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SYLVAIN SEIGNOUR,
DEPUTY CEO &
CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER

NETCRACKER
HELPS CSPs TACKLE
NEW CUSTOMER
EXPECTATIONS



COVER STORY



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NETCRACKER

HELPS CSPs TACKLE NEW CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

By Justin Smith

Being at the forefront of innovation and customer responsiveness, Netcracker strives to help CSPs be digitally at par with their customers' expectations. The following is a conversation CIOReview had with Sylvain Seignour, Deputy CEO and Chief Customer Officer at Netcracker.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT TRENDS IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY THAT HAVE IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS AS WELL AS THAT OF YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Covid-19 has dramatically changed the perception and purpose of communications service providers (CSPs). Due to the pandemic, we have been forced to transition to a socially

distanced digital society. CSPs who were once looked upon as 'dumb pipes' are being recognized as foundational players in these uncertain times. Communications and connectivity are in great demand as entire populations are staying at home, and digital infrastructure is becoming increasingly essential for human interaction amid lockdowns. This has dramatically accelerated the pace of digital transformation including digital customer journeys.

I would add that these digital journeys have been accelerated due to the desire of customers to be more self-sufficient. This includes self-installation and provisioning and even the adoption of hyper-automation functions to get customers up and running quickly without having to send



With three decades of experience and expertise, what differentiates Netcracker is its ability to quickly adapt to different situations and pivot as needed to ensure a customer's project is delivered on time and budget

a truck or technician out to a home or business. For customers and the teams within CSPs that serve them, it has also forced a rethinking of what customer care means. Operators have to evolve beyond monitoring customer journeys and measuring satisfaction metrics to fully understanding what customers want to urgently address their immediate needs.

In times of economic crisis, when job losses run into the millions, the key indicators of operators' success will depend upon how they deliver services that meet the current needs of their customers with empathy, care, and concern. This includes utilizing advanced analytics and machine learning to keep a real-time pulse on changing customer preferences and rapidly innovating to redesign journeys to support current requirements.

In terms of technologies, I would say that 5G, including Open vRAN and related technologies, will have the greatest impact on our customers, most of whom are deploying the technology in some manner or have completed trials and production environments. Another key area is security, which becomes even more critical as operators offer an omnichannel customer experience to boost their loyalty, trust, and reputation by allowing customers to access services and help from a variety of devices and methods.

Netcracker has always been at the forefront of innovation and customer responsiveness and we strive to address the needs of our customers as quickly as possible. The recently launched Netcracker 2020 digital portfolio of products and services is a good example of how we address key demands of our service provider customers by helping them to get through uncertain times but also arming them to innovate and disrupt the 5G digital economy.

With Netcracker 2020, service providers can transform customer engagement, dynamically evolve their digital ecosystems, and reach new levels of automation and security, helping them to be ready for whatever comes next.

AS OPERATORS AROUND THE WORLD ADOPT A CLOUD STRATEGY TO LOWER THEIR COSTS AND MAXIMIZE THEIR AGILITY, WHAT IS NETCRACKER DOING TO SUPPORT THESE INITIATIVES?

The cloud is a major area of focus for Netcracker across several different initiatives and projects. Netcracker 2020 is built on a cloud-native and microservices-based architecture and runs on any cloud platform, enabling CSPs to benefit from a multi-cloud strategy.

In 2020, we announced partnerships with the major cloud-scale players – AWS, Google Cloud, and Microsoft Azure – to give our customers the choice of using public clouds and accelerate their innovation through cloud-scale and agility. By supporting both public and telco clouds, we can leverage Agile and DevOps expertise in a collaborative manner to revolutionize the way services are delivered. This ties directly into the digital experience in terms of guaranteed performance

of applications and optimized processes, the ability to anticipate future growth, and safeguarding end customers' data and other vital information.

HOW DOES NETCRACKER'S POSITION AS A WHOLLY-OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF NEC PROVIDE AN ADVANTAGE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS?

NEC has more than a century of experience in the network and software space. The company was an early pioneer in telephony, wireless and other methods of communications, and today you'll find NEC involved in everything from satellites and 5G to cybersecurity and biometrics.



