Service Assurance Proves Vital to Understanding Networks

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to some estimates, global mobile data traffic grew 69 percent in 2014, with about 500 million mobile devices and connections added during the year. Smartphones accounted for about 88 percent of that growth, with about 440 million net additions in 2014. Furthermore, smart devices – those with advanced multimedia capabilities and a minimum of 3G connectivity – generated 22 times more traffic than other devices.

A key driver in the service assurance market will be the ability to measure performance of a service and link it to churn and stickiness. The evolving over-the-top (OTT) application ecosystem will put more pressure on communications service providers to deliver a quality experience. Service providers must understand what’s happening inside a home or business network, as opposed to just understanding what's happening to the connection up to the interface point.

One of the things happening inside the home network is the use of a broad range of different apps, some of which are coming from the primary network operator and others of which are coming from non-traditional communications service providers that are specializing in apps. Network operators need to deliver a quality experience for end customers using a third-party app like Netflix, just as they do for customers accessing their own cloud DVR product, or they risk losing the end customer to a competitor that can deliver a higher-quality experience.

Being able to appropriately test service experience without compromising end-user privacy is another key factor that will drive service assurance. Those vendors that are most successful will reduce the complexity of service delivery so that network engineers and field technicians are able to use service assurance solutions intuitively without hours of training and study. Furthermore, the most successful solutions will be those that correlate millions of data points to make the resulting information actionable.

Over the next two years, increasing competition and slowing growth will shift the focus in the industry to retaining current customers and creating more efficient operations. Understanding and acting on the customer experience in real time to deliver an outstanding experience will be a key success factor.
Service Assurance Proves Vital to Understanding Networks examines the service assurance market, providing insights as to how 10 vendors define service assurance, as well as what features each vendor identify as being in their solution. It discusses drivers and challenges in the industry and includes a comparative analysis of solutions available. Finally, it examines the geographic landscape of the market and details trends that are likely to occur in the industry over the next 18-24 months.

The report delivers a timely and important competitive analysis in this rapidly growing market, including these 10 leading suppliers.

Currently, the biggest driver in the service assurance market is the explosion that continues in the smart devices and downloadable applications market, as shown in the following excerpt. With every new device that comes on the market – think Apple Watch and every other new device of its kind that hits the market on a monthly basis – communication service providers must grapple with incremental numbers of new subscribers on their networks. Those new numbers mean more traffic that must be monitored for service assurance.

Excerpt: Drivers in the Service Assurance Market, 2015-2017

![Bar chart showing the drivers in the service assurance market.]

- Explosions of smart devices and apps (25%)
- Ability to measure the performance of a service (20%)
- Directly link service quality to customer stickiness (15%)
- Overcome challenges created from network/service/app convergence (12%)
- Ability to link subscriber’s service experience to churn (10%)
- Track trends in customer habits independent of competition (8%)
- Other (5%)

Percentages indicate estimated size of total service assurance spending
Source: Heavy Reading, based on supplier estimates

Service Assurance Proves Vital to Understanding Networks is published in PDF format.