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# TELCO Transformation: Changing the Approach to Customer Connections

**TABLEAU VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE  
EVENT SUMMARY**



# Introduction

## Enhancing the Customer Experience

**Across the global Telco industry, rapid change has intensified as new technologies emerge, particularly in the areas of AI and IoT, while the rollout of 5G continues. Combined with what can be done, is the issue of what must be done; in the face of customer churn, increased competition and new regulatory requirements.**

**This Tableau virtual roundtable, hosted by Meet the Boss,** explored how Telcos look to applying data-driven analytics to improve customer targeting, and to inform the development of and innovation in personalised services, differentiated propositions, operational cost reductions, and improved network performance.

The organisations represented were BT, Comcast, Dentsu, Inmarsat, Three, and Virtusa. Participants were senior executives whose roles included Head of Solutions Architecture, Director of IT Business Transformation, Head of Service Operations Delivery, Director of Data Engineering for Consumer, SVP and Global Head of TMT Solutions, and Director of Digital Innovation.

They shared their experiences and observations<sup>1</sup> on successfully and swiftly navigating a path through the many challenges pressing in the Telco sector not just in absolute terms, but also in a comparative sense; consolidating the competitive advantage.

<sup>1</sup> Observations are presented in this private events summary as collective, broadly consensus views, and not ascribed to the individual participants, other than by organisation.



## Moving Forward, Looking Back

One of the most commonly shared challenges for Telcos when moving forward with digital transformation is dealing with legacy infrastructures.

The huge investment they represent puts pressure both on the reliability of the business case – future-focused while paying heed to the ongoing operational costs of legacy systems – and the practicalities of migrating customers from long-established systems onto cloud-based connections.

The migration phase, by its transitional nature, can bring complications even as it enables an organisation to make a big step towards simplification.

Parallel worlds start to unfold as customers are assigned to different IT stacks, with newly acquired customers channelled into new systems while existing customers remain yet to be migrated.

The result is that differing customer experiences, and hence inconsistencies, prevail.

# Challenges in enhancing the Cx Journey

Differing experiences delivered to customers, simply on the basis of where they sit from the perspective of an evolving infrastructure, is a long way short of best practice.

Consistency and integration are key to enhancing the customer experience across mobile, online, contact centre and point of sale, to avoid siloed and unconnected customer views.

## 'Seamlessness' is Critical

The 'human element' is a more integral feature of the customer journey with Telcos than it may be with banking or insurance; customers invariably seeking reassurance from a person (in a shop or through a contact centre) regardless of channels they may have used in the exploratory stage of the purchasing cycle.

Pervading all considerations is the requirement to achieve profit targets.

Any innovation is contextualised by profitability, which focuses the senior management mind-set on a 12-month cycle, yet, as one participant put it, the challenge is about far more "...than just actually hitting that EBIT number on a yearly basis". In the competitive landscape, the pace of change is fast, aggressive, and unforgiving.

"Simplification is a huge challenge when you have thousands of different plans across multiple business units, spanning different companies. It's essential that systems are streamlined, providing consistent offers that sync to billing platforms."

Inmarsat

"We always aim to think three steps ahead, while ensuring the stability of systems that are already in place."

Three



# Data: The Path to Customer Connections

Participants were unanimous on the need for change in the organisation culture. Teams need to fully understand the latest technologies, the capabilities they can enable, and the more beneficial outcomes gained when product and engineering work more closely together.

As with most other sectors, there is much discussion in the Telco industry around how AR and VR can improve the customer experience.

An example quoted was on trials of an AR app for customers seeking to set up TV configurations to instal set-top boxes/routers:

“Where customers were not at the point of making an online purchase, they downloaded the app and used the AR configuration guide. In a six-month period, a reduction of 40% new instal-based contact centre calls was achieved, and engineer home visits (at £150 to £200 per visit) were reduced by 10 to 15%”. **Inmarsat**

“The major change has been customer focus, and changing the culture of our teams to be a lot more exploratory, understanding the problem domain and trying to deliver value, as opposed to just the milestones”. **Dentsu**

**Data is invaluable in predicting the customer probability of converting a quote to an order.**

AI-based identification enables an organisation to evaluate customer behaviour patterns; purchasing criteria, delivery requirements and timings, and histories. Data insights can support and drive a ‘hyper-personalisation’ experience based on customer segmentation. In this regard, organisations are moving away from rule-based and more to machine-learning based recommendations.

**Yet the data to drive these insights is often dispersed and unconnected, resulting from the legacy system issue. The pressing need becomes to improve data quality and consistency; to provide the single view of the customer, across any and every service.**

Many organisations remain overwhelmed by data, not least due to rapid changes in customer behaviours that now encompass the use of a far broader ranges of services – including video-on-demand and gaming – than organisations have traditionally been adept at offering.

**“Making recommendations to customers is so complicated, you shouldn’t try to boil the ocean. Start with simple recommendations, evaluate the outcomes, and develop an implementable strategy from these insights.” Comcast**

Data analytics enable an organisation to tighten its focus and reach improved outcomes faster. The optimum strategy is to identify the task/problem/opportunity and set out to solve the problem from that lens.

**“Using the entire data set might not actually be relevant. Specify the use case, for example easier focus on customer churn, incentivising cross-sell/upsell or identifying next-best actions. Draw from the hypothesis and then turn to the data”. BT**

# Delivering Insights in the Moments that Matter

Alongside improving the personalisation of services, data can reduce the cost- to-serve by enabling organisations to understand why the customer is making contact in the first place. Moving to swifter resolutions or outcomes not only satisfies the customer but also drives down operational costs.

Agents need no longer have multiple tabs open (up to 22 systems according to one participant) ready to swing into action with the correct one; they can respond proactively, depending on the implementation of a simple UI and how the data has filtered the customer requirement.

