Netcracker Announces OSS BSS Cloud Native Digital Solution Portfolio

June 05, 2020

By: Karl Whitelock

IDC's Quick Take

With 5G core networks coming online, the vision of improved connectivity can now deliver new ways for network services to satisfy changing customer needs. Dynamically configurable throughput volumes, variable transmission speeds and definable low and ultra-low latency and are just some of the 5G operational parameters needing management control. These new requirements, and several others, go well beyond what traditional operations, assurance, and business support systems (OSS/BSS) are designed to address. A table-stakes need from all communications service providers (Comms SPs) is for cloud-native ways to augment and in many cases replace these systems, especially as new business models converge around digital services involving partners, enterprise customers and consumers. The Netcracker 2020 digital operations, monetization and services portfolio enables Comms SPs to provide 5G services and an expanded digital experience for both consumers and business customers.

Product Announcement Highlights

On June 3rd, Netcracker announced it has launched its cloud-native Netcracker 2020 portfolio to help Comms SPs focus on their customer's digital lifestyle. While not new to native cloud development, Netcracker has successfully evolved its OSS BSS solution portfolio to a fully containerized operations and monetization environment along with changing its internal development processes to address a CI/CD approach to software design. Through this method, the company annually delivers multiple solution releases according to customer requirements. Netcracker 2020 also supports open APIs and conforms with automation management standards defined by ETSI, 3GPP, MEF, TM Forum and other standards organizations.

The Netcracker 2020 cloud-native solution consists of a cloud platform, BSS functionality, an analytics platform, OSS capabilities, and professional services.

The cloud platform incorporates a built-in multi-pronged security framework that has received positive attention by the US government and other cloud security minded organizations. The platform provides Comms SPs the tools necessary for the security and privacy of networks and services, including 5G and multi-cloud environments. The solution portfolio runs on any cloud platform, including public clouds from AWS, Google, and Microsoft Azure.

Within the BSS realm, Netcracker 2020 enables a mobile-first, contextually aware digital experience along with enhanced partner management capabilities pertaining to onboarding, access to a growing partner ecosystem and support for multiple partner-driven (resellers, suppliers, and distributors) business models including those involving sponsorship and wholesale B2B2X. Other BSS functions involve convergent revenue management for 5G including a distributed charging architecture, slice-base rating with dynamic adjustment capabilities, and support for new payment methods.

The solution portfolio leverages the Netcracker Advanced Analytics platform, which comes with several use cases that address all major BSS business processes. For example, through a service-agnostic loyalty

engine, Netcracker translates the consumption of any service into membership points, which are used through a gamification platform to provide next best action (NBA) and/or next best offers (NBOs) to customers. It then manages the transfer of this value within the partner ecosystem.

On the OSS side, Netcracker 2020 provides slice management for the dynamic orchestration of network slices within a single domain or across multiple domains. Open source DevOps tools have been added to automate the VNF, CNF and PNF network functions published by Comms SPs in a marketplace. Advanced digital service domain orchestration functions are also included specific to Open vRAN, SD-WAN/LAN/Wi-Fi, MEC edge and 5G core.

The professional services portion of Netcracker 2020 is designed to help Comms SPs benefit from Netcracker's system integration services and end-to-end program ownership to execute blueprint-based solution design. Professional services also provide a set of cloud enablement services to help build, migrate or enhance cloud-native IT environments involving multicloud hosting options such as AWS, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud, outsourced analytic-driven operations, and management of business processes on behalf of customers.

IDC's Point of View

Digital transformation continues in all industries, so much so that IDC believes by 2023 50% of IT spend will be for digital transformation projects. The communications industry is no exception. For example, when the recent pandemic mandated health officials to issue shelter in place orders, one large North American Comms SP transitioned 80% of its care workforce to a work from home (WFH) environment within a week after lockdowns were initiated. By the end of April 2020, the company was operating with 93% of its care team in WFH mode. Other organizations have accomplished similar feats, with many developing/deploying internal applications for managing crises workflows completed in just days following the global lockdown. This includes remote network management, remote software functionality updates and new solution implementation.

Accomplishing the objectives of an agile systems and process environment requires a digital first approach, often initiated simultaneously for many different workflows. Within the communications industry, an agile operations environment is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity for meeting changing business conditions. The types of change in processes and systems functionality that have accompanied the current global pandemic will continue at an accelerated pace as the full benefits from digital services and network slicing become a business reality. IDC believes solutions such as Netcracker 2020 are strategic for any Comms SP to be successful by enabling companies in all industries to engage their customers and partners with a digital services way of doing business.

Cloud operations and monetization solution models provide agility and the right environment to quickly get to market with new ideas and better ways for customer engagement. Establishing a cloud native architecture is not something that comes easily, however. Netcracker has worked on its containerized cloud native operations and monetization environment for over five years. IDC believes the Netcracker 2020 announcement is a statement about the company's investment in product and technology along with an articulation that the company's long-term OSS/BSS architecture evolution is paying off with significant market wins.

Netcracker explained that it now has 15 of its key customers using some or all parts of the Netcracker 2020 solution including companies such as A1 Telecom Austria Group, Bechtle, Etisalat, Grupo Gtd,

Swisscom, Rakuten, Viasat, and Vodafone Group. Netcracker 2020 is designed to operate in a multicloud environment, using public clouds or on-premise cloud platforms, according to customer preference. This includes the traditional license model using a customer's private cloud.

What makes the Netcracker 2020 portfolio significant is that it addresses several aspects of what Comms SPs are asking for with regard to meeting the business demands of 5G and next-generation mobility, delivering improvements in the customer engagement processes, support for new business models including partner management, addressing the need for cloud adoption, delivering on the hyper automation needs of the network as more and more network functions are virtualized, and support for outcome-based, analytics-enabled service delivery models.

The complexities with moving a supplier's software development processes to a microservices, containerized environment cannot be overstated. Also, cloud native solutions set the stage for Comms SPs to address new business models with partners (B2B), enterprise customers (B2B) and consumers (B2C). The Netcracker 2020 portfolio enables Comms SPs to increase the level of automation in both business and network facing processes to improve speed to delivery and cost reduction.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Netcracker 2020 is the integrated ability of the platform to provide Comms SPs with both the operations and monetization functionality needed to meet the challenges of 5G services and the complexities that come from complicated B2B2X business models. IDC strongly believes that the greater opportunity for the communications industry lies with the creation of new revenue streams from partner ecosystem services than from any cost control effort that a Comms SP may try to define. The future of not only the communications industry, but several other industries, hangs in the ability for Comms SPs to successfully create, implement and track complex service usage. To this end, Netcracker 2020 sits with a very small and elite group of solution suppliers.

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