

Service providers need to exploit unconventional, agile and innovative business models, so should establish a strategy for big data to gain momentum, writes Erik Couture

# Big data provides ammunition for telco marketers

**Erik Couture: Mobile operators can gain a better understanding of their subscribers' behaviour and use the information to run their operation more efficiently**



The evolution of mobile networks — the rollout of 4G technology and associated dramatic growth of data consumption — bring challenges but also opportunities for network operators and other players in the ecosystem.

Mobility is fully integrated into daily life. Consumers and businesses seek ways to derive more value from the applications on their devices and look for services that meet their individual requirements.

To accommodate customers' needs, telecoms companies need to reconsider rapidly their business strategy and adapt to market challenges.

One of the key aspects of the operators' new strategy will be establishing ways to monetise big data — using customer data by investing in analytics tools and setting a diversified approach towards the competition, from over-the-top players, for example.

To gain a competitive edge, mobile operators should fully exploit big data and use it to provide valuable insight into service usage, associated quality, customised services and applications to their end customers.

The telecoms industry is rich in data collection and handling. Operators process a massive quantity of data daily. They have network data as well as behaviour patterns and other extremely valuable assets.

All of these make telecoms operators extremely well positioned to ensure superior network quality and availability, as well as to deliver breakthrough customer experience. Data passing through the telecoms networks helps operators run their business more efficiently, if it is analysed properly.

According to the latest industry research, around 70% of service providers have already established their big data analytics strategy or see the necessity to do so.

But despite the significant commitment to enhanced customer experience, companies still lack visibility into critical areas of intelligence and analytics. Only 5% of marketers have access to real-time network analytics tools that help them providing the best possible customer experience to their subscribers.

Data enrichment becomes essential: telco marketers need tools that not only collect and analyse the vast amounts of unstructured data, but also remove the complexity of the detailed signalling information and visualise intelligent data in a simplified manner.

By enhancing monitoring capabilities with mobile-aware deep packet inspection, network operators can benefit from even stronger big data analysis to make better sense of the information goldmine.

Operators will see not only the quality of a data session but also be able to analyse applications their customers are using, view use of the network capacity for particular services, performance of applications, and so on.

Statistical information on mobile device types or customer segmentation is vital for internal planning and strategies. Extracting detailed traffic information in real time has become an integral part in the information value chain for big data analysis.

Mobile network operators and service providers can gain a better understanding of their subscribers' behaviour, usage patterns and preferences to further improve service assurance and customer experience.

As a result, operators can run their operation more efficiently and find new ways to drive revenues.

Other research shows that 31% of telco marketers see potential revenue streams from new products or services that can be offered to OTT players, including subscriber analytics and behavioural insights.

Normally OTT providers are considered as a disruptive force. However, mobile VoIP OTT players can also be seen as an opportunity to enhance customer experience, improve and broaden the service offerings and enable operators to differentiate themselves on the fierce competitive market.

We expect increasing partnerships between mobile operators, handset vendors and mobile voice OTT providers, as we consider it as the best way forward.

By choosing this path, network operators will benefit strongly from OTT players' innovative features and use them as efficient customer acquisition tools that would help them to strengthen their positions, enter new markets, drive revenue and grow their business.

Many operators are partnering already with Skype, Google and Facebook to improve the attractiveness of their mobile data packages.

Alternatively, mobile operators might choose a strategy to compete with their own offering, as they have a strong competitive advantage, being much better positioned than OTT players in terms of network and service insight obtained via big data.

It is still early days in the cycle of the big data market. There is a growing vision about what big data can do. Big data is a mind-shift, a big cultural change. It becomes essential for the communication service providers to exploit unconventional, agile and innovative business models. Hence it is crucial to establish a strategy for big data and gain momentum to remain competitive. ■

**Erik Couture is executive vice president for global sales and marketing at Polystar**