With contact centres receiving tens of thousands of calls per day – for each of which the authentication process alone can take 40 seconds for just three questions, reported one participant – any time reduction in handling times quickly adds up to big cost savings.

Techniques that organisations are evaluating include bi-directional conversations through Intelligent IVR, intelligent routing, and AI; examples of where technology and innovation can combine to take the cost down, potentially creating funds for reinvestment in network enhancements.

Data is increasingly being used to understand network performance, rather than basic status reporting on alarms and ticketing. By applying AI in the right place and the right way – predictively rather than post-event – network operations costs can be reduced.



# Key take-outs

## Are Telcos at a turning point?

It's an observation that has been made so many times in the past yet now, in light of the enormous societal and behavioural changes engendered by the global pandemic, it takes on a new relevance. Customers are less able or willing to enter into stores, while having continued on their own journeys to digital maturity.

New competitive battlegrounds are being consolidated where the struggle for hearts, minds and custom is fought differently. The difference is in the data. Now the competitive challenge occurs in the moment that delivers no second chance to make a first impression.

## Less physical equals more personal

Although contact is more digital than human, intimacy has not diminished. Smart use of data enriches it.

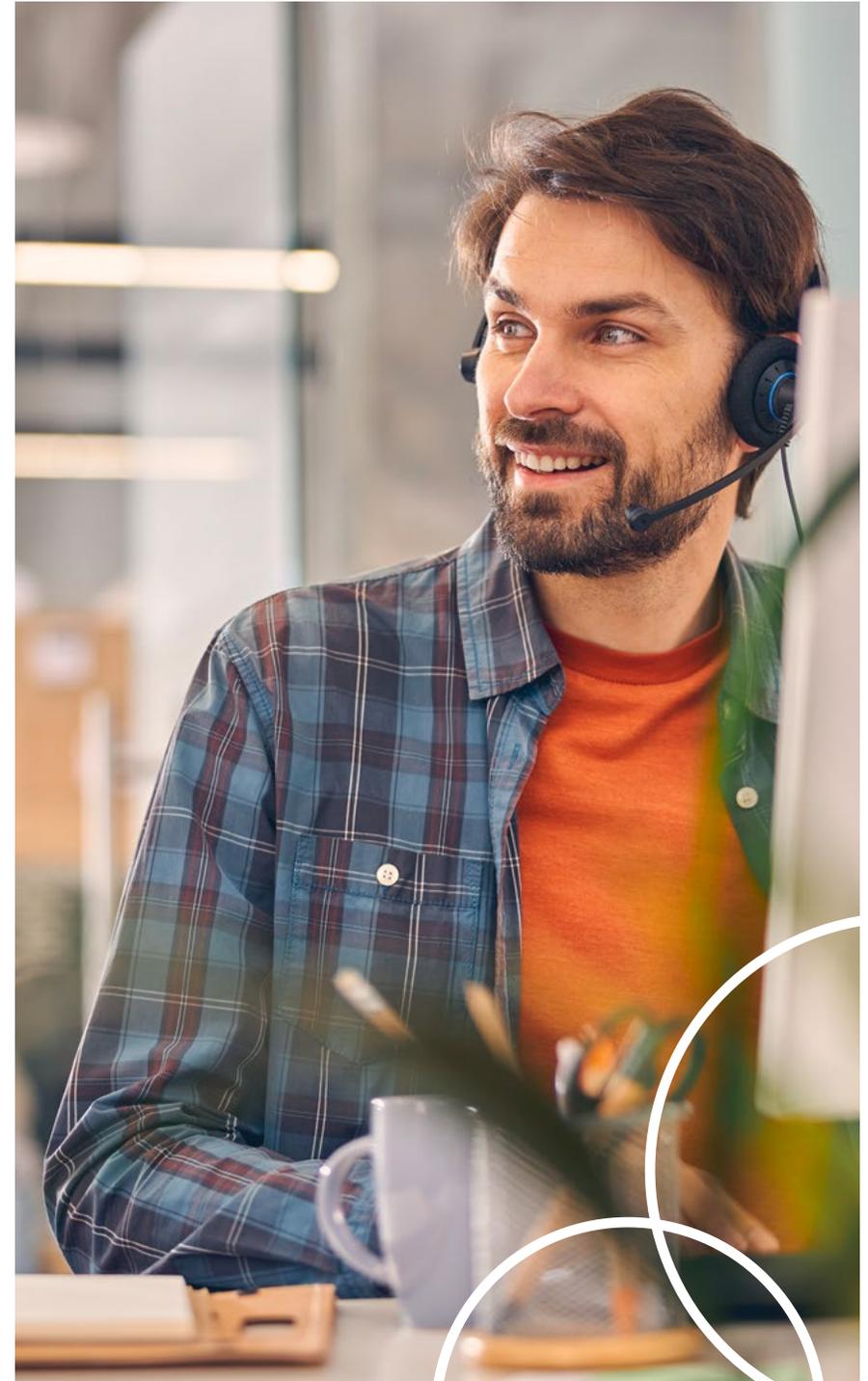
Organisations can know more about what their customers are looking for, to deliver more in line with customer expectations, more swiftly, and to the enhancement of the customer experience.

Put simply, customer connections are enriched by data. This is the biggest win, but so many others come along with it; from reducing costs-to-serve, through to improving network performance, accelerating interventions and improving operational efficiency and innovation capability.

Data delivers more than insights; it delivers inspiration both across the customer franchise and within the organisation culture.

*If you can drive value for the customer, then everything else will fall into place.*

**Everybody's view**



Download our ebook to discover how Telcos are using  
Tableau to solve the four key issues in their organisation.

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