Converging on Customer Experience

Stephen has over 28 years of commercial experience delivering large scale business and technology transformation for blue chip organisations across the globe. With a degree in Physics with Electronics he has worked as a consultant for major global organisations such as IBM and Ernst & Young, gaining extensive experience in Financial Services, Telecoms, IT and Retail.

Through his roles in Virtus IT in the UK and its US sister company – Clearway NMS, he has been at the forefront of bringing to market what is arguably the most comprehensive IP monitoring platform available today – Network Assurance Expert (NAE).

NAE displays the passion that Stephen and the highly experienced team in the UK and the US have for turning thought leadership into reality. NAE is a comprehensive monitoring solution that provides a deep, near real time view of performance and customer experience associated with the emerging and increasingly complex world of unified communication and converged technology solutions.

Knowledge bases and the correlation of data from many different sources give business managers, first line support staff and experienced technical teams a unique access to critical management information.

For Telcos, IT service providers and large enterprises, NAE provides a single view of activity, quality of service and quality of experience, spanning the devices in a Telco’s core network through to end user devices (e.g., fixed and mobile phones, desktop PCs, laptops, servers, IP TV), access devices, IP compatible machines and the applications that run across these devices such as Microsoft's OCS.

Q: The challenge for Telco Network Managers is linking in all the information provided by their systems, where do you see the next applications leading the industry?
A: The issue Telco Network managers face is dealing with the complexity that we are now facing. We have come from an environment where systems were disparate and therefore diagnosing performance issues was easier. Today, the level of convergence makes it much more difficult to diagnose performance issues cost effectively. The complexity is there because not only are we converging voice, video and data, we are converging fixed and mobile networks as well as devices and applications. This is creating a paradigm shift and consequently performance management systems need to be redesigned, bottom up to focus on managing this convergence.

Q: Global trends are pushing a more information lead market place would you see this continuing?
A: We observe that global trends are now pushing quick, accurate and actionable insight that can be gained from the vast ocean of information. With only a third of the people on the planet connected and less than 1% of devices connected, the world is still a very disconnected place. However, for those already connected, we are recording and sharing much more information now than we were even three years ago. We also need to look beyond how many people could still be connected. The world of Machine to Machine communications is set to explode. A large Telecom supplier predicts a digital society with tens of billions of connected devices by the year 2020. As more devices come on line, with a rapidly increasing proportion of these coming from Machine to Machine applications, the level of information available to us will explode. This is just the start and we will see many more generations of information sharing and insight creation over the years to come.

Q: How can Virtus help decipher this information for the telco’s?
A: The Telco’s proposition to its customers is one of consistent and unified service delivery through assembly of the best operational components (networks, OSS, BSS, devices, applications). As these components become more integrated, performance management systems will need to understand the converged environment and help manage the performance and service offered. It is not viable to integrate legacy management systems cost effectively. We have seen the legacy system trap that the Financial Services market fell into. Telco’s would do...
well to learn from this. This is where we come in with Clearway Network Assurance Expert (NAE). NAE is about delivering actionable insight from information and there are no legacy problems to worry about.

NAE is a cloud based monitoring architecture that takes real-time information from many points across an entire network (from the Telcos’ IMS to end user devices – fixed and mobile phones, PCs, servers, IP Video devices etc), and presents this back as a single unified view showing activity, performance, capacity, quality of experience and issues with service and security. Information is presented through a knowledge base that looks at the information supplied and provides the insight that a first line Service Support team can use to resolve issues for customers that would otherwise require deep and expensive technical knowledge of the various technologies that interact in a converged world.

Q: With Chief Financial officers trying to justify all spend what are the key cost savings they can achieve and what applications can be used to drive revenue growth?
A: In terms of costs savings these are clear. The ability to know about problems and fix them automatically will save service downtime and therefore save money. The ability to remotely monitor networks, signalling, devices and applications independent of the network provider, means that there will be fewer engineer visits saving considerable expense. In terms of revenue growth, service assurance is known to be a key differentiator for customer purchase decisions, so having a better performing converged service will absolutely contribute to the top line as well as the bottom line. Finally the business intelligence that is generated from the data that is captured is valuable to the end customer as well as to the service provider.

Q: Are there any key differences in usage between fixed and mobile service providers, and any unique benefits?
A: The only difference between them is the last mile, where one is wired and the other is wireless but both of the core networks are fixed/wired. Even the ability to prioritize traffic in wireless networks and pay more for higher access as you do in the Fixed Networks exist. In today’s world of Fixed-Mobile Convergence (FMC), carriers are physically converging their operations though M&A or partnering to offer FMC services. In either case both require devices, signalling and IP traffic to be monitored and controlled. New business models are emerging which will require performance management systems that can handle complex convergent environments.

Q: We have looked at the uses by a Telco themselves, but is this also an application that can be utilised by a Telco’s customers as well?
A: This is very true and we expect many of the larger enterprises to subscribe to this performance management technology. Many larger companies have their own IT organisations who manage their internal infrastructure and would like to know much more about how their portfolio of technology is serving the business. Also, in addition to Telco’s, there are many infrastructure outsourcing service providers like hosting companies and managed services providers who are also high volume customers for such technology.

Q: Where do you see Virtus in 12 months and what are the key markets you are looking at?
A: Today, with our sister company Clearway NMS, we have in our NAE product what we believe to be the leading performance management architecture and a number of major clients to support this claim. In 12 months we will have continued to evolve our architecture to include more interaction with Machine to Machine applications which will open up new markets for us. Our clients will be able to understand what is going on with their entire IP estate as it evolves to accommodate new technologies – everything from the quality of voice conversations and video applications, the utilisation, capacity and performance of desktops, laptops, servers and mobile devices through to the status of machines that control domestic and business utilities and monitor an individual’s health. We also intend to invest in enabling connectivity with a variety of industry Unified Communications applications beyond Microsoft OCS/ Microsoft Lync that we support today. We aim to ensure that NAE stays at the leading edge of converged performance management with an architecture that continues to be regarded as truly world class.

For more information visit: www.clearwaynms.com www.virtus-it.com