

Network data builds customer information 'playground'

Telecom carriers urged to mine operational data and apply it to customer management

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Telecommunications providers are sitting on a mother lode of subscriber data that is being retrieved and cached in real time as part of routine network monitoring and testing operations.

The information, which includes such details as disconnects, relationships with peering partners and the quality of interconnects, and end point device usage, frequently doesn't reach the hands of marketers and others within a telecom organization who deal with subscriber satisfaction.

"You have to start thinking about what you don't know about your subscribers" and mine the information from the network's normal monitoring operations, said Lisa Evans, senior director of global telco solutions at Teradata.

Evans and Alan Martin, program director of the assurance solutions division at Agilent Technologies, were co-presenters during a session, "Activating Customer Experience Management: The Next Generation of Business Intelligence" at the Teradata Partners User Group Conference and Expo in Las Vegas. Their pitch was aimed at a relatively new market: telecommunications providers who are facing increased competition for subscribers in a mature market and are being forced to dig deeper to understand subscriber experiences.

"The network ... is just a great playground" with "many touchpoints, many interactions ... with subscribers," Evans said.

In most cases, the information is held tightly by network operations personnel who for years have used it to make certain things run right. Although not maliciously, these organizations have been more concerned with operations and less with solving customer-facing issues such as dissatisfaction with voice and data services. If the network's running right, in fact, it's considered a good customer experience.

"Subscribers can have a bad experience without any alarms going off," she continued. "Think about what data you need to give you the right business intelligence."

The data is gathered and stored by Teradata's electronic warehousing software and can be mined and organized by Agilent, a recently announced strategic partner with Teradata. The biggest and most immediate benefit is for operators to learn how well new services are operating and whether they're being used within the first 30 days of launch, the two presenters said.

"If you want to improve the ramp of any service, monitor the experience in the first 30 days," Martin said.

This means keeping track of how often the new devices are used and what features are used. Unused features such as messaging could be signs that the services are too complex and customers are not using them, essentially leaving money on the table that the operators could reap. Knowing that there is a problem—real or perceived—gives operators the chance to proactively contact consumers and offer to help.

On the other hand, subscribers who use the services might be ready for an upsell or cross-sell opportunity. This, too, could save money because operators could focus their selling efforts only on customers who would potentially be interested.

"For a mature market you have to be focused on the customer ... be more intimate with the customer," Martin said. "You need to have the contextual clues that we're providing."

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