



B2BSimpleX
INTERCONNECT CONTRACTS MADE SIMPLE

Tackling a Complex Process to Make it Simple.

Carrier collaboration was a driving force behind the development of B2BSimpleX. InterComms talks to Keith Shillingford, Sales Director, Ascom Systems & Solutions on how they applied this customer-centric approach to solve one of the industry's most pressing needs

Keith has over 15 years of Sales and Telecom experience. He joined London based Storm Telecommunications shortly after the liberisation of the European Telecommunications Market and has held various Sales and Management positions throughout Europe with Fibernet UK, responsible for the development of the European Service provider market and Senior Sales management position at KPN International.

The last five years have been spent heading the International Sales activities of Ascom Systems & Solutions to position its rich set of system integration and software solutions towards the Global Service Provider Market.

He holds the diploma "business administration (VWA)" from administrative and economic academies at Heinrich-Heine University Duesseldorf.

Q: The B2B SimpleX Platform has been added to Ascom's Suite of products for the CSP's globally, where did you see the gap in the market that this tool can plug and how does it help with adoption and standardization?

A: For almost five years now Ascom has been involved with conceptualizing and developing a solution to help carriers find a better way to manage their business in the area of complex bilateral agreements, swap deals and structured contracts in general. The "gap" we saw in the market became apparent as we went through our investigation. It was identified that these class of contracts were becoming popular again after a period of decline, yet the business of negotiation, contract definition, agreements and subsequent billing was manual. We observed that most OSS/BSS systems

were not capable of modeling a contract "as-is" and the interpretations of the contract content lead to continuous delays and disputes in the market. Our objective became: "how to simplify the complex bilateral agreement process", hence the name B2BSimpleX. The gap we saw was the need to create a better contract structure, automate and accelerate the lengthy negotiation process, and provide a mechanism for collaboration of commercial contracts amongst carriers.

B2BSimpleX offers "true" negotiation capability. That is, it facilitates a back-and-forth mechanism where each party can review what the other party has transmitted, before reaching an agreement. It further facilitates a change management process after a contract is in place, to allow amendments and changes to the contract to be conducted in a documented and controlled manner. One of the main benefits of B2BSimpleX is that each contract partner needs only to maintain its own side of the contract and yet assuring that there is always one consolidated set of commercial conditions gathered in one document shared through B2BSimpleX platform with both partners.

Our early involvement in this process has also meant that Ascom have been at the forefront in supporting and consulting to a carrier industry grouping formed three years ago, namely Global Business Exchange for Telecoms (GBET). This forum is a global consortium of carriers working together to set up standards for the electronic exchange of data in international wholesale with the aim of reducing administrative costs and the ambiguity of various transactions (e.g. commitment agreements, disputes,



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**The Fastest, Most-Secure,
Worry-Free Way to
Exchange Bilateral Voice
and SWAP Agreements.**

**Automatic and Transparent
e-Contract Formatting to
any Customer Enterprise
Systems to Save Time, Money
and Resources.**

**User Friendly Business
Development Tools to Model
Business Cases and Measure
Contract Performance ...
in Real Time.**



► invoices, etc.). B2BSimpleX embraces all the standards put forward by GBET.

Q: With three entry levels SimpleX Basic, SimpleX Standard and SimpleX Premium, are you providing an option for carriers to build up their usage or to allow even the smallest company to take advantage of this flexible product?

A: This is exactly what we had in mind with the three entry levels. Different service grades are the reflection of the degree of sophistication carriers have in place or want to adopt. We start off with an easy entry level and move up in gradients of sophistication depending on the requirements of the carriers business. Let me highlight what we propose:

SimpleX Basic service is the entry level offering for B2BSimpleX service. Basic service offers the smallest of customers the ability to exchange contracts using a standard set of Microsoft Excel templates advocated by the Telecommunication industry grouping – GBET. Our Basic service customers still enjoy the same level of details but the medium of communication is confounded to the traditional email and excel attachments. While this is the current norm of the industry, we ensure that the trend of email exchange with the customers of the B2BSimpleX is consistent with negotiation cycle that we advocate in B2BSimpleX.

SimpleX Standard is the principal cloud based solution of B2BSimpleX. It offers telecommunication companies the ability to create and exchange contracts in a rich and flexible web based environment. Extended features are provided for creation of tariff models, creation of number plans, simulation of alternative tariff models and playing what-if scenarios. Users are provided with the ability to supply potential traffic volumes and analyse profitability of various alternatives. SimpleX Standard embraces normal carrier business process workflows for various approval processes within the carrier, as well as supporting the inter-company collaboration workflows between partnering carriers.

SimpleX Premium is the most sophisticated of the cloud based offering. It extends the aforementioned functions of the Standard system by offering an extended set of (customisable) workflows, and rich set of reports to allow users to monitor performance of their contracts. This is achieved by providing a set of connectivity tools to the back office systems, facilitating automated upload of daily traffic information, exchange rates and other general reference and operational systems.

Premium service provides a new condition definition section enabling customers to define their own set of contractual parameters to be included in the negotiation with their counterpart. SimpleX Premium allows customers to define set of conditions suiting one or more clients, and defining a completely different set of conditions for other counterparts.

One of the many other key features we would like to mention here is the opportunity for carriers to use the service and the private web site as a portal to offer to their counterparts. This feature provides tremendous opportunity

to Premium service customers to invite their counterparts to use the web-site to generate their part of a contract. This mechanism enables fast creation and approval of contracts, increases the traffic to the customer site significantly, and expedites conclusion of contract negotiation.

Q: We have talked about the use of the product but in basic terms what are the business savings on deployment of product?

A: Contracts suffer from four fundamental shortcomings: i) they are unstructured, ii) they are not in a uniform language or a language that is agreed across the business, iii) they typically lack consistency of data capture leaving contracts open to interpretation and subsequent disputes and iv) lengthy negotiation cycle aggravates the systematic nature of the negotiation process. We tackle all four issues head on.

B2BSimpleX advocates structure. It generates the same look and feel of contracts every time, This is regardless of exchanging contracts in Microsoft Excel, Word or PDF formats. We stress on uniformity of presentation. So regardless of how colorful and complex a contract is, it is always presented in a uniform language, laid out in clear sections and leaves out the ambiguity. Mutually agreed B2BSimpleX contracts are consistent and correct. While the system does not force contracting parties to create correct information every time, but at final stages it forces business rules and validation rules to ensure contracts are correctly defined. Additional business process and workflows ensure that several approvals are sought before a contract reaches the final signature stage. Finally, the system attempts to reduce the negotiation cycle. It does this in a three pronged approach. Firstly, each contracting party is responsible for their side of the contract, so no party has to duplicate the counterpart's data. This in itself is significant, as no re-keying or interpretation creeps in. Secondly, as- each party can quickly create their own side, and receive the counterpart information in matter of seconds, they are able to examine alternative pricing and profitability scenarios with their counterpart, without any loss of focus, and can always come back to a version that is mutually acceptable. Thirdly, as the contract reaches various approval stages, workflows are triggered to remind the rest of the business to proactively seek the final contract approval and execution stage.

Q: How can companies go about viewing a demonstration or getting a demonstration of the product along with your other offerings?

A: That's fairly simple...Our sales team -is ready to provide onsite demonstrations of B2B SimpleX. Alternatively we can initiate the process with a web demo.

After that we could facilitate a short trial of the platform and some simple document exchange can be done.

For more information please contact us at:
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