



## Make 'rapid response' a reality when launching new products

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### **Time to market is the key phrase that is being talked up by the communications industry, but is it falling behind when it comes to walking the walk?**

According to a recent independent research paper commissioned by Ceon\*, the time taken to define and launch a new medium-complexity product offering that repackages existing service capabilities is on average between three and 18 months in the U.K. In the U.S., lead times are typically more than five months – with a maximum lead time from design to launch of up to nine months.

The research also discovered that a whole product launch in the U.K. could involve as many as 250 or 300 people, giving a clear idea of the complexity of this process in terms of the size of teams involved. While our survey indicated that lead times may be longer in the U.K. than in the U.S., this is probably due to the fact that operators in the U.K. are more aggressively marketing bundled, highly tailored, more complex product offerings of converged, broadband, mobile and entertainment services.

The study has shown that operators on both sides of the Atlantic want to be more innovative and agile in the way they combine underlying network and service capabilities, so they can quickly deliver blended, tailored packages aligned to customer preferences.

Major inefficiencies in the way in which telecoms operators and service providers are launching next generation services is compounding the problem. There are very few systematic, consistent, fast and reliable approaches in use today for defining and managing products. One of the key findings of the research is that the majority of operators have continued to use existing disparate software systems to manage their products, but now need to be able to centralise this activity and integrate information across organisational and technological divides.

The complexity of product creation is increasing in proportion to the growing number of end user access channels, third-party agreements and developments in new IP-based services. To operate in these rapidly changing markets, operators must be able to develop more standardised approaches to product lifecycle management, be able to reuse a core set of elements in defining their products and services, to streamline and simplify the collaboration of cross-functional teams and automate processes across the organisation.

The problem of product creation and packaging is going to be compounded further as operators more aggressively deploy next generation network (NGN) architectures. NGN architectures, such as IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS), are allowing operators to simplify and speed-up the deployment of new service capabilities. These architectures eliminate the need to install service-specific infrastructure, enable the adoption of proven IT approaches for service creation/delivery, and allow operators to tap into a broader ecosystem of multimedia-service application developers and providers.

Although deploying NGN is the first step in being able to deliver more varied services,

operators do not typically sell individual technical service capabilities. They sell packaged product offerings that need to be defined in market terms. Operators need to revamp their product realisation processes, and software support systems to reduce new product introduction time and facilitate rapid monetisation of new services.

Product lifecycle management (PLM) software systems can help service providers achieve their objectives of increasing product launch and product management agility. The adoption of purpose built PLM software means time-to-market and cost-to-market for new products is reduced by taking a 'helicopter' view of product management and product definition across the organisation. PLM systems are a must-have solution component for 'operationalising' NGNs, as they bridge the gap between the network and the marketplace by bringing new service capabilities to life as sellable product offerings and packages.

Silo-based thinking, poor internal communications between business units, gaps in managing product data and the non-systematic approach to product lifecycle management is still the norm in Europe. This is a significant barrier towards achieving the desired 'rapid response' mode of operation. A move to a software systems enabled PLM approach will not only allow teams and business units to rapidly collaboratively define, construct and manage but also to efficiently deploy a catalogue of product offerings within weeks if not days.

The traditional timeframes for launching new services and products are unsustainable in a fast-moving multimedia/content-driven market - operators must be able to develop more standardised approaches to product lifecycle management. Service providers must be able to put up product and service package offerings that may only last a few days, within days or even hours. Operators have to stop talking about speeding up new product introduction and begin taking the steps to do so.

\*Source: The Value Proposition of Product Lifecycle Management Software Solutions Independent Research by Qualitative Change: <http://www.ceon.com/plmsurvey.html>

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