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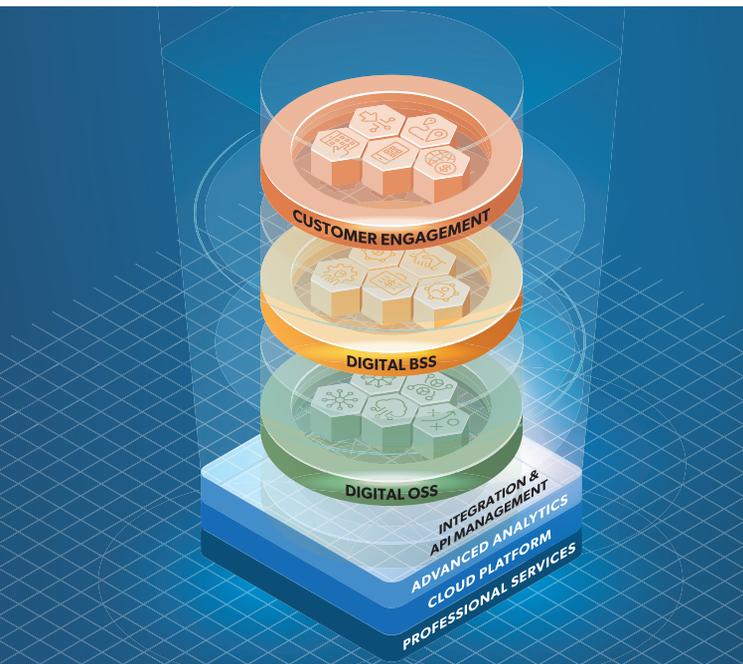
NEC has always had the highest commitment to innovation and R&D and has a reputation as being on the cutting edge of every market they enter and every technology they develop. These principles are also cornerstones at Netcracker.

An example of this strong focus on R&D can be seen in Netcracker 2020, which was redesigned and enhanced specifically to help our customers as they navigate the 5G era. This is critical for operators as they undergo digital transformations that include cloud strategies, strong security, complex partner ecosystems, and automation.

In the context of 5G, NEC and Netcracker are taking a completely disruptive approach in providing 5G-ready, Open vRAN solutions to the market. The collaboration brings together NEC's IT, network, and system integration expertise and Netcracker's orchestration capability to promote an open, virtualized infrastructure model utilizing IT, orchestration, and network expertise. Also, Netcracker Digital BSS, part of the

Netcracker 2020 portfolio, is a 5G-ready out-of-the-box solution that is very quick to deploy and delivers convergent revenue management capability for new digital services that operators will want to offer over their 5G networks. This capability, as well as a dynamic mobile-first digital experience, personalized offers, and a consistent view across all channels, helps deliver the critical end-to-end capabilities that operators are looking for.

NEC, along with Netcracker, is engaged in all telecom network layers from front-haul to back-haul, physical and virtual networks, and network orchestration to management and business layers with OSS and BSS. Netcracker's portfolio of



products and services complements NEC's offerings extremely well, which allows us to go to market with NEC on projects to deliver true end-to-end value to our customers.

HOW HAS COVID-19 CHANGED YOUR BUSINESS PROCESSES AND IMPACTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING ENSURING BUSINESS CONTINUITY DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES?

Nobody could have predicted what has transpired in 2020, with the world essentially shutting down, people being forced to stay at home for weeks or months at a time, and most of our lives being completely upended. However, Netcracker has been extremely fortunate as our customers are considered essential services and are even more in demand than before.

Our customers are right at the heart of this fast-changing world where most people are working and studying from home and relying on their communications providers to support their jobs and schooling as well as their entertainment needs.

Even with so many challenges and difficulties this year, I have to give operators full credit for being agile and flexible enough to support the rise in customer demand but also in their willingness to work with customers by waiving fees and discontinuing service terminations in certain cases.

As a trusted partner to many of the largest operators in the world, Netcracker has been right by their side during their digital transformation projects and also as they continue to go live with deployments even under challenging conditions. Our highly trained, geographically dispersed workforce and our focus on security and business continuity have helped us see several high-profile projects through to completion. This includes expertise in our core areas of BSS and OSS but also skill in Agile methodologies and DevOps processes.

By bringing together our expertise, experience, and ability to work closely with a wide range of partners, we've had incredible success with complex transformation projects even under difficult circumstances such as having to switch our way of working with customers. Here are few examples of complex transformations that were delivered recently in a fully remote mode using Agile and DevOps. This demonstrates what is possible if you have the right talent, technology, and partnership in place.

In April, Rakuten Mobile unveiled its Un-Limit program, enabling easy and personalized onboarding on its new, fully virtualized cloud-native network. Netcracker's BSS solution forms the foundation of Rakuten's innovative customer experience, including the mobile app, retail store, and call center channel solutions.

