



# MWC: The worlds most important event for the Telecom ecosystem—

## WHAT WE LEARNED!



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One of the major themes for MWC 2024 was the mainstream appearance of 5G standalone (5G SA). According to the [GSMA](#), of the 261 commercial 5G services available today, 47 are provided by 5G SA networks, and 89 are planned for deployment in the near term. The ability to assure the new services that 5G SA will enable was, therefore, a key discussion point in the conference with three focus areas:

### Assurance as part of service orchestration

Many vendor stands offered the same demo during the show – the orchestration of slices. This is part of the rise in importance of an end-to-end service orchestration process that fulfils a customer’s requirement for a new service - stretching from order handling through service design, service/resource provisioning and assurance. This orchestration will need to interact with the assurance system to notify it about the new service (for example, how network functions are chained together, and the KQIs/SLAs required). The assurance platform will then track compliance (are all metrics healthy now?) and forecast potential threats to KQIs/SLAs. Slice demonstrations at the show included AIOps assurance models which forecasted expected performance against KQIs with projected future confidence bands for metrics such as device-level and end-to-end downlink throughput.

### The need for observability – within domains, across domains and across vertical stacks

Findings from Spirent’s [2024 Market Drivers, Insights and Considerations](#) survey, featured at MWC, found development in the assurance market, particularly around the 5G mobile core as 5G SA upgrades began – with preparation for new revenues from mission-critical services requiring guaranteed performance levels. Other focus areas included the need for assurance of virtualised networks to span both enterprise IT and traditional telco networking, with 5G increasingly blurring the line between the two, as enterprise workloads run on the network edge. Vendors at MWC were, therefore demonstrating their ability to provide assurance both horizontally and vertically.

### The need for observability – across customers

The last few years have seen continuing improvement in network resilience (from the adoption of virtualisation and new automations), requiring less focus on individual network issues from the NOC. Along with preparations for new 5G SA services, these improvements have seen the focus moving towards service assurance. Data from the network and a range of other sources (test data, weather patterns and customer sentiment) is needed in service assurance; alongside new ML models to deal with this increasing volume of data and undertake anomaly detection, prediction and optimisation tasks. There were a range of demonstrations at the show in this area, including the ability of assurance vendors to ingest and manage the data on behalf of the telco, if necessary.

### What was overexposed at the show, and what trends are yet to emerge?

Survey data from TM Forum’s recent report [Generative AI: operators take their first steps](#), saw 87% of respondents expecting Generative AI to have a high potential to positively impact customer experience and 85% expecting a high potential to impact network operations. It was, therefore, no surprise to see discussions in many vendor demos. In relation to assurance, it is likely that the main use in the next few years will be to add digital assistant capabilities which provide an interface to assurance solutions.

Looking beyond 2024, Gen AI’s ability to suggest improvements to the network based on assurance (and other) data is still a subject of discussion – but, in the next few years, it will most likely provide simple code and script generation capabilities, allowing real-time changes to the network to be made more swiftly. Its ability to generate text may also allow it to manage and update documentation related to assurance deployed in the network – perhaps even automatically generating help files for, say, an enterprise taking assurance services from the telco.

### Trends yet to emerge at the show, and perhaps focus areas for 2025, included:

#### Demonstrations of complex self-healing capabilities

The rise of 5G SA will see telcos face challenges in supporting their more dynamic networks with many concurrent issues. Simple self-healing capabilities have been available for many years. However, we have yet to see much demonstration of more complex functionality. This would see the creation of multiple nested closed loops which poll in near-real-time, fixing issues discovered or requesting that orchestrators redesign the next-best configuration (either in terms of technical compliance or cost-effectiveness) if the issue can’t be fixed immediately (in the case of a fibre cut or hardware failure). This requires active assurance using AIOps models, time-series databases and storage/monitoring in a distributed architecture to support massive amounts of data from multiple domains.

#### A push to ensure that assurance data gets to the right destination

Meeting enterprise customer requirements around new services will require telcos to integrate their data and operations across diverse and complex ecosystems. Delivering the right data (a mix of assurance, inventory and external third-party data) to the right people and processes at the right time will provide new visibility and automations to support these new services.

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