

## ITAnalysis - Who cares wins

By Rob Bamforth, Principal Analyst, Quocirca Ltd

There has been a recent, not-so-subtle, shift in the tone of advertising campaigns for consumer products, which will undoubtedly make it into the business technology world as soon as marketing budgets permit. It follows a curve from the peak of the boom times through the turn downwards to thrift and then to the uncertainty in the decline that follows. No longer is it sufficient to say:

- we offer great stuff – in IT product marketing lingo this is often portrayed as 'feature packed' or 'our range of benefits include..' followed by a list of words ending in '-bility'
- our prices are lowest – generally turned to expressions such as 'price-performance ratio' or 'more bang for the buck' in the technology lexicon

No, the next wave of advertising says 'we care' and there are even some that say 'we can be bothered'. This is not a public spirited attempt to demonstrate empathy, but to try to win business.

While this may appear like a last desperate throw of the demand creation dice, it does open up some very interesting opportunities for those companies that can really deliver on the promise. However there is a big difference between saying you care, and actually meaning it and doing something about it.

This is particularly true for many companies where technology has had a large impact in the customer interaction and service capabilities. We all recognise the words used to describe service and support, and the perception they might convey if services are badly implemented is somewhat different to the positive impression the provider might have been hoping for:

- 'your call is important to us' (but not enough for us to put more operators in place)

- 'call our helpline on 08...' (we make money out of premium rate numbers)
- 'simply click here for support' (we can blame the internet for the delay)
- 'use our self service portal' (we don't want to talk to you, it's too expensive)
- 'please rate this page' (hello? Is anybody there?)
- 'follow us on Tw...' (anything to stop you actually getting in contact directly)

Generally it is not a fault in the technology itself, but the way it is deployed. There is often a lack of completeness of the solution, one mode or channel is not connected to another or business processes constrained by the physical world have not evolved to meet the 'Web2.0' speed of online interaction.

The internet makes it simpler to connect millions of customers to thousands of services – one long tail to another – on a common, converged network including telephony and 'broadcast' media. One global market of the masses. But the problem is that needs of individuals are different and vary with time, location and context, depending on who they are, where they are and what they want at that precise moment.

In this highly connected world there is one group of organisations that have the information available to support a more tailored and precisely pinpointed customer experience – telecoms network operators. Whether in the fixed or mobile domain, they hold subscriber information not only based on demographics, but also past behaviour and current context.

How these organisations choose to exploit this market intelligence about their customers is critical. Operators could choose to offer a range of products and services themselves, way beyond the boundaries of traditional telephony, directly to their subscribers.

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In some areas they may have success, but the difficult experiences of mobile operators trying to control walled gardens of their own content echoes what occurred in the early days of the internet. It would be far better to act as a smart channel for all others, than a simple seller of a subset of goods.

For too long operators have focussed on the wires, base-stations, masts and antenna as being their most important assets when in reality they are simply basic requirements and the network itself is not a differentiator. The most valuable asset operators have is their subscribers and the business opportunity to be able to offer a conduit for network and context aware services to their partners.

Accurate knowledge about specific customers and their behaviour provides a way to personalise and streamline all elements of

customer communications from initially establishing a relationship, through selling to support and the whole lifecycle of services.

It will even highlight what leads a customer to move elsewhere, and provide an opportunity to care more about the experiences of customers.

If network operators work with the right partners to use this information sensitively and to the benefit of their subscribers and joint customers, they will certainly be showing they are 'bothered'. The next step for suppliers showing they really care will probably require a change in attitude from the top, and suitable training of front line staff, but a dose of recession will focus many minds on why caring for customers is good for suppliers too.

Quocirca's report looking at how the provision of e-services may evolve is freely available [here](#).

### About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at

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