von E-CRM und seine Fähigkeit steht, in Verbindung mit dem Betrieb eines Call-Centers die Kosten zu senken, die Wirtschaftlichkeit und die Kundenzufriedenheit zu steigern sowie den Kommunikationsgesellschaften zu einem schnellen und messbaren Wertzuwachs zu verhelfen.

## NEWS

### UMTS-Netze

# « PC-Karte für schnelle Datenlösungen »

**Die Unternehmen Lucent Technologies und Option wollen gemeinsam Wireless-PC-Karten für UMTS herstellen. Das Angebot zielt auf Firmenkunden, die schnelle mobile Datenverbindungen für mobile Mitarbeiter benötigen, die auf unternehmenskritische Anwendungen zugreifen wollen.**

**M**obilfunk-Service-Provider können damit ihren Firmenkunden schnelle Datendienste auf Basis von UMTS anbieten. Dazu zählen beispielsweise E-Mails, auch mit umfangreichen Anhängen, Zugang zum Internet, zum unternehmenseigenen LAN, zum Intranet und Zugriff auf andere Applikationen – und dies schnell und zuverlässig, von jedem beliebigen Standort aus. «Wir glauben, dass im Geschäftskunden-segment noch grosse und bislang nicht ausgeschöpfte Marktchancen liegen. Dies gilt insbesondere für den schnellen, mobilen Zugriff auf typische Büroanwendungen», so Bruce Dale, als Vice President der Mobility Solutions Group von Lucent zuständig für UMTS-Produkte

und -Angebote. «Durch das Abkommen mit Option können wir eine Ende-zu-Ende-Lösung anbieten, mit der UMTS-Netzbetreiber diesen Markt erschliessen und kurzfristig Erträge mit UMTS einfahren können.»

Diese Partnerschaft stellt einen Meilenstein für Lucent's Strategie dar, die Einführung von schnellen Datendiensten für die dritte Mobilfunkgeneration weltweit zu beschleunigen.

Der Vertrag sieht vor, dass Option Dual-Mode-UMTS/GPRS-PC-Karten für die Frequenzbänder 1.900 und 2.100 MHz (US-amerikanisches und europäisches Frequenzband auf UMTS) entwickelt. Das UMTS-Team von Lucent in Nürnberg unterstützt Option auf der technischen

Seite und integriert die Wireless-PC-Karte in die UMTS-Lösungen von Lucent. Mit den Wireless-PC-Karten kann Lucent Mitte 2002 eine Ende-zu-Ende-Lösung für einen schnellen Datendienst verwirklichen.

Jan Callewaert, President und Chief Executive Officer von Option meint: «Die Systeme der nächsten Generation werden grössere Bandbreiten nutzen und dem tragen wir Rechnung. Die Dual-Mode-UMTS/GPRS-PC-Karte ist eine konsequente Weiterentwicklung unserer aktuellen GPRS-Produkte. Dual-Mode bedeutet in diesem Fall, dass der Anwender die hohen Geschwindigkeiten von UMTS da nutzen kann, wo UMTS verfügbar ist, und in anderen Bereichen mit GPRS arbeitet. Das bietet dem Nutzer einen klaren Vorteil.»

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