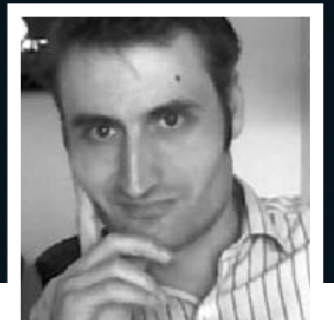


REGAINING OPERATIONAL FREEDOM TO BOOST OPERATIONS



“Genuine multi-vendor network management is one of the key technological opportunities for operators to solidify their market position.”



Ben Vandenberghe, VP Sales & Marketing, Skyline Communications.

In an ever more competitive market, with ever more demanding customers, there's simply no room for operational compromises. Over the course of the last decade, multi-vendor network management technology has leaped ahead, and an increasing number of successful deployments have demonstrated how this technology can significantly reduce operational expenses, while increasing service quality and availability. What's the definition of a genuine multi-vendor network management platform? Can it be considered an option or a must to succeed?

The challenges?

The facts are undeniable. Customers are ever more demanding, and it all boils down to the quality and features that service providers can supply, and at what price. A simple equation, but complex to master. And now the economic climate even further increases the pressures on capital expenditure and operating cost.

And what about the technology curve? Technology is evolving at an ever faster pace, while market adoption remains extremely difficult to predict. Today high-tech, tomorrow a commodity or maybe all forgotten about. In any case, there's no room for contemplation, and service operators can only be successful if their infrastructure has the agility to bend along with emerging trends.

While single-vendor solutions are often pitched as being better integrated, they typically come hand in hand with important pitfalls and operational risks. What if operational experience suddenly reveals important shortcomings that affect service quality and availability? What if new technology emerges with tangible economical or operational incentives, and your prime vendor drops the ball or conflicts of interest stand in your way?

The proposition?

All of this may seem daunting, but there's a surprisingly simple proposition that downplays every one of these challenges. And that proposition is genuine multi-vendor network management technology. Genuine because it enables service operators to integrate with any device or system from any vendor, irrespective of whether they expose standard or proprietary interfaces. Genuine because it is supplied by a vendor free from any ties to any of your product suppliers. And genuine, because it features a sufficiently open architecture to enable anybody to create new interfaces, both north and south bound, and to expand on the functionality.

Considering these prerequisites, what would the impact be on your operations? For starters, you will have the obvious operational benefits and cost savings of deploying and operating

a single consolidated network management platform across your entire operations. This includes, just to name a few, no recurring and overlapping software investments, reduced training cost, reduced cost for system administration (including single-sign-on security, audit trailing, back-up, integration in the IT infrastructure, interfacing with third party systems, etc.), increased leverage of any software application (including intelligent correlation and root-cause analysis, reporting, notification, customer portals, etc.) and much more.

While a single vendor solution may appear to be the easy-way-out and less expensive because being more out-of-the-box, the immediate aforementioned quick wins for a genuine multi-vendor network management platform largely compensate for that, especially when extrapolated across

repeated projects. But the benefits of a genuine multi-vendor network management platform go beyond the obvious.

The agility of a multi-vendor network management platform significantly increases service availability and reduces capital and operational expenditure by:

- Using available system resources far more efficiently and intelligently
- Leveraging legacy systems beyond their normal expected scope
- Adapting instantly to evolving and newly emerging operational requirements
- Adopting new technology, irrespective of which vendor supplies it

And last but not least, end-to-end network management is the indispensable stepping stone towards comprehensive service and business management. An end-to-end solution, across all disparate systems, allows for recoding of raw information, resulting in a very valuable service perspective, showing operators how and where all components of a service are located and interact. Combining and weighting this against the predefined service performance expectations, then results in SLA management.

Utopia or reality?

Although the concept of vendor agnostic network management platforms has been widely accepted for quite some time as the next generation solution, it has only been recently that genuine multi-vendor network management technology has emerged, with the key word being genuine. Today, solutions such as Skyline's DataMiner platform have been deployed by leading corporations in various industries. Systems that manage vast amounts of devices and systems from hundreds of different vendors, providing a single consolidated perspective on the entire operational ecosystem.

The wide acceptance of this technology as the next generation solution is also demonstrated by the increasing number of leading equipment and system vendors that include it in their solutions portfolio. Rather than developing yet another vendor specific solution, these vendors invest in expertise and provide their customers with pre-integrated multi-vendor network management packages.

While a complete overhaul of the legacy OSS infrastructure may appear risky, a corporate strategy to start leveraging the latest multi-vendor network management technology can also easily be maintained through incremental evolutions. Breaking through the never ending cycle of investments in vendor specific solutions, and progressively investing in multi-vendor network management solutions for smaller scale projects, will already result in tangible benefits and provide a smooth and risk-free migration.

Unlike many other investments that have a finite predefined lifecycle, OSS investments have a pronounced long-term character. The recurring impact, or lack thereof, on operational expenses and service quality has a cumulative effect, which is not to be underestimated. And while a single-vendor investment may sometimes seem appealing in short term, the long term impact of genuine multi-vendor solutions make it the inevitable choice.

Ben Vandenberghe

VP Sales & Marketing, Skyline Communications

IT'S A GENERAL CONSENSUS AMONGST SERVICE PROVIDERS THAT MULTI-VENDOR NETWORK MANAGEMENT IS THE WAY FORWARD.

PREREQUISITES OF GENUINE MULTI-VENDOR NETWORK MANAGEMENT

In an ever more competitive market, there's no room for compromises if you are dedicated to be successful. And it's a widely accepted fact that the latest generation of genuine multi-vendor network management solutions, which enable end-to-end integration of the entire operational ecosystem across all vendor and technology boundaries, plays a very central and crucial role in all of this. But what does that mean exactly, and what are the indispensable key ingredients that one has to look for in order to roll out a genuine multi-vendor network management platform? Strictly adhering to the following three principles is the key to a successful deployment:

1 Vendor Independent Supplier: a multi-vendor network management platform shall only be sourced from a genuine vendor independent software vendor. By definition this is a corporation that has no stakes or interest whatsoever, not directly nor indirectly, in anything else but the multi-vendor network management software that it designs, develops and commercialises. This effectively prevents any potential conflict of interest from impacting on the roll-out and deployment.

2 Multi-vendor Technology: the multi-vendor network management platform shall provide an unconditional and guaranteed interface with any device or system from any vendor, irrespective of its interface, proprietary or standard, and this shall be proven through a sufficiently wide variety of deployed integrations. This effectively prevents any potential technical limitations from impacting on the roll-out and deployment.

3 Open Architecture: aside from the actual NMS vendor, any other third party shall be able to interface any device or system with the multi-vendor network management platform, i.e. the interface drivers shall be entirely open format. This effectively prevents any financial ambiguity from impacting on the roll-out and deployment.

Any compromises whatsoever on any of the above mentioned qualities, no matter how insignificant they may appear to be, will inevitably lead to respectively strategic/political, technological and financial hurdles at some point in the deployment, and can jeopardise the postulated benefits of a genuine multi-vendor network management system.