While Rakuten progressed with their pre-launch and launch plans, a state of emergency was declared in Japan due to COVID-19, and our program team had to quickly reorganize to support the customer as the pandemic was unfolding globally. We had to support the Rakuten launch entirely virtually and adapt to a new way of working. While our teams would have been onsite under normal circumstances, access to Rakuten offices for the launch was not allowed, so our local teams were also completely remote.

Another example of a project we recently delivered largely remotely through a geographically dispersed team was with Belgian operator Telenet. We successfully helped them to migrate mobile customers it acquired when the operator bought a competitor several years ago. The virtual delivery program for our BSS solution, including our Convergent Charging System, was a success due to close collaboration and open communication across the product, delivery, and operations teams. The complex solution has remained stable and is achieving high call success rates. We have also recently completed the next delivery phase for Telenet, which includes prepaid, SOHO, and fleet customers, to give the operator a truly converged system that supports prepaid, postpaid, mobile, fixed-line, broadband, and more.



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In Latin America, we are helping Vivo, the Brazilian subsidiary of Telefónica Group, on several key initiatives, including an e-commerce program that will make it easier for customers to order and purchase products and services. This goes even further to help Vivo monetize new services and provide an enhanced, digital-first omnichannel experience, which is even more critical during the current global crisis where customers want and need to be more self-sufficient.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY OFTEN GOES HAND-IN-HAND WITH SECURITY, PRIVACY, AND COMPLIANCE, WHICH ARE ALL ESSENTIAL FOR MISSION-CRITICAL AND COMPLEX COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENTS. HOW IS NETCRACKER POSITIONED TO BE THE TRUSTED PARTNER TO OPERATORS AS THEY NAVIGATE A RAPIDLY CHANGING TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE?

Security and privacy have always been at the forefront of everything we do as a company. Our customers are managing millions of customer accounts which includes very personal information. That customer data, along with network data and transaction data, needs to be safeguarded from cybercriminals, hackers, and other forms of intrusion and disruption.

We have an entire business practice devoted to being a trust center for our customers, which gives us an advantage in the industry. Netcracker works closely with our customers to help ensure subscriber and other data is secure within the confines of the operator's network as well as when data traverses public or private clouds. Our enhanced security plan covers sensitive

data, as well as the software and services used to store and process that data and to apply it to our customers' needs.

We incorporate the principles of the shared model of responsibility and go further through alignment with industry security frameworks and standards to bring the highest levels of assurance to customers. This encompasses several specific solutions, but one I'd like to single out is our Enclave as a Service, which is designed to provide end-to-end secure remote operations. This solution includes the tools and processes required to onboard and train customers and provides them with control and full visibility.

Our security solutions have received the highest praise from the U.S. government as the gold standard for telco industry data security. Adam Hickey, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, said our Enhanced Security Plan is a model of good security practice. This is fantastic validation for what we are doing to ensure our customers and their customers remain confident in the security and privacy of their data.

HOW DOES YOUR COMPANY'S CULTURE GIVE YOU A COMPETITIVE EDGE?

With almost 30 years of experience and expertise under our belts, we can quickly adapt to different situations and pivot as needed to ensure a customer's project is delivered on time and budget. It's easy to say, but as evidenced during the current pandemic climate we have been able to go live with several projects and provide ongoing managed services and maintenance on long-established accounts. While there is no substitute for working with our customers face to face, we feel we have the processes and systems in place to weather the storm no matter the challenges.

Another key advantage for us is our long history of being ahead of the curve on the technologies and features our customers are asking for and requirements for them to remain competitive in their markets and be able to branch out into new lines of business. Whether this is building a solution on a cloud-native platform, supporting open standards, working on various aspects of 5G, or using Agile and DevOps processes, we can dynamically adapt to our customers' business needs and help them expand their digital ecosystems, automate their operations and deliver an unmatched business value that makes everyone involved successful.

These are characteristics we share with our parent company, NEC, which has a decades-long track record of innovation and moving the needle on technology development and deployment and was one of the key reasons they sought Netcracker out as a key piece of their global business. With our people, infrastructure, commitment to innovation and modernization for ourselves and, more importantly, for our customers, Netcracker is in the perfect position to continue down our path of major achievements and accomplishments as we help move our industry forward. 

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The annual listing of 10 companies that are at the forefront of providing Digital Experience solutions and transforming businesses