Vitria and Independent Analyst Charlotte Patrick: Customer-Centric Network Assurance Strategies Critical to NSP Future

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"Managing customer service operations will require correlation across all of the layers of service delivery, and the analytics to drive that automation."

Chris Menier, General Manager and Transformation Strategist, Vitria

Artificial intelligence, machine learning and other enablers of predictive and prescriptive analysis have laid the foundation for customer-centric network assurance strategies that will help define successful network service providers (NSPs) as we enter the next decade. So says independent analyst Charlotte Patrick and Chris Menier, general manager and transformation strategist at Vitria, the AIOps platform provider in a joint interview for journalists covering the MEF19 conference at the JW Marriott Live in Los Angeles, California on Nov. 18-22, 2019.

"For some time now, the concept of network assurance has evolved to focus on customer experience rather than on the speeds and feeds of performance — monitoring which boxes on the network has red lights," explains Patrick, who recently left Gartner after 13 years to launch her independent consulting practice.

"Over the last year or so, this focus has intensified among operators who understand the importance of examining what the customer is actually experiencing with their network, their services, devices, and apps," she adds.

As a result, there has been a parallel shift in the way that NSPs analyze their operations. The industry is moving from a descriptive and diagnostic approach to network analytics, toward more predictive and prescriptive capabilities.

"Competitive differentiation is now increasingly tied to the ability of NSPs to anticipate issues that can come up in the future and determine how teams can automate the process of fixing problems before they affect the customer experience," says Menier.

With new technologies — like 5G — coming online, operationalizing this will become more complex. It will require further correlation across all of the layers of service delivery to enable the kind of analytics that then drive the automation to enable the "self-healing network".

This, of course, is much easier said than done. As consumers demand more services across a more complicated infrastructure (at home, at work and on the go), in a completely integrated manner, the number of moving parts that interact and affect each other is growing exponentially.

This raises important questions about what NSPs will have to done to deliver on this brand promise.

"As the network becomes virtualized, it seems clear that leaders will have to double down on investments in DevOps and strategic change management. This is crucial for enabling operators to roll out new products and services more quickly, which is great for consumers who always want more," says Menier

It is how NSPs will be able to flex their network dynamically in response to major shifts in the market — which now happen all the time in response to new disruptive competitors and changing user behavior.

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The challenge — and opportunity — at this particular moment in time is that there's still a real immaturity in quite a lot of the predictive and prescriptive capabilities on the traditional physical networks.

"They're sort of in trial phase, a lot of them," says Patrick. "Over the last few years, operators have been experimenting with how to calculate a score for an individual's customer experience. But it is only just now getting moved into mainstream production."

The good news is that effective, customer-centric network assurance issues are very solvable.

"The organizational change issues can be addressed. The technology is available. The data is everywhere. The elements are available for NSPs to align network assurance functions with customer experience to achieve competitive differentiation," says Menier.

"At Vitria, our AIOps platform looks at signals across all of the different layers of today's infrastructure environment, and then uses machine learning and AI to correlate these signals to guide an action or automate a process preemptively. If this ability to correlate isn't in place, then automation can have unknown or unintended consequences that affect the different layers. This can disrupt the customer experience," Menier explains.

To listen to full audio interview with Charlotte Patrick and Chris Menier please [click here](#).

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