

# Global Services Excellence: A Paradigm Shift in Network Services

Sharat Chandra, President & COO – Strategy & New Technologies at GTL discusses the firm's activities in end-to-end offerings, technology adaptation in a vendor agnostic mode, quality initiatives, enhancing the human capital, tools and processes and strong global partnerships with OEMs and Carriers



**Q: GTL has been positioning itself as independent services provider for all telecom technologies in the last few years. What is it that you have achieved in this direction?**

**A:** GTL has occupied a pre-eminent place in the network services space for the past 22 years and it has been a natural progression to place itself in a position of vendor and technology neutral services partner to telecom carriers and equipment providers alike. We have worked with every major equipment provider in the telecom domain such as Nokia Siemens, Ericsson, Alcatel Lucent, Motorola, Huawei and ZTE to name a few. Our long standing OEM relationships and experience in working on a gamut of technologies be it GSM, CDMA or WiMAX & 3G, enables GTL to service today's multi-technology, multi-vendor environment. Our experience ranges from planning

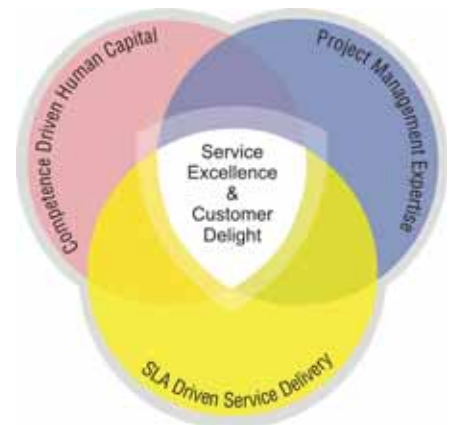
& commissioning to operations & rip and replace, migrations and such like in more than 44 countries around the world.

**Q: How challenging is it to attract global carriers to do business, with you being a non-equipment supplier?**

**A:** Carriers today are moving from a Network Centric to Service Centric environment. GTL believes that for our success as an independent network services provider in future, our relations with the carriers and equipment providers have to transition to a relationship based on collaboration and innovation and we are working towards it. With the carriers' networks becoming heterogeneous, they require a partner who has technical capabilities, backend resources and an ability to combine offshore and onsite activities seamlessly. GTL has nurtured its talent pool, developed repeatable processes, invested in tools and test equipment and used the experience gained in different regions to create service delivery teams that can function as an extended arm of the customer.

**Q: Service quality determines customer experience; what is special about GTL that makes a difference?**

**A:** You are absolutely right! Service quality determines customer experience, but how do you gauge your performance as seen and observed by the customer? We, in GTL, have adopted SLA based approach which not only measures our performance but also KPIs attached to it. This keeps a tight vigil on the operations thereby continuously monitoring the health of the network well supported by preventive maintenance and proactive optimisation. SLAs can be difficult to implement, which is



understandable, as they attempt to distill the complexity of telecom services into a simple set of metrics. Moreover, evolution of next generation services has also resulted in greater complexities for telecommunications service providers which in turn make it critical that the right service delivery is made, ensured by SLA's. A way of modularizing the SLAs is a mature process that GTL has adopted with KPIs tied to performance of specific network elements. I can give you various examples of our engagement with our customers with the same approach. We are currently engaged with one of India's largest carrier to provide Managed Services for their WiMax network.

**Q: What quality initiatives GTL has taken to bring about the service excellence?**

**A:** GTL has adopted a holistic approach that affects, and involves, everyone - employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders and society. Our focus on quality underlies

every engineering decision, every cross-functional team, every network installation, and every customer contract. We adopted IMC's Ramakrishna Bajaj Quality Model based on Malcolm Baldrige Business Excellence framework in 2004. The adoption of this model has helped us to understand the systems and processes that have to be optimized for ensuring sustainable growth and excellence. Our Quality Management System has been further enhanced by implementing the requirements of TL9000 standards which measure the quality of telecommunication services and track the performance excellence by defining system requirements, eliminating the need for multiple quality management standards and providing a consistent set of quality expectations. GTL's operational excellence is a result of implementing blend of Quality Tools like ISO 14001:2004, SA 8000:2001, ISO 9001:2000 etc.

**Q: How have you kept pace with new technology?**

**A:** Keeping up with the technology holds the key to any network services providers' success, specially the one who is not an equipment supplier. GTL has consciously invested time, money and resources to create a knowledge-base within the company for continuously addressing newer technologies. We started with the Centre of Excellence for WiMAX two years back, which has now expanded itself to take on 3G and potentially LTE in the coming year. The CoE trains its resources through classroom training, hands on experience on projects in different regions, involving itself in Proof of Concept and interoperability tests with OEMs and operators. Involvement with the operators and OEMs at an early stage of technology adoption provides the necessary outlook to address the services requirement of the future.



### GTL Quality Milestones



The emphasis is clearly on what the technology is capable of and then to prepare a service rendering to exploit it to the maximum. Platform expertise is gained through hands on training exposure starting with participation in trials down to fullblown field implementation. Being vendor neutral enables us to build a pool that is trained on platforms created by different equipment vendors.

**Q: What do you see as the potential for pure play services in New Technology fields?**

**A:** There is huge potential for pure play services going forward. In high growth markets, fulfilling the ever increasing subscriber needs demands adoption of New Technology for the carrier to maintain its competitive edge. But it is difficult and expensive for a carrier to manage its subscriber's expectations, services portfolio and competitive pricing while also performing the duties of maintaining the network with trained resources. However, such duties form part of the core offering of an independent network services provider who continuously works on building and maintaining advanced data and voice networks of different carriers in different regions. As a result, new technology implementations through established players like GTL reduce significant burden off the carrier and brings the network and services to market quickly yet cost effectively.

**Q: How can the carriers manage the rope walk between new technology rollouts while pulling down costs in today's volatile conditions?**

**A:** At a time when capex-opex savings are at the forefront of strategic planning for the carriers, outsourcing through Managed Services becomes a preferred option. Outsourcing brings a more systematic process of reviews and performance upkeep of the network along with the reduced cost. They take a position to task the outsourcing partner to achieve stringent KPI and SLA, with reward or penalties. Carriers can manage to bring down the costs by outsourcing the newer technology implementations, as it would be expensive for them to maintain a pool of resources trained on different technologies whereas an independent services provider can achieve better cost efficiencies by offering its services to multiple OEMs and carriers in the region. This has been successfully proved in emerging markets where carriers are operating such models for the last few years with significant success. As an example, in India, some of the largest carriers such as Airtel and Vodafone have benefitted from similar models and the new entrants are following suit.

**Q: There is a view that outsourcing leads to lack of control by the carrier. Your views?**

**A:** I think it is quite on the contrary! Outsourcing or giving away the day to day mundane activities allows the carrier management to hold fewer but stronger reins to keep a tight control on its operations. It is important to emphasise that the supervisory control remains with the carrier. Typical 'do it yourself' models which have been prevalent with telecom carriers come with its baggage to micro manage the network health, invest in people and tools. By outsourcing the network management activities, carriers can free themselves from these tasks and focus on customer expectations & new services, which indeed is their core business. Do what you can do best and outsource the rest, is the mantra for Network carriers today.

**For more information visit:**